



Elements of a Comprehensive Local Youth-Serving System

Five Quality Elements guide the work of the State and Local Youth Councils, Foster Youth Transition Action Teams, ITOP Intermediaries, and other youth-service professionals and educators. These elements, components of the All Youth-One System frameworks, were developed by New Ways to Work for the California Youth Council Institute (YCi), a nationally recognized initiative designed to assist California's 50 Youth Councils in developing comprehensive youth-serving systems. The Quality Elements have been modified and updated through a series of stakeholder meetings of practitioners and policy makers to reflect the needs of all youth, including those in the foster care system and youth with disabilities. These stakeholders include foster youth and alumni, local and state department of social service representatives, special education instructors, local practitioners and providers, workforce development partners, and other professionals working in the workforce development, education, child welfare and special education systems.

Each of these Quality Elements must be in place to provide a balanced set of services and supports to youth and ensure their success as they transition to adulthood. The elements are supported through a community-wide structure that ensures the coordination of a continuum of services across programs, institutions and projects.

The Elements of a Comprehensive Youth-Serving System Framework features the image of a young person in the center of the chart to intentionally point to the importance of keeping youth at the center of the initiative. The images surrounding the young person represent the four desired outcomes for Youth in Transition.

EDUCATED and ready to learn
EXPERIENCED and ready for career
CONNECTED to adults, peers and services
CONFIDENT and ready for life

The five elements of a comprehensive local youth-serving system are:

- **Academic Excellence**
All youth are engaged in their learning in the classroom.
- **Career Preparation**
All youth are engaged in their learning in the workplace and community.
- **Youth Development and Support**
All activities and services incorporate a youth development approach.
- **Youth Leadership**
Youth are visible and active in leadership roles.
- **Comprehensive Approach**
A formal network provides the foundation for an equitable, coordinated system.

Academic Excellence

All youth are engaged in their learning in the classroom.

- **Adults promote high academic achievement**
- **Workplace experiences support academic learning**
- **Multiple educational approaches address and support individual needs**
- **Quality educational options exist for all youth**
- **All youth are educated and ready to learn**

In addition:

- Adults advocate for, expect, and support high academic achievement for all youth
- People and systems guide youth in their academic achievement
- An advocate helps keep track of each youth's educational records
- Adults ensure that youth know their educational rights
- School, teachers and systems encourage the development of high expectations commensurate with individual abilities
- Youth are supported in their transitions from one level of learning to the next
- Coordinated "cross-system" individual transition plans drive instruction and academic support
- Coordinated support options exist to achieve a high school diploma, equivalency certificates, and/or General Educational Diploma (GED)
- Support exists to succeed in a range of post-secondary options
- Early and ongoing career exposure, awareness, and preparation activities are provided
- Sequenced work-based learning is linked to academic learning
- Work readiness skills are assessed, evaluated, and documented
- Learning experiences are relevant and contextual
- All educational experiences address multiple learning styles
- Post-secondary educational opportunities are accessible, including advanced certificates, credentials, and degrees
- Young people are exposed to interdisciplinary concepts and a variety of perspectives
- Quality alternative education options exist, especially for older and out-of-school youth
- Academic programs are aligned to state and federal standards
- Equal opportunities exist for participation in extracurricular and enrichment activities, such as the arts, band, sports, and clubs
- Support exists to attend the same school(s) consistently
- Early and ongoing academic support and tutoring are available throughout young people's lives - Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary
- Courses and opportunities that support post-secondary educational and career options are available
- All youth have access to their complete academic record

Career Preparation

All youth are engaged in their learning in the workplace and community.

- **Adults facilitate access to workplace opportunities**
- **Classroom learning supports career preparation**
- **Quality Work-Based Learning opportunities are in place**
- **Early employment exposure and experiences are provided**
- **All youth are employed and ready for a career**

In addition:

- People and systems provide support and access to workplace experiences
- Early and ongoing career exposure, awareness, and preparation activities are provided
- Adults ensure that youth know their rights and are aware of legal issues pertaining to employment
- Businesses and community organizations are engaged as partners
- Stable contact mechanisms are available via address, email, P.O. Box, and/or phone
- Academic coursework offers the opportunity to reflect on workplace experiences
- A sequence of activities prepare youth for successful employment and includes an awareness of workplace culture and employer expectations
- Learning experiences are relevant and contextual
- Work readiness skills are assessed, evaluated, and documented
- Career preparation is tied to economic development and industry-recognized, portable skills certifications
- Quality work-based learning opportunities exist and are supported
- Sequenced work-based learning is linked to academic learning
- Entrepreneurship exposure and opportunities are available
- Work experiences are tailored to meet individual needs
- Early employment exposure, experiences, and support are available
- A full spectrum of workplace experiences and work-based learning is provided

Youth Development and Support

All activities and services incorporate a youth development approach.

