

# ***FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL***

## ***SECTIONS 1-4***

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# MANUAL OVERVIEW & CONTRIBUTIONS

## BACKGROUND: THE FAIR FUTURES STORY

**Fair Futures is a youth-led advocacy movement and coalition of 100+ organizations and foundations** advocating for all young people in New York City's foster care system to have access to the long-term, comprehensive supports they need to achieve their potential. **Fair Futures is also a codified, comprehensive model completely centered around the needs, goals, and aspirations of young people.** The full model includes a robust middle school program that prepares students for success in high school and a coaching program that provides 1:1 coaching and tutoring to help young people achieve their academic, career development, and independent living/life goals from 9th grade through age 26.

The Fair Futures model has been implemented and scaled across all 26 NYC foster care agencies and serves over 3,500 young people. The model was developed and codified through a 1.5-year collaboration that included the expertise of NYC's leadership in child welfare, education, workforce and youth development. It is based on evidence-based programs nationally and best practice programs at NYC foster care agencies that have achieved strong outcomes for young people at scale over the last nine years.

The Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board was successful in securing and baselining \$30.7 million, making NYC the first in the nation to support young people in foster care from 6th grade through age 26 with public funding. We are grateful to Mayor Eric Adams and NYC Administration for Children's Services Commissioner Jess Dannhauser for being incredible champions as we work to ensure more youth have Fair Futures.

Fair Futures was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the significant challenges that presented, early results are strong systemwide:

- By the end of the first year, nearly 99% of young people engaged with their Fair Futures Coach.
- In the first year of implementation, 85% of young people who were coached for 90+ days (the engagement period) achieved at least one academic and/or career development goal; an average of 3 goals were achieved by each young person!
- In the second year, 90% of young people who were coached achieved at least one academic and/or career development goal, and an average of 3.8 goals each!

Following the success of the Fair Futures model for youth in foster care, several key stakeholders encouraged the Center for Fair Futures team to embark on its **expansion to new populations - foster youth in Buffalo, New York, and youth in NYC with experience in juvenile justice.** We are honored to be expanding to ensure more youth have access to Fair Futures.

Katie Napolitano and Emil Ramnarine have overseen the implementation of the model in NYC since its inception, and in 2022 launched what is now called the **"Center for Fair Futures."** The Center has a team of 12 staff/consultants who oversee both the youth-led advocacy and the model implementation.

## A MODEL THAT MEETS YOUNG PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

The model, and this manual, are **fully centered around meeting the needs of system-involved 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 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.

**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.

## MODEL FLEXIBILITY AND STRUCTURE

There is inherent flexibility to the Fair Futures model, as it is centered around young people's needs and meets a youth where they are. However, it also provides a lot of structure to assist staff with "how to" help a young person at every juncture on the journey they choose. It maps out the steps on how to navigate various systems and access the academic, career, and housing resources, programs, and opportunities available to youth in NYC, based on where they are and where they want to go.

Innovation is always encouraged! Organizations 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's youth-serving nonprofits 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.**

## 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 other staff supporting youth (such as 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 model also does not train Coaches to navigate crisis situations. While the Coach will often be the first person a youth in crisis will contact, the Coach should loop in the Case Manager/Planner and other supports to provide frontline response.

Coaches are also not trained to provide case management support to families. They are required to build relationships with the parent/family from the perspective of supporting the young person with their academic, career, and life goals.

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
- "Gap-year" programming or other academic/vocational bridge programs
- Professional mentors for students in a post-secondary setting
- 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)
- Additional on-site job readiness and/or internship programs
- Wellness activities, such as yoga, meditation, and healing circles

[Learn more about our model.](#)

## THE ONLINE PLATFORMS, CARE4 AND ONE DEGREE

**CARE4 IS A USER-FRIENDLY, CLOUD-BASED, PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TOOL THAT SERVES 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 is also 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 the NYC nonprofit community, including many foster care agency staff and external experts in each topic area. These materials are updated twice each year, and as needed. These materials are incorporated into the all of the “Goals & Steps” Worksheets on Care4 so that they can guide staff as they are working on a particular step.

## ONE DEGREE

**One Degree is a user-friendly, online resource directory that contains nearly all NYC academic and career/workforce programs and supports for young people.** Fair Futures brought One Degree to NYC so that staff can go to one place to find best-fit schools, programs, and career opportunities for young people that are up-to-date. The site currently contains over 1,500 high school, post-secondary, and career development opportunities and is searchable by eligibility criteria, age, program structure, geography, etc. All staff are trained on One Degree as part of the Core Training.

