

Supporting Healthy Sexual Development of Foster Youth

Book of Proceedings

February 5, 2015 - Oakland, California USA



Good policies, thoughtful practices and healthy care environments:

What do I want to share, explore, question and think about with you to support healthy sexual development among young people in foster care?

Table of Contents

Thank You	4
Foster Youth and Dating Older People	6
Offering Non-Pathologizing Support for Youth Who Have Experienced Sexual Trauma	7
Self-Esteem	10
How to Talk to Youth About Sexual Experiences and Being Safe?	12
Single Parenting and Dating	14
Sex, Dating and Masturbation in Group Homes	15
Consent	20
How to Have Conversations with Adults Who Have Religious / Cultural Beliefs that Get in the Way of Supporting the SOGIE [Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression] Development of Youth	23
Breaking Cycles	26
Legal Protections and Advocacy for Parenting Foster Youth	27
What Does My Judge Need to Know?	30
Gender, Gender Expression and Gender Identity	32
Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and Foster Care	35
Is Sharing Really Caring - Or When Is It Too Much?	37
Virginity and Abstinence	38
Supportive Responses to Sexual Curiosity	39
How to Establish Boundaries when Educating Youth about Sex?	41
Religion and Sexuality	43
Love After Heartache, Grief and Trauma	44
Technology and Sexual Health Education	46
Social Media and the Sexual Revolution - and How It Influences Our Youth	47
How to Recognize Signs of Abuse in a Relationship and Say No	49
How to Work with Children Who Have Been Molested / Sexually Abused	50
Sexual Assault and Coping	52
Exploring Sexuality and Identity	53

How to Improve Licensing Standards to Support Healthy Sexual Development of Foster Youth?	55
I'm a Teen Mother in Foster Care ... Is There Hope for Me?	56
Gender Roles and Values - and Boundaries and Respect - In Relationships	57
Healthy Relationships	58
Fatherhood and Supporting Young Fathers in Foster Care	60
Discrimination Against LGBTQ Youth In Foster Homes and Group Homes	63
Who Owns Information about a Foster Youth's Sexuality?	64
Queer Youth in Foster Care Deserve...	66
Foster Youth, Physical Activity and How to "Be" in Your Body	67
Support for Pregnant and Parenting Foster Youth	68
Post-Conference Reflections	69
Closing Circle Comments and Reflections	70
About Open Space Technology	76
Participants	78



Photos: Lisa Heft

Thank You



EDMUND G. BROWN, JR.
Governor

DIANA S. DOOLEY
Secretary, California Health and
Human Services Agency
Cochair, California Child Welfare Council

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL



TANI G. CANTIL-SAKAUYE
Chief Justice of California and
Chair of the Judicial Council

VANCE RAYE
Administrative Presiding Justice
Cochair, California Child Welfare Council

Dear Colleagues,

March 16, 2015

Thank you for your hard work and rich discussions at the February 5, 2015 Supporting Healthy Development of Foster Youth Gathering where you explored the strengths and needs of children and youth in the child welfare system for healthy sexual development and support in wellness from their earliest years onward. You also identified actions, policies and practices needed to support children and young adults' sexual safety and wellbeing. We know you will enjoy reading your Book of Proceedings and recalling the ideas, challenges, best practices and opportunities you shared during your day together.

There are several ways you can use the information in this Book, which can be a living resource document for you as well as a review of our Gathering, for example:

- Read it to review the discussions and remember the thoughts and ideas that occurred to you - to reflect, to think of an action, to recall some learning that you can apply to your work.
- Copy it to give to your supervisors or funders to show them one of the deliverables you developed as a result of attending this conference.
- Continue discussion on a topic you see listed in this Book - you will see the participants who were interested in this topic and can reconvene them in-person or via telephone conference or email to continue an important discussion.
- Contact the participants of a particular discussion you were not part of - to offer them some answers, resources or thoughtful questions you feel may help them in their further exploration of that topic.
- Assemble an advisory group some months from now based on a topic you see here.
- Excerpt non-attributed (zero names) quotes from this document to illustrate issues and opportunities for some future grant you may write or for a report to your agency.
- Share the list of topics you see in the Table of Contents with funders and peer organizations - to highlight what are the emergent issues in your field.
- Share some thoughts from this Book with your organization to start a conversation about programs or services you wish to enhance, expand or adjust.