- **A broad range of services address individual needs**
- **Activities are asset focused and foster personal identity**
- **All youth have strong and enduring adult and peer connections**
- **All youth have safe and stable living arrangements**
- **All youth are connected to adults, peers and services**

In addition:

- A community network of services and opportunities address individual needs
- Ongoing information and support is provided throughout a youths transition
- All activities are intentionally connected and supported
- Decisions about support are based on developmental abilities
- Peer-to-peer strategies are used in the provision of all services
- A full range of social services and support is available including:
 - Physical, mental, and behavioral health services with preparation and support to use them effectively

- Child care that is accessible
- Counseling to address substance abuse and violence
- Transportation that is accessible
- Life skills training and support is available, including:
 - Financial literacy, money management, and savings and asset development
 - Consumer skills training
 - Goal setting
 - Responsible parenting
 - Communication, conflict resolution, and anger management
 - Supporting healthy and stable relationships
 - Appropriate appearance and behavior
 - Coping skills that enhance resiliency
- All activities foster a sense of personal identity and community responsibility
- Youth-friendly, culturally competent environments exist to support youth engagement
- Personal development supports are in place and promote:
 - A healthy sense of cultural and personal identity
 - The development of interpersonal and social skills
 - Opportunities to learn from mistakes
 - Normal, progressive, age-appropriate experiences
- Each youth has a close, positive, and lasting life-long relationship with at least one adult
- Other supportive relationships and community connections are in place
- Permanence and stability in schools, housing, and adult and peer relationships exist
- Youth are supported in their building and understanding of healthy, stable relationships
- Youth are provided opportunities to understand and develop cultural sensitivity through cross-cultural experiences
- Systems and strategies are in place to engage and support families.
- Affordable and safe housing is available
- Youth live in stable living environments

Youth Leadership

Youth are visible and active in leadership roles.

- **Youth are actively engaged in planning for adulthood**
- **Youth voice actively drives policy and decision making**
- **Youth are encouraged and supported in leadership roles**
- **Youth leadership opportunities are leveraged and connected**
- **All youth are confident and ready for life**

In addition:

- Youth actively participate in the development of their transition plans
- Youth are supported in setting goals and identifying resources that support them
- Youth participate in decisions about their lives, education, work, and families
- Youth are informed about their personal rights, including supportive services and resources
- Youth actively participate in shaping the system

- Youth are engaged as leaders on local, state, and national public policy and decision-making bodies
- Perspectives and experiences from youth guide decisions about their lives
- All youth have access to a continuum of opportunities and guidance to develop decision-making skills
- Youth are engaged as decision makers with adults
- All youth have access to older youth of similar backgrounds as mentors
- All youth have opportunities to take risks
- Youth have opportunities to participate in service and civic engagement activities
- Youth are involved in a full range of decision-making bodies
- Youth have leadership roles at a variety levels and institutions within their communities
- Youth have opportunities and support to network with peers

Comprehensive Approach

A formal network provides the foundation for an equitable, coordinated system.

- **Engaged community leadership supports collaboration**
- **An operational infrastructure is in place**
- **A quality system is responsive to emerging needs**
- **All components of the system are connected**
- **Adequate resources are available and leveraged**
- **The community publicly supports a focus on youth**

In addition:

- Community leadership is engaged and supports collaboration
- All partners have clear roles and responsibilities
- All youth receive a “Guaranteed Preparation Package” or portfolio of important documents, including:
 - High school diploma and transcript
 - Social security card
 - Birth certificate
 - Health and medical information
 - Proof of Citizenship and/or Immigration Papers
 - State-issued driver’s license or identification card
 - Work-related records
 - Work-Readiness Certificate
 - Documents that certify eligibility for services
- The system is focused on quality and is responsive to emerging needs
- Funding is leveraged and flexible to address a variety of issues
- Institutions and organizations are equipped to support needs as they arise
- Quality professional development opportunities support systems change
- Youth are supported by a single, multi-agency, individualized development plan
- Comprehensive, flexible, and integrated case planning is available to all youth
- Common, streamlined processes and procedures lead to access of services
- Resources are identified to support collaboration
- Blended, braided, and stacked resources address needs