

ROAD MAP to REFORM

Developing a Trauma-Sensitive Mental
Wellness Approach to Supporting
Youth and Families in Foster Care



PRESENTED BY
YOUTH FOSTERING CHANGE
a program of JUVENILE LAW CENTER

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Juvenile
Law Center

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AUTHORED BY
CATHY MOFFA, MSS, MLSP &
MARCIA HOPKINS, MSW

& OUR YOUTH ADVOCATES
AMBER, MALIK, DUANE,
BRIT, STEVEN, DEZZY, LEXI,
DAISHA, JOHNNY & MARK

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Juvenile Law Center advocates for rights, dignity, equity and opportunity for youth in the foster care and justice systems. Founded in 1975, Juvenile Law Center is the first nonprofit, public interest law firm for children in the country. We fight for youth through litigation, appellate advocacy and submission of amicus (friend-of-the-court) briefs, policy reform, public education, training, consulting, and strategic communications. Widely published and internationally recognized as leaders in the field, Juvenile Law Center has substantially shaped the development of law and policy on behalf of youth. We strive to ensure that laws, policies, and practices affecting youth advance racial and economic equity and are rooted in research, consistent with children's unique developmental characteristics, and reflective of international human rights values. For more information about Juvenile Law Center's work, visit www.jlc.org. © 2020 All rights reserved. Part or all of this publication may be reproduced if credited to Juvenile Law Center. This publication may also be downloaded at www.jlc.org.

A YOUTH-DRIVEN ROAD MAP

Achieving Individualized Supports for Youth in the Child Welfare System

The Purpose of this Tool and How it Should be Used

This road map is a strengths-based approach to problem-solving that is led by youth in their own cases. It is meant to serve as an unbiased review of needs and resources between the youth and their case worker. The main purpose of the road map tool is to provide youth with the space to lead the discussion on the mental health resources they may need, particularly to talk more about alternatives to therapy. Although we know therapy can be supportive to some youth, we do not think that mental health support is a one-size fits all model. The road map can assist youth and their case worker in exploring what types of resources would best fit the individualized needs of the youth. This tool should not be used for any mental health or medical diagnoses; case workers should refer to medical professionals for those purposes. Housing recommendations for youth should not come from this document. Information documented in the road map cannot be negatively used against a young person's case. This document cannot negatively impact the way in which case workers or attorneys represent their client.



DIRECTIONS



FOR EVERYONE

Fill out the road map with your own personal experiences. Identify when resources could have been given to better support you and your mental wellbeing in that time of your life and now. Think of the supports as “off ramps” to a highway where you could have gotten the support you needed. Be specific about these supports and who would provide them. This activity serves two purposes 1. To have the young people in care be in the driver’s seat and pick their support and safety net and 2. To provide a cathartic or therapeutic experience for a young person who may think all of the bad things that happened to them is their fault - it is not.



FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Think about major events in your life specifically around your experience in care: right before you entered care, when you had to leave your home and in various placements. Write down the events in order on the road. Only write down what you are comfortable sharing! Your experience is your own and you do not need to share the details! Once you complete the road, think about all the times that better support could have helped you transition through these major events or even prevented some bad things from happening. On the off-ramps, write down what resources you could have been given to better support your journey in care AND who should be providing the support (case worker, foster parent, family member, other supportive adult, counselor). Think of these supports as helping your mental, physical, and social wellbeing. Remember to be specific about your needs!

DIRECTIONS



TIPS FOR FILLING OUT YOUR ROAD MAP

- » List all your experience first before putting them on the roadmap to organize your thoughts.
- » Find a place (a safe haven) you feel most comfortable filling out the form. It is okay if you do not feel comfortable filling it out in front of your case worker in their office: at home, at school, at a park, or at a friend's house.
- » Find someone you feel most comfortable with to fill out the form: a friend, a trusted adult, a therapist, or by yourself.
- » Don't feel rushed to fill out the roadmap!
- » Think outside the box for resources (therapy is awesome, but so is mural painting, peer mentorship, internships, and pick-up basketball.)
- » Take a photo of your roadmap on your phone when you are finished in case you lose it!



PLEASE NOTE

Case workers are mandated reporters! To ensure your safety, if they hear about the possibility of abuse or neglect to a minor, they have an obligation to report it. If you have questions about how the information you are sharing will be used, you can stop and talk to your attorney.

DIRECTIONS



FOR SYSTEM PROFESSIONALS

Before having your client fill out this road map, please be sure to inform them about safe ways to discuss concerns when describing personal experiences and support they need. Be transparent about your role as a mandated reporter and offer ways for your client to talk about the needs they have without worrying that they or someone they love will be reported. This tool should be used when a young person enters into care or any changes happen in their life like a placement change, being assigned to a new agency or service provider, or when they go through a challenging situation. This tool can help establish a trusting relationship with your client if used correctly. It can also provide a clear description of what your client knows they need to feel safe and supported. When you have decided to share the roadmap tool with your client, offer them the example, show the accompanying videos, and fully explain the 'General Directions' and 'Directions for Young People' to fill out the form. Allow your client to take their time filling out the document. You can offer to have them fill it out on-the-spot with your support or you can offer that they fill it out in a location that feels most comfortable to them (alone or with a trusted friend or adult). Be sure that each support has someone accountable for administering that support (yourself, the foster parent, a family member, the attorney, a school support, a counselor, etc.)



DIRECTIONS

TIPS FOR COMPLETING THIS DOCUMENT

- » Do not use this tool during the first interaction you have with your client.
- » Explain to your client what this tool is and how it will be used.
- » Prepare them for when they will be expected to fill out this tool.
- » Continue to remind your client that they do NOT need to share experiences they are not willing or ready to talk about.

Provide an alternative way to complete the document if your client is uneasy about writing down their experiences.

- » Example: "Write down your experiences for only you to see and just share your suggested prevention supports to me."

Listen to your client! Hear what they know they need.

- » If your client is struggling to identify the types of support they need, offer options and examples that are diverse and inclusive.

Think outside the box for resources (therapy is awesome, but so is mural painting, peer mentorship, internships, and pick-up basketball.)

- » Save a digital copy of the roadmap or the part of the roadmap your client wants to share in case it gets lost.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This tool should empower your client and encourage a trusting, open relationship between you and them. It should NOT be used as a way to punish your client if they fill it out in a way that you disagree with or if they struggle to fill it out at all. Make sure your client knows that you will not be sharing their roadmap with others.