# 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 **initial expansion throughout NYC's foster care sector** was made possible through a public-private partnership between the Administration for Children's Services, several key foundations (including the Foster Care Excellence Fund), all 26 agencies providing child welfare services in NYC, and several additional organizations providing high-quality youth development, academic, workforce development, and other services. We are grateful for the contributions made by this group.

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

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

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

Katie Napolitano, Fair Futures	Liz Northcutt, City Living NY
Graham Windham staff, including Emil Ramnarine, Bonnie Kornberg, and Sharmeeela Mediratta	Aisha van Ter Sluis
Erika Palmer, Advocates for Children	Administration for Children's Services Education and Employment teams, including Yuriy Pawluk and Ray Singleton
Michael Zink, At The Table ( <i>formerly of The New York Foundling</i> )	

## **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 Yuvienko, and Michael Zink	HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Graham Windham	Children's Village
Good Shepherd Services	Forestdale
New York Foundling	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:**

Georgia Boothe, Children's Aid	Dawnasia Freeman, HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Dawnette Artwell, Children's Aid	Dr. Sylvia Rowland, The New York Foundling
Vincent Madera, Children's Village	Michael Zink, The New York Foundling
Liz Northcutt, City Living NY	My Asia, <i>Youth Employment Program Graduate</i> , Children's Aid
Elizabeth Garcia, Good Shepherd Services	Richard, <i>Youth Employment Program Graduate</i> , Children's Aid
Denise Hinds, Good Shepherd Services	Yannick, <i>Youth Employment Program Graduate</i> , Children's Aid
Pilar Larancuent, Graham Windham	Miguel Ortiz, Fair Futures Youth Board
Emil Ramnarine, Graham Windham	Alex Santana, Fair Futures Youth Board
Brooke Rosenthal, HeartShare St. Vincent's Services	Jahlika Hamilton, Fair Futures Youth Board

**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:**

Fair Futures Consultants: Katie Napolitano, Michael Zink,  
Aisha van Ter Sluis, and Nadine Yuvienco  
Graham Windham  
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

**The current expansion to NYC's juvenile justice sector** was made possible through a public-private partnership between the **Administration for Children's Services' Division of Youth and Family Justice team**, several key foundations including the Solon E. Summerfield Foundation and the Pinkerton Foundation, organizations currently providing MAAP and Close to Home services, and several additional organizations providing high-quality youth development, academic, workforce development, and other services. We are grateful for the contributions made by this group.

#### **Administration for Children's Services' Division of Youth and Family Justice Team**

Margaret Aminyar  
Charles Barrios  
Naomi Cavanaugh  
Stephanie Dueno  
Christina Harn

Sara Hemmeter  
Jamall Jenkins  
Johan Peguero  
Ebony Washington

**In partnership with the DYFJ team, the following agencies participated in a "Listen & Learn" tour that helped inform how the model would be implemented in the juvenile justice sector.**

CASES  
The Children's Village  
Community Mediation Services (CMS)  
The Foundling  
Good Shepherd Services  
Martin De Porres Group Homes

Police Athletic League  
Rising Ground  
SCO Family of Services  
Sheltering Arms Children & Family Services  
(formerly *Episocial Social Services*)  
St. John's Residence for Boys

**The following individuals and organizations made significant contributions to the development, revision, and/or review of the Fair Futures Manual and materials for the juvenile justice expansion:**

Katie Napolitano, Liz Nellis, and Libby Nussbaum  
(*Center for Fair Futures*)  
Division of Youth & Family Justice at the Administration for  
Children's Services (see above)  
Ana Bermudez

Dawn Yuster (Advocates for Children)  
Erika Palmer (Advocates for Children)  
Lisa Bernard (Advocates for Children)  
Michael Zink (At The Table)

# **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 system-involved young people, all of whom have experienced trauma, 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.

The community that advocates for the Fair Futures model - youth in foster care - do not have access to long-term, comprehensive support and 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. We know that youth with experience in the juvenile justice system are similarly disadvantaged.

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

**System-involved 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, authentic 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:

- Build trusting relationships and a strong network of positive peer and adult supports;
- Prepare for and graduate high school;
- Explore, connect to, and persist in post-secondary settings;
- Engage in career exploration and build progressive career development experiences in line with their interests and academic/vocational plans;
- For those aging out of foster care - to access and maintain affordable housing and gain independent living skills.