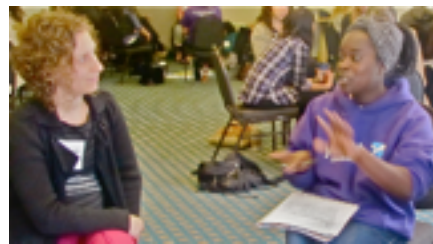
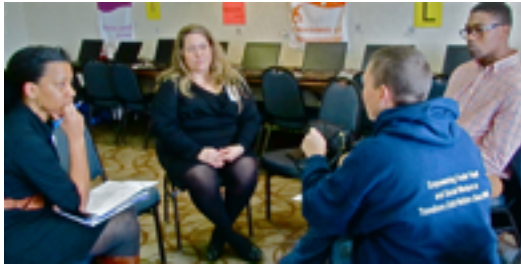
We know you will find it has many other uses, as well. The host for this event, the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee of the California Child Welfare Council, will be using the Book as the foundation of advisory recommendations to be presented to the Council for consideration and approval at its June 3, 2015 meeting. On behalf of the Committee, we wish you great success and productivity in your continued advocacy for foster youth.

Sincerely,

GORDON JACKSON, Co-Chair
Child Development and Successful
Youth Transitions Committee

ROCHELLE TROCHTENBERG, Co-Chair
Child Development and Successful
Youth Transitions Committee

1600 Ninth Street, Suite 460 • Sacramento, California 95814 • Phone: 916-653-2902 • email: cwcouncil@chhs.ca.gov



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Foster Youth and Dating Older People

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Brianna Robertson

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: John Casey

Los otros participantes

Other members: Shane Wallin, Glenn Schnell, Megan Huerta, Robin Smith, Julio Montes, Nef Franks, Geri Shing

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

How can we support foster youth around their dating and relationship choices when by law we may be required to mandate (report) or if there might be some legal ramifications behind their actions - such as a 16-year-old female dating a 20-year-old male? We discussed mandated reporter responsibilities around what can be kept confidential when dealing with this topic (when you have to report a situation).

We talked about maturity levels and picking a boyfriend / girlfriend who feels right to the individual.

What as a foster youth dating older people would you have like people to ask you - instead of judging the situation? Why? (Please don't hop immediately just to your concerns about sex.)

Why are you dating? What does it mean to you? What are the commonalities of the relationship?

Although sex plays a part in relationships, that doesn't mean that the act is always going on or is the first thing on a youth's mind.

Healthy versus unhealthy relationships - who teaches you this? Birth control, contraception, safe sex?

How can positive relationships be taught and / or demonstrated?

Trust. "Trust is developed by showing up."
If I reveal certain things about my sex life, then I am in trouble.
How is trust affected when a report is made?

Structure of group homes, supervision concerns, rapport with staff.

Attraction to "gangsters" - They have all you need: money, clothes, cars, food.

Rules and regulations of a social worker: One former foster youth in our group could not see herself being a social worker because she sees herself more as an advocate and mentor.

"Catch-all" aspect of the law: The law cannot look at each individual case separately.



“Talk That Talk” training (Youth Training Project)

Being okay with the gray areas.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Offering Non-Pathologizing Support for Youth Who Have Experienced Sexual Trauma

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Briana McGeough

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Haydée Cuza

Los otros participantes

Other members: Various folks

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Layers of a youth's experience - foster care, teenager, sexual trauma - how do we address the whole person? How do we establish a sense of self-worth for an individual? A way to find balance.

There are automatic assumptions of behavior based on trauma - an immediate diagnosis that could be incorrect or stigmatizing for the rest of the person's experience in foster care. And assumptions and preconceived notions are made about youth before even meeting them, because of reading their file.

When something is written in someone's file there are assumptions that are made. When my probation officer would meet me, they would automatically assume I was a troublemaker, a runaway. They didn't realize that I was surviving and trying to find safety.

