



The Center For  
**FAIRFUTURES** >  
**FIRST 90 DAYS  
OF COACHING**

Following enrollment, the next 90 days\* begins a period of relationship building between the Coach and the young person. If Coaches cannot build relationships with youth, they cannot help them make progress with their goals! The Coach will also start the process of building relationships with the key adults in the young person's life – his/her Case Planner, the parent(s)/family, and school/program staff.

During this period, the Coach should also visit the young person's school/program and start to collect key data.

**\*Note: This time period does not have to be exactly 90 days – it is just a general guideline!**

*Some young people may form an instant relationship with their Coach, and others may be struggling with life/other issues and take much longer to build trust.*

## FIRST 90\* DAYS OF COACHING CHECKLIST

COACHES SHOULD ENGAGE IN THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES WITH ALL OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE THEY WORK WITH IN THE FIRST 90 DAYS OF COACHING.


### ENGAGE THE YOUTH AND PARTICIPATE IN RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING ACTIVITIES - HAVE FUN!

*Before reaching out to a young person for the first time, sign up for a session with the Juvenile Justice Relationship Manager to practice introducing yourself and your role - first impressions are important!*


#### IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES INCLUDE:

##### Coaches make communication comfortable and meet youth where they prefer.


Coaches travel to meet young people wherever they feel most comfortable — in the community, their home, a pizza joint, etc. This facilitates a more casual conversation and allows the young person to begin the process of building trust.

 **TIP:** The best conversations tend to happen over food!

Coaches should also use whatever form of communication that young person is most comfortable with, including texting and various forms of social media.


 **TIP:** Texts/messages should be casual and engaging, not transactional

Coaches working with youth in Close to Home placements may not be able to meet young people in the community (until they are in aftercare).

 **TIP:** In that case, work with your colleagues in Close to Home and think creatively to identify space/time within the residence to get to know each other.

##### Meet them where they are.

Coaches get to know the youth's interests, listen carefully, and are always strength-based. Don't ask the young person about their academic performance or career goals on their first conversation, unless they bring this up. Get to know who they are as an individual, what they like to do in their free time, etc. If they are hesitant to open up, open up to them and share your own interests.

 **TIP:** If you are struggling to engage them in conversation, share something about yourself - relationships are a two-way road. Open up to them as you hope they would open up to you, and try to find a common bond. If you don't have one – create one! Learn more about whatever it is that interests them (a particular game, sport, activity, TV show, etc.).

##### Practice the 3Cs - Consistency, Creativity, and Celebration - *If one approach doesn't work, try another!*

Many young people in foster care have suffered from inconsistent and/or disrupted adult supports, which can make it challenging to form trusting, long-term relationships. Coaches should reach out at least once a week to young people – whether they are responding or not. They should also try new approaches – if reaching out by phone or text does not elicit a response, then try social media. If that does not work, find out their schedule and run into them – engage them in conversation, or ask if you can bring them to lunch.

✓ **Coaches show up consistently, even if the youth doesn't!**

For youth who do not engage after multiple attempts, Coaches should continue to reach out and visit them. Some youth take time to trust that the adult is truly interested in their well-being, and they will seek assistance once they know the intentions are coming from a genuine, caring place.

★ **TIP:** Coaches should use “out of the box” approaches to engage that young person – send them a GIF, a Tic Toc video, send along a credible messenger, bring them on a trip, etc. New experiences can serve as conversation-starters and can help facilitate relationship-building.

✓ **Coaches should always be their authentic self.**

If we want young people to open up to us and allow us to assist them, we have to be genuine and open with them, too! What we hear most from young people is that they appreciate when we are “real” and do not put up our walls.

✓ **Validate their feelings.**

An important step in engaging a young person – or any person – is to validate their feelings, regardless of whether or not you agree with them.

**This includes:**

- ✓ Finding the kernel of truth in another person’s perspective or situation, verifying the facts of a situation;
- ✓ Acknowledging that a person’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors have causes and are therefore understandable;
- ✓ Not providing solutions or problem solving;
- ✓ Not necessarily agreeing with the other person or validating what is actually invalid.

**BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY ADULTS IN THE YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE, INCLUDING:**

✓ **Agency Staff (e.g., Mentors, Youth Development Specialists, etc.)**

Within first week after the initial enrollment (the first face-to-face session), the Coach should be in touch with the other agency staff that work with the young person. Building a positive rapport with the other agency staff is important as there needs to be open lines of communication. It's important that everyone works together as a team.