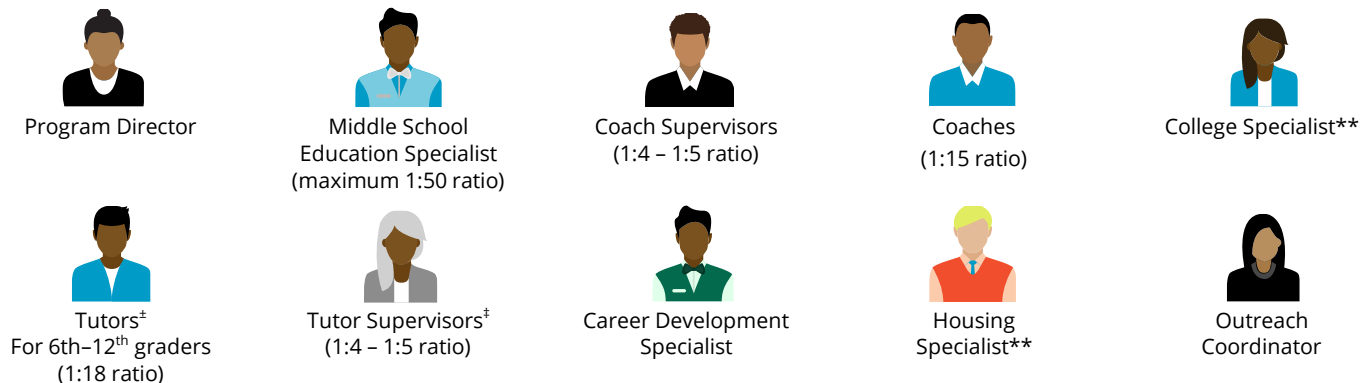


## SECTION 3. FAIR FUTURES STAFF & KEY MODEL COMPONENTS

At scale, the original Fair Futures model serves young people in foster care starting in the 6th grade and sticks young people until age 26, regardless of their permanency status.

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:



A best practice that agencies could adopt is to have an **Outreach Coordinator** who was previously system-involved 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 the **expansion to juvenile justice**, we will initially serve youth who are in **9th grade (or so) through age 21 (for MAAP) or 23 (for Close to Home)**, though we hope to secure funding so that we can extend the model to those age 26, as we have with the core foster care model. Secondly, Coaches serving youth involved in juvenile justice will have **smaller caseloads** (closer to 1:8-12).

\*\*Also, most programs serving youth with juvenile justice experience will staff an **Education & Career Specialist** (rather than College, Housing, and Career Development specialists) during the pilot phase. We will use this time to learn from the pilot and understand if/how the Key Program Staff recommendations may evolve.

<sup>‡</sup>Tutors are for students in grades 6-12. Agencies can sub-contract with a quality tutoring vendor or create their own tutoring program; see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 19](#).

<sup>‡</sup>This position is only for agencies that would like to implement a tutoring program; see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 19](#).

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Key components of the model include:

### A ROBUST MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM (FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE), WHICH PREPARES STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL \*

In middle school, Fair Futures students in foster care 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 trauma-informed, weekly, in-home tutoring by a quality tutoring provider (New York Foundling or TierNYC);
- 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 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 report academic progress, needs, and concerns to the Middle School Education Specialist and work with the Specialist to help ensure young people are connected to extracurricular activities.

To implement the tutoring component, agencies can subcontract a quality third party tutoring provider or build their own tutoring program, ideally with training and technical assistance from a quality tutoring provider.

***\*Please note that the expansion to juvenile justice will not include a full middle school model.***

*It may be the case that some MAAP Coaches work with 8th graders; in this case, they will perform the same role as a Coach but work with the student on the Middle School Goals outlined in [Section 5](#) of the [NYC Foster Care Fair Futures Program Manual](#).*

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



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

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.

**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.**

*\*Again, the expansion to the juvenile justice sector will begin by serving youth through age 21 (for MAAP) or age 23 (for Close to Home), though we hope to secure funding so that we can extend the model to those age 26 in the future. It may be the case that some MAAP Coaches work with 8th graders.*

### COACHES ARE NOT CASE PLANNERS OR CASE MANAGERS

Case Planners in foster care are required to focus on keeping the young person safe, making diligent efforts towards permanency planning, and working according to Family Court-mandated timelines. Case Managers in juvenile justice similarly attend Court and assist with the young person's case and service plan.

Coaches do not attend Court (unless the young person or Case Planner/Manager ask them to for a particular reason). 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 often with greater frequency than mandated by a Case Planner/Manager. 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 8-12 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 parents, schools, agency staff, tutors, Specialists, and other key adults in a young person's life, 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 have an APPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) can access and **maintain stable, affordable housing** and **build independent living skills**

## **TUTORS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NEED**



At scale, 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 subcontract a quality third party tutoring provider or build their own tutoring program, ideally with training and technical assistance from a quality tutoring provider. Quality providers recommended by the Center include The New York Foundling's Road to Success Program and TierNYC.