There should be a system where the first time a worker meets a youth, they are not allowed to read the file before the initial first meeting, and are only allowed to ask them about themselves.

Ask a youth to tell the social worker about him / herself before reading the chart. Get to know the youth FIRST! Interaction is affected after a person reads the file.

Stay curious when interacting with young people. The key is to keep in mind other aspects of a person's personality - their likes and dislikes in general. Even something as simple as their taste in music. Example: “What kind of music do you like? What are your interests?”

There needs to be space for something organic to grow.

Admitting when you are not sure how to approach a young person: “I’m trying to figure out how to be supportive to you. What do you need?” “What do you need from me?”

It is unfair that the youth know nothing about the workers and are forced to re-live their trauma experience over and over again, and the worker knows nothing really about them. And it affects the overall relationship and interaction between the youth and the worker.

After reading the chart, yes, the worker should take certain things into consideration - such as a young person's specific needs. But they should not base most of their opinion of the young person off of the chart.

Maybe I am treated as a runaway - but why do I run? What leads to a behavior, from the youth's perspective?

It is easy to lose the strength-based side of things, such as coping skills and developing ways to survive. The problem is that people see the individual as a victim instead of as someone stronger who is working through it and developing coping skills. "I am not a victim, I am a survivor!" said one of our group members.

Being in meetings with providers - sometimes the sexual trauma as with sexual exploitation becomes the youth's identity. The worker's reaction makes it worse - they are viewing me as a victim. Sexual assault becomes the main focus of identity. There are more complex aspects of their identity. So how do we shift the conversation in those meetings with officials, to bring in the whole person? How to re-direct the conversation?

It just feels icky when we box youth in.

Re-living the experience every time someone looks at a file: They are not just a victim - there are other aspects of identity and experiences.

Getting treated differently after a traumatic experience can have a negative impact. The therapist was nice, but it was like she pitied me - it didn't feel good.

Looking at the role of a caregiver - if their own experience does not include how to talk about sexual development, how do they have the discussion with young person? What happens when sexuality is not discussed?

Stigma around adolescent sexual development - how do we move past that? There is stigma that impacts how youth feel about themselves and how people feel about them. Openness, being sex-positive - approaching the work from a sex-positive approach - can we teach this?



A tool I use is matching the energy of the person having the experience - trying to balance my approach. Ask how they are - establish where they are. Not having pity, and asking open-ended questions. Asking questions without imposing one's own ignorance onto the young person.

Each individual may have a different reaction time to trauma - do not create an environment that creates expectations for how someone should respond to trauma.

Provide peer support for young people - connect them with someone who has had a similar experience so they know they are not alone.

Trainings around youth who have been sexually assaulted - looking at the curriculum. Is it multi-dimensional? Is it looking at a person as a victim? Or as someone with strengths, accomplishments, and potential? It is useful to have future thinking and goal-setting.

Juvenile justice is all about how data is gathered about youth who have been sexually exploited. How do we create a different lens?

Conversations are hard and when are the right times to have them? Need trainings that are more than an overview of sexual trauma or behaviors versus experience.

There is training about matching one's behavior to trauma, but what about the person? How do you treat the person as a person?

Provide attention to the person - to the complex parts that need attention.
Use people-first language. Don't reduce people to acronyms - speak of the person and identify the experience - not the person as the experience.
Use non-generalizing language.

The labels of being a perpetrator / sexual assaulter can live with a young person for the rest of their lives. Even after rehabilitation, they are still stuck with the label. Example: A boy committed a sex crime. Years later he is still messing up - however he is messing up in unrelated areas. However people are still connecting it to sex crimes. Any sexual activity is seen as a crime. Not sensitive about what a person has gone through. And yet rehabilitation is possible, healing trauma after perpetration is possible. And yet even after years of good behavior, the label stays.

How can we change the way we look at the charts of young people in foster care? On probation?

What about resources for advocating for youth who have experienced sexual trauma? How do I get involved in a group or space that is talking about this topic?

Social workers, counselors, probation officers all need training.
Social work training academy - YOUTH Training Project
Bringing the youth voice to developing curriculum for foster parents and social workers.