In the first interaction(s), the Coach should:

⊕ **Establish clarity on the goals of the program**

The Coach should build a positive rapport with the other agency staff that work with the young person. Other agency staff may not know much about Fair Futures, so it is helpful for the Coach to provide an overview of the program goals and how agency staff and Coaches will work together to support the young person.

⊕ **Discuss any helpful background information**, including that young person's home situation, permanency goal, and any school-related information they have.

⊕ **Ask for copies of the young person's documentation**, including copies of their birth certificate, social security card, state ID/license, working papers, etc.

⊕ **Let the other agency staff that work with the young person know that the Coach looks forward to working with them and that the Coach will be providing them with a monthly update and progress notes.**

This is helpful for the other agency staff records and Family Court process.

★ **TIP:** A monthly contact report can be automatically generated from the Online Platform –it will include all progress notes and contact dates.

✓ **The Coach should also attend the team conferences**

The coach should attend the team conferences, which take place at least twice per year, and build a rapport with any other adults in the young person's life – including his/her therapist, or health care coordinator. If there is regular communication between the Coach and the various adults in that young person's life, then these adults can work together as a team, surrounding the young person with a network of support.

It can also help prevent crises from happening; if agency staff has important information related to that young person's safety, mental health, physical health, or well-being that they can share with the Coach, the Coach can use that information to help address the situation and provide social-emotional support to the young person. Ideally, the other agency staff that work with the young person" is present as well, along with the young person, to create a circle of support.

✓ **Parents/family**

Within the first month of working with the young person, the Coach should work with other staff at the agency to determine the best time for the Coach to reach out to the family. Ideally, the Coach and other agency staff that work with the young person is present as well, along with the young person, to create a circle of support.

The first meeting can include an explanation of the program and what supports the Coach provides – this is another reason why it's important to have program language prepared (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 9](#)). Often times, the parent is very happy to hear that someone is helping the young person with his/her academic progress and career path.

## VISIT THE YOUNG PERSON'S SCHOOL/PROGRAM TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP AND SHOW SUPPORT

- The Coach should visit (or call, if during COVID) the young person's high school, GED program, and/or any other program they are enrolled in within the first 90 days, ideally after the Core Training.**

Don't be nervous about the school visit - you can't screw it up! Sign up for a TA session to prepare and read [Appendix C5: First School Visit](#).

### The purpose of the visit is to:

- ➕ Show support; show the young person that the Coach cares about them and is there for them on their journey
- ➕ Ensure that they are in a "best fit" high school environment and making progress towards graduation (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#))
- ➕ Ensure that they are accessing available supports
- ➕ Form a relationship with any key staff that the young person interacts with at the school (e.g., a guidance counselor, school therapist, etc.), so that the school staff know to reach out to the Coach if any challenges, issues, or opportunities arise as it relates to that young person.

- On the first visit, the Coach should obtain, if possible/available:**

- Any permissions to access the student's data if over 18 (a FERPA agreement)
- A copy of the current or most recent transcript
- Attendance records
- Any disciplinary or other records
- The student's IEP or 504 Plan, if they have one

★ **TIP: For Coaches supporting youth in Close to Home placements**, keep in mind that youth will be engaged in an on-site or off-site school during placement, but they will transition back to a community school or program after placement. Learn more about placement-related schools in [Appendix F31: High School Context for Students in Close to Home](#) and be prepared to help students with their transition. You might want to collaborate with other agency staff who are familiar with the students' schooling options to plan for a great next step.

See [Appendix C5: First School Visit](#) and [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#) for more detailed information on how to conduct the visit, key questions the Coach can ask, what to look out for.

If the young person is no longer enrolled in an academic setting, the Coach should obtain that young person's most recent high school transcript and any records. This data provides important information once the young person is ready to re-engage in an academic setting. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#))

## ENCOURAGE THE YOUNG PERSON TO ATTEND ANY PEER GROUPS, WORKSHOPS, AND AGENCY ACTIVITIES.

This will help the youth learn more about the program and build relationships with other staff/youth.

## START SELECTING GOALS BASED ON YOUNG PERSON'S SITUATION

Be ready to start the goal-setting process with the young person; they may be ready Day 1 or may need time to build a trusting rapport. Even if the young person has not engaged yet, the Coach can start selecting goals in the platform based on their situation. Going through this process can actually be what helps a young person engage and realize that you care.

- By the 90 Day mark, use this document, [Types of Goals](#), to add goals, based on the young person's situation, for all young people in your coaching group.
- Once a goal is added, read the Worksheet and start tracking the steps. When a Goal is completed (successful or not), or changes, close it out in Care4. You will learn how to do so in your Care4 training.