## **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 other staff) 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, Tutors, and other staff, as needed, to provide young people with robust social/emotional, academic, career development, and housing/independent living supports.

### **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COACHING**

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

To build a strong relationship, the model emphasizes consistency, constancy, and creativity. Be consistent in reaching out and when one approach does not work, try another! And when you do connect, remember to be your authentic self. Suggest fun activities in line with their interests to get to know them better.



Coaches should be in touch with young people regularly (minimum once/week) and meet in-person, whenever possible. However, there may be times where a Coach needs to reach out/visit a young person more frequently (even daily) during challenging times and critical transitions. This includes during the transition out of CTH and back into the community, when young people may be experiencing a range of emotions, learn of losses since their time away, and be drawn back into activities and peer circles that led them to CTH in the first place. During this critical transition, Coaches should be in touch daily.

Coaches should remember to never make the interactions feel transactional! They should not always talk/ask about the young person's academic or career development progress. They should also 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.

### **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 (ideally) enter and persist in a post-secondary setting.



While the Coach is the young person's partner on their educational journey and the primary source of persistence support, the Coach should closely collaborate with any Education Specialist (if the program has one). Education Specialists can help the Coach navigate any complex educational advocacy issues, prepare for (or follow up from) school visits and IEP meetings, provide assistance around school transfers or identifying best-fit schools, etc.

Specialists also play a critical role in helping any student interested in college, including exploring colleges, applying for colleges, submitting all financial aid applications, and ensuring they are enrolled in the proper classes. While the Coach will provide ongoing persistence support, Specialists assist with the critical technical aspects! See specific examples below of the role of a Coach vs. a Specialist when it comes to academic support and how they can collaborate.

## **ROLE OF A COACH AS IT RELATES TO ACADEMIC SUPPORT:**

**For young people who are disconnected and without a high school degree/GED,** Coaches help them re-engage and reconnect them to a best-fit academic setting. However, they do not simply tell the young person why they should go back to high school - the young person knows this, and has likely heard it from many other adults in their lives. Coaches try to understand the drivers as to *why* that young person may have disconnected, and perhaps first help that young person connect to experiences in line with their interests. This could include any type of extracurricular activity, job, or other type of career development experience where they can build their self-esteem, sense of self, and start to envision success.

If a young person is not interested in a career development experience because of any number of factors going on in their lives, Coaches could attempt other strategies, such as connecting young people to credible messengers/peer groups. Sometimes, taking the young person on a trip or exposing them to a new part of the City or new environment can help the young person expand their horizons and consider other possibilities. When nothing works, the Coach does not give up trying new approaches and continues to provide emotional support.

If and when a young person is ready, the Coach helps them explore best-fit high school settings. The Coach may engage the Education Specialist for assistance with exploring, selecting, and enrolling in best-fit schools/programs and engaging families in this process; see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20](#).

**For students in middle school, high school, or a GED program,** Coaches are a critical partner on their educational journey. Coaches obtain documents, review grades/transcripts and attendance records, visit the school with the young person at least 1x per semester (and as often as needed), and discuss graduation and post-secondary plans (and include other adults in these conversations). When needed, Coaches provide educational advocacy, connect students to quality tutoring, and assist with transferring students into a better-fit high school or GED program. If the student has an IEP or 504 Plan, Coaches should prepare for the annual meeting, coordinate with the student and parent(s) so they attend and feel informed, and ensure the student is receiving the appropriate supports/services. If needed, an Education Specialist could support the Coach with any of the above, particularly if it's a complex issue. Coaches should also coordinate with the student's Case Planner/Manager, tutor, teachers, and parents to support their academic needs and plans. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#))

**Coaches help all young people explore post-secondary opportunities,** including college and vocational pathways, starting in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, or as early as possible if the young person joins the program at an older age. Even if the young person is not interested, it is the role of the Coach to at least "plant the seed" and ensure the young person is aware of all of the opportunities available to them, so they can make an informed decision. For example, for students with foster care experience (including those in CTH Non-Secure Placement, who are considered "active in foster care") they should know that not only will they not get into debt by going to any CUNY or SUNY college (a common misperception!), but that they will EARN money by attending full-time as long as they maintain a 2.0+ GPA. In fact, students in the ACS College Choice program (which all foster care and CTH NSP youth are eligible for, as long as they enroll while "active in foster care") will make more money going to college than they would in a full-time job AND receive free housing up to \$2,500 per month. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

If the young person is not interested in college, the Coach should ensure the young person knows about all the free sector-based training programs in NYC that could lead to a credential and higher-wage career path. Some even have paid internships! ... Ultimately, the young person will make the decision - it is the Coaches job to make sure they are fully informed about their options. For young people who are interested in a post-secondary setting, Coaches will often work in conjunction with a Specialist to help young people develop plans. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#).)