There may be trainings about how to recognize and identify trauma, however they don't usually go beyond that. We need to fix that, and create more trainings about after care.
What about healing the wounds that linger? Honoring the healing process?

One woman found it helpful at a foster home to have an experience of having a healthy, non-sexual relationship with a man.

San Mateo has a foster youth advisory board that is a place where youth are developing their voice.

How do we build skills around these topics - the nurturing of the development of a youth?
It's not a script - it's an emotion. What can be taught?

Trainings can be about interaction - not minimizing a person's experience but still offering support.

How do we select foster parents?

Ideally for open energy - for keeping someone safe.



Creating a space that allows for organic conversations.

There are a significant amount of resources but there need to be ways to connect.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Self-Esteem

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Teffani Taylor

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Teffani Taylor and Sophia Herman

Los otros participantes

Other members: Lori Starnes, Amanda Sommers

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Self esteem triggers decision making choices.

If a person has low self esteem they are more likely to make a less wise choice about the way they handle their body.

Feeling lonely or isolated causes self esteem to drop. Temporary highs like prostitution and exploited sex are the cause for making choices that negatively impact a youth's whole life.

Love keeps a connection and builds self esteem. Family-oriented love keeps the youth encouraged and empowered. Organic, trusting relationships help a youth feel more complete.

As of now, group homes are not a happy place for youth to build self esteem. They are places for boarders, and they don't aid in building relationships. And group homes cause a resident to withhold information and be more self-conscious in a negative way.

Show what healthy relationships look like.

Options for ways to cope with emotions - whether positive or negative emotions - can really help. Touch (appropriate touch) helps build a youth - like a hug from the right person can comfort another person.



What are ways self-esteem plays out in personal relationships?

Lonely and isolated plays a major role in self-esteem and decision work. Family finding / permanency - people who are more isolated often throw away progress, due to no connections. People sometimes compromise their goals due to their personal need for attachments being more immediate to them than their long term goals.

Basic needs may be met (for example, in a group home), but overall youth happiness is not achieved - which does not allow youth to prepare for tomorrow but instead to always live in survival mode. Self preservation helps a person feel better about themselves - but you can only self-preserve when you are not in danger - not in a survival mode like when you are in a group home.

Genuine love and respect amongst family can lead to building relationship between a foster youth and their hosting family. Family is inclusive - it is not just family but it is also community. It's not about just housing the kid, but is his family and community. Standards of raising family and people in the world. When you have a family or a stable home you can have and understand delayed gratification versus just going out.

It is helpful to youth to have families that include parts of their community who collaborate instead of working apart from each other, or expecting young people to choose between a foster family and their biological family.

Parts of inspiration can inspire youth.

How can youth build self-esteem when they have limited access to the outside world?

The group home can partner with agencies to help build self-esteem and to know how to do this. Youth can learn from other people just as much as we can learn from them.



Create opportunities for youth to make healthy and organized relationships.

The sensation of touch is absent from placements and youth in care - there is a need for experiencing a sense of healthy touch.

Placements that don't show love often cause a youth to feel more isolated and often put them more at risk of low self-esteem.

When you're going through life through a survival mode it's like running through a series of brick walls.

- Foster parent license languaging should be youth friendly.
- Have conversations with youth that make them feel comfortable.

What experiences contributed to you being a young adult full of self-esteem?

- Debutante class
- The opportunity to choose the classes I wanted to attend
- The opportunity to learn about myself and manage myself
- Youth who don't feel they have anything to lose often act out more than other youth

Teaching and modeling positive behavior. Teach by analyzing youth behavior and helping them use self-analysis to see and understand where they can be.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

How to Talk to Youth About Sexual Experiences and Being Safe?

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Conveners: Jynnahlove Abshire and Meredith Ku

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Meredith Ku and Vaishali Singh-Sood

Los otros participantes

Other members: Monica Pavia, Jeanie Yoon, Chelsea Stoner, Gordon Jackson, Megan McQuaid, Daileane Connors

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Every youth is different and must be approached differently about the topic of sexual health and practices.

Everyone must contribute in the responsibility of keeping youth sexually safe.

When groups can't be open with youth, the youth are sent away to someone else who says they can still not help the youth.

Sexual health is somewhat of a taboo topic and isn't openly talked about or discussed.
What is driving the negative connotations around the discussion of sex being discussed?
Are social workers able to talk about this topic? If so, what can you say and what can you not say?
Some social workers may be scared to talk. They may not be sure what they can and cannot talk about.

What is considered a violation and what is not?
What can we talk about without stepping over any legal boundaries?
We need to scour the law.

There is a training provided through Y.T.P. (YOUTH Training Project), that provides a training on this topic called "Talk the Talk".

There are many different personal values for you that can affect your discussion of this topic.
We must distinguish between what is actually law and what is just fear when it comes to communicating with the youth about this topic. Everyone must understand how to be a helpful party with the use of consistent information and not through personal values.

You should also be aware of where you are getting information and how reliable it is.

Instincts can help you gauge a child's comfort with the subject. Though there is a liability about having conversations about sex with a minor.

Some social workers feel it is important not to get personal with youth.

Some people may give out condoms or travel with a young person to Planned Parenthood.
They really only offer safety, such as birth control.

How to tread when talking about sometimes awkward issues?

“Are you having sex?” “Are you being safe?”

In a group home, people can get into trouble for masturbating.

Foster youth look for love in the wrong ways. Chasing love in all of the wrong places. And sometimes they have children to fill in the need to be needed.

Make sex safe, not a burden. the more you ostracize the problem, the more dangerous it becomes. Make it a safe and okay topic, and in doing so we then spread the good habits and good knowledge. Give them safe information, rather than letting them find out things via the internet. Social media creates some serious boundaries with communication, binding and hindering certain topics. And pornography causes poor gender roles. Instead, guide people by relating to their personal experience. How else will they learn?

Many other adults need to be communicated to, including doctors and therapists. Look at the whole system of providers. Remove the stigma - the bad impression about foster youth. Being a foster young person is not a bad thing. And ensure that all youth know.

Each county has its own rules and regulations about certain things. That is cool - but we should regulate our systems. Ideas include having a high school representative for foster youth, like the liaison role in some colleges. Specifically trained and appointed personnel. And peer mentoring, peer health educators. Get the contact information for the group homes and / or the foster parents and offer to send them messages about services to give directly to the young people, rather than exposing that young person by giving them information in the school environment.

We should also spotlight the good things that counties are doing - Napa and SC counties have some great youth-run resources.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Single Parenting and Dating

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Conveners: Tammy Rivera and Nighat Iqbal

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Megan Huerta and Nighat Iqbal

Los otros participantes

Other members: Heriberto Angel Arrendondo, Grace Lee, Robin Smith

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

How to single parent and take care of your child and date, when you don't want to have your child see you with different boyfriends or girlfriends?

Mom needs to develop her own skills - for example go to school or work - but child care becomes a barrier to those skills and goals.

Foster homes and the system need to support parenting fathers and mothers.
More value needs to be put into parenting.

What is a foster parent's role in supporting a youth parent?
Whose role is it to talk about overall sexual health, safe relationships, and safe sex? Foster parents think it is a social worker role, and social workers think it is the foster parent role.

Support needs to be offered to young parents.
The system needs to focus on training foster parents on how to help teens and support them if they are young parents.
Parenting is very stressful, so youth need mentors.

Parenting needs to be taught to foster parents and foster youth.

Young teens who are already parents and then become parents again - how does your system deal with that?

Creating independent living programs for foster youth: Foster youth should be given incentives (such as cash, clothes and diapers) for attending ILP (Independent Living Program) courses.



There is a youth center called "Voices" in Napa county.
There is not a lot of support for young parents in rural counties. For example, high schools send pregnant teens to separate schools - as if the pregnant teen is contagious. Youth should be allowed to stay on campus and parent their child in a familiar school community.

It would be great if the foster parent could bond with the teen mom's child. Though we need help in this area, as some teens are afraid of their foster parent bonding with their babies. We should build

more awareness in the foster parent's training about bonding because for example the teen mom's child could go to the foster parent and not his own mom.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Sex, Dating and Masturbation in Group Homes

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Rochelle Trochtenberg

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Rochelle Trochtenberg, Jodean Greene, Nef Franks and Vaishali Singh-Sood

Los otros participantes

Other members: Elizabeth Davis, Daniel Oquendo, Miracle Fauli-Garibay, Kayla Corder, Keith Dunley, Angela Carmack, Patterson Emesibe, Sophia Herman

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

The discussion began with questions about why this topic was of interest and what the problems are. Most youth in group homes do not have access to age-appropriate sexual exploration, and in fact, when youth are in foster care, normal sexual development is often discouraged through policies and practices. Youth who engage in consensual sex, dating, or masturbation are often met with very punitive responses from caregivers, social workers, administrators, and other adults involved. Natural sexual development is often seen through a lens of viewing these behaviors as problematic and are punished or strictly prohibited from sexual exploration, resulting in myriad problems that manifest in poor-self esteem, increased risk of sexual exploitation, increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, higher teen pregnancy rates, and engaging in risky sexual encounters.

Youth in group homes are often policed more aggressively when it comes to age-appropriate sexual exploration. When a youth wants to date a person they are often prohibited due to rules of no physical contact with others or not having court approval for the youth to visit their significant other. Prudent parent standards are rarely considered in congregate care environments, and there is stigmatization of youth who have experienced sexual abuse. Youth who want to date are often forced to run away / go a.w.o.l. (absent without leave) to have normal age-appropriate interaction with a significant other - and this leads to more intensive labeling, restrictions, or higher levels of care and in some cases referrals to juvenile justice.

As a foster youth in a group home you don't get opportunities to have dates or to engage in intimate relationships with a significant other. The prohibition on dating actually has negative effects on foster youth, especially when they are forced to go underground - to hide - any relationships. This means that there are many missed opportunities to ensure that youth have a chance to safely talk about what is going on in their relationship, learning about healthy and non-healthy interactions in intimate relationships, safe sex practices, and how to communicate their needs to a significant other. Instead, the current practice keeps youth in the dark with long-term negative consequences.

When youth engage in age-appropriate masturbation they are also often labeled as sexually deviant or given other punitive labels. There was discussion about masturbation across the life span, including young pre-school age children (even young children who have NOT experienced sexual or physical

abuse) who engage in masturbation as a self-soothing mechanism. The question was then posed, what or how does molestation / sexual abuse impact the sexual behaviors of children and youth in foster care? If a youth has a history of being sexually abused, there is more pathologizing of masturbation, and adults / clinicians / social workers, etc. are much more likely to push the idea that the masturbation is connected to past abuse rather than age-appropriate exploration of sexuality and self-soothing. Someone else discussed some of the health benefits of masturbation, including how masturbation for men can help keep their prostate healthy, it is a stress reliever that increases the release of neuro-chemicals that help the body, and it can help youth become familiar with their own bodies and desires and what makes them feel good sexually.

Youth in group homes are more intensely monitored, including time in the bathroom / shower or bedroom. The intensive monitoring is much more intrusive - and that means that youth engaging in masturbation are more likely to get caught, labeled, punished, shamed, and humiliated. Several people with lived experience in care discussed how masturbation is something that will get you into trouble. If you are caught, you will lose points, get dropped a level, put on segregation, privileges are taken away, and often the behavior gets documented and then used against the youth over time. If you get caught, they document it in your case file, and then it becomes something that social workers and care providers will be talking about and doing more intensive monitoring for. The stigma follows the youth, and some care providers won't take a youth who has "sexually inappropriate" behaviors. Another youth shared that they were caught masturbating in appropriate places (such as in the shower or alone in a bedroom) - and still they got into trouble - and were referred to a program for sexual predators. Youth are most often met with punitive reactions, stigma, and total silence on positive and healthy sexual development.

When youth have to go "underground" or hide their sexual relationships this puts them in danger. Youth may engage in having sex despite rules being made, and yet there is nothing being provided to those youth to consider the risks or benefits of engaging in sex. As soon as a youth gets caught having consensual age-appropriate sex, they are often labeled, it goes in their files, and then it follows you through your entire time in foster care.