**For students on a college-bound pathway,** the Coach will have exploratory conversations with the young person about their interests. They should then connect the young person to the Specialist to explore and identify best-fit colleges, complete college and financial aid applications, access any 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 emotional and academic persistence support at critical junctures before, during, and after each semester. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

**For students on a vocational or direct employment pathway,** the Coach will have coaching conversations around what these pathways look like and connect the youth to the Specialist to identify and apply to best-fit vocational/workforce programs, internships, employment, and/or apprenticeship opportunities. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#) and [Section 22](#)) Once enrolled, Coaches will provide persistence support.

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



## **ROLE OF A SPECIALIST AS IT RELATES TO ACADEMIC SUPPORT & HOW THEY CAN PARTNER WITH COACHES AND YOUNG PEOPLE:**

- ❑ If the youth is in middle or high school, assist the Coach with obtaining any educational documents, such as report cards/transcripts, IEPs, attendance records, etc., if needed.
- ❑ Partner/collaborate with Coaches to prepare for school visits and annual IEP meetings, particularly if the Coach needs support around reading the transcript or IEP, preparing questions, etc. The Specialist can attend with the Coach and young person as well.
- ❑ Support the Coach with navigating any complex educational advocacy challenges, if needed. This could be related to school discipline, obtaining needed IEP/504 Plan services, conducting an appeal of a grade/Regents exam, transferring schools, etc.
- ❑ Meet with young people interested in college to have an exploratory and informational session, after they are referred by their Coach, and discuss the college process and what a potential timeline could look like.
- ❑ Help young people apply to colleges in line with their interests, preferences, and performance, including assisting them with college essays and personal statements.
- ❑ Organize college tours for young people (Coaches can attend as well) and help them explore options.
- ❑ Work with young people and their parent(s) to apply for financial aid. For students active in CTH, help them apply to College Choice and all forms of financial aid that young people “active in foster care” (which includes CTH) are eligible for; see College Section for details.
- ❑ 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 ACS’ College Choice Program, if applicable.
- ❑ Partner with Coach and student 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 each year and properly withdraw from classes, if needed.
- ❑ Work with Coach and student to help transfer colleges, if needed.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS**

Coaches ensure **all young people engage in at least one career exploration activity each year**. 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, whenever possible. Sometimes, for a range of reasons, this is not possible. However, Coaches should be intentional about trying.

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 pathways to success and why a degree is so important.

***Both the Coach and Specialist can help young people make progress toward their career development goals!***



### **ROLE OF A COACH IN PROVIDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT EACH YEAR**

(See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#))

- ☐ Conduct career exploration activities with young people that are in line with their interests;
- ☐ Ensure the young person has working papers, if needed, and has an updated resume each year;
- ☐ Work with the young person and/or refer the young person to a Specialist to engage in a discussion around potential career development experiences that young person could have that year based on their interests, strengths, & academic plans;
- ☐ If a young person does decide to engage in a career development experience, the Coach should help them enroll (and work with the Specialist to do so) and persist in that setting. The Coach should build a relationship with the primary adult(s) if it's a program and follow up with the young person each week and help them navigate any challenges. If the young person does not succeed in that program/job, the Coach should help them reflect on the experience, celebrate any learnings or successes, and plan/prepare for their next step.

Some ways Coaches can help young people connect to career development experiences:

- 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;
- Refer young people to the Specialist to help them apply to external youth workforce programs, vocational programs, employment, etc.



### **ROLE OF A SPECIALIST:**

- ☐ Typically oversees any on-site internship or job readiness program(s) (e.g., YA WORC), including enrollment and scheduling of program cycles;
- ☐ Helps young people develop or refine their resumes and conduct career assessments (Coaches can also do this with young people; collaborate!);
- ☐ 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.

## 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.

*\*Please note that more details on housing supports for youth from juvenile justice programs are in process. As helpful, please refer to [this document](#) for housing supports available to youth in foster care.*

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

- ☐ Coaches the young person on ALL of the types of housing available to them - read the Housing Section of the manual. Reach out for technical assistance if needed! Encourage the young person to apply to all, or at least to two different kinds so that they have options - remind them that they can always turn it down;
- ☐ Helps the young person coordinate 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 19 if their goals is to age out);
- ☐ Accompanies the young person to visit supportive housing residences, and on any housing interviews (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; reaches out every day that first week to provide emotional support during this often scary transition;
- ☐ 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.



### ROLE OF 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; 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



## **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. 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