Things are worse for LGBTQ youth. They tend to be even more intensively monitored, censored, and labeled. Most group homes are same sex homes - so if you are a lesbian and you live with all girls and you confess to liking someone, or you get caught touching, kissing or hand holding, you are even more likely to be labeled a sexual predator. Or you get separated from the other girls because "they need to protect the other youth" - despite the fact that often if an LGBTQ youth comes out, they are bullied and discriminated against. Youth are reporting that they have either been kicked out or witnessed other youth being kicked out of group homes due to age-appropriate and consensual sexual behaviors.

Youth who engage in sex, dating, and masturbation get punished and penalized. This reaction only increases a sense of shame, secrecy, inadequacy, and lower-self esteem. Some caregivers may be afraid to talk about these issues - they may not be educated enough to talk about these things. When the system or caregivers operates in such a punitive environment, or aren't able or willing to talk about sex or relationships, then youth are being robbed of precious learning opportunities. Sometimes caregivers are not willing to talk about these things or create opportunities for youth to explore their sexuality due to religious or moral values, and they fail to see how this impacts the youth. Often, no one is having a conversation with youth in care about sexual health and exploration, with negative consequences for the youth.

So the question comes: What can be done about this issue? Other questions posed were how does grief and loss fit into this conversation? Another question was posed: What do we want to do to change this?

There was discussion on Community Care Licensing (CCL) standards as a big issue. Youth often are told that they can't do these things because CCL prohibits that. Then in conversation with CCL employees, it came to light that there is actually nothing explicit in CCL regulations on consensual sex, dating, or masturbation. Instead, the focus on CCL is appropriate supervision and monitoring in congregate care settings.

The question comes up: Where is the balance of supporting the healthy sexual development of foster youth and the regulations and limitations related to being a licensed care facility?

Then we discussed how in homes for the elderly and developmentally disabled people, sexual behaviors are often perceived differently and clients are not nearly as often criminalized or penalized for similar behaviors. There are also different approaches with those populations, such as teaching those clients to go in a bathroom or into their private bedroom to masturbate.

Someone else said that the problem is that CCL gets calls mostly for sexual or physical abuse in a home, "...and they get a lot of false allegations against care providers." This point was quickly argued, saying that part of the problem is that it's too easy to dismiss youth in foster care - and often the social worker and care provider are given the benefit of the doubt and the youth's complaints are met with skepticism - which leads back to the issue of youth getting labeled.

Another person shared an example of how the group home caregiver would have a young male family member stop by the group home daily - and one of the girls got into a relationship with this young man. However, when this came to light, the foster youth was punished and kicked out of the group home - and the male family member of the caregiver was able to continue living his life with no negative repercussions.

Someone else asked: How does CCL get exposed to trauma-informed care and reflect that in policies and regulations? A CCL worker said they don't have much authority to change the regulations or practices. Instead, it was suggested that more needs to be done to teach youth their rights, and there was some challenge to that. Meaning, youth in group homes don't have free access to computers or phones to make complaints or find out more about their rights and how to have them enforced.

Prudent parent standards don't exist in group care - and while we can teach youth about making complaints to CCL, the reality is that they have very little access to really be able to do that. And just hanging the form and number on the wall is neither sufficient nor practical in group homes. We also learned that there is currently nothing that explicitly prohibits or addresses appropriate sexual health, including masturbation and dating. And despite good intentions, there are still gravely negative ramifications for foster youth across their life span, when the sexual health of foster youth goes ignored or punished.

One of the major problems is the lack of training and clarity on these issues. There is nothing to ensure that foster youth get exposed to sexual education or other healthy alternatives.

Some also pointed out that sexual health begins much earlier than adolescence and that people should start having conversations sooner, especially as children's bodies begin to change - and that we should be talking with youth about what that's like, what is happening in their bodies, how they feel about those changes, and what changes they may expect as their bodies change.

These discussions can't be expectations just placed on the social worker, as that is an ineffective approach. Throughout the conversation, much discussion took place about what can be changed at the policy level. We discussed training for foster care providers - and it was pointed out that they are often the least trained, the least educated, and most likely to be reactive to any sexual behaviors. We also thought it would be useful to have sex education in group home settings. Increasing requirements for training for foster parents was highlighted as a need as well, and it was discussed that foster parent training is so different across the state that there is little standardization on content or topics for training.

We also discussed what would it look like or what would change if CCL took this issue head-on and worked on creating regulations that allow for age-appropriate sexual development. That idea was met with some concern that it may not be possible - but a CCL person did suggest that she does have the power to include these topics (sex, dating, and masturbation) in the CCL orientations she conducts with new organizations as they get licensed.

We agreed that addressing these issues, bringing them into the light, and demystifying and discussing these topics would be hugely important. More work needs to be done to tackle these issues and come up with safe ways of helping youth explore their sexual identity without the fear of being reprimanded and punished.

Nef adds...

When youth are caught in sexual acts or relationships, they are marked as “Sexually Deviant” in the eyes of care providers and social workers. These youth are judged left to right and they are either running away, or are being moved into higher levels of care.

There is a prediction that youth who are sexually abused when young are more likely sexually inappropriate.

To the youth, sexual acts are a coping mechanism tool called “self soothing”. When youth “self soothe” they are really performing the acts they had either learned or participated in because it helps block out bad thoughts - or because the youth has internalized this act as a normal part of their life.

There needs to be a training for when and what to do about sexual development for these care providers, and also a training on how to cope and support youth that were sexually abused. There needs to be a list of services and activities for the family and for the child to do to build outlets for the youth.

But care providers are scared to educate these youth about sex, mainly because they are religious or because they don’t have proper boundaries, so that they can tolerate sex.

Care providers do not support same sex relationships unless they happen outside the house. In my own experience, they made it seem like I am influencing youth to act out, to rebel. And it hurts, because you cannot just change and like guys, after they kicked your roommate out.

There is no sense of hope for LGBT youth living in same sex homes, for they are judged, they are exploited, or are even made to look like a monster in your peer’s eyes.

There needs to be more communication in these foster and group homes, related to positive sexual development, and less communication about how wrong it is. People need to respect youths’ choices, and let them make mistakes.

Care providers need to be assessed better when attaining a license. The providers need to be mindful about who they want to house, and also there needs to be an option for care providers to either want or not want family involvement in the homes.

Youth need to speak up more about what is being done and what needs to improve when it comes to sexual development - to social workers and licensing - because they can and don’t regulate or define procedures for sexual development.

There needs to be a revision in the procedure about touching - so it allows for people to hug and embrace each other if it is consensual.



Can there ever be a care provider and / or a foster family that works on helping build the foundation missing from youth's background and character? And who can help them build towards their future, instead of helping them and then cutting them off when they turn 21?

This can lead to a youth awol-ling / running away to a place they feel accepted at, and a lot more trauma that can build in the youth. How can this help change the cycle for youth in group homes?

Can we influence youth to be okay with their sexuality even when their families are not?

Foster youth who grow up in the system without fully understanding their own sexual development go through dramas like:

- Domestic violence
- Loss of heart for the world
- Struggle to be okay with their self image and sexual contact with others
- Long term negative mental impact
- No sense of trust for anybody, because in their eyes they have failed by being sexually active

Jodean adds...

Masturbation is frowned upon in group homes, but should be accepted - but providers prohibit it. There is also a no-touching rule and time in the bathroom is monitored.

Kids feel that providers should allow sex in the home so they wouldn't have to run away to have it. All touching is viewed as negative.

We had a discussion on how kids must earn trust by honoring house rules, and by demonstrating self control.

Group home providers shame them and exploit their background. This behavior reinforces secrets. They are not loving, caring or compassionate.

Providers must assess the child's sexuality upon intake by talking to their social workers and talking to the child.

Providers are there to protect and provide supervision. The provider is required by law to maintain a Needs and Services Plan - which addresses the need to provide services for the young person's sexuality. Services can be discussed and resources provided for the child to make educated decisions and to at the same time ensure protection.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Consent

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Noah Nash

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Noah Nash and Jamie Lee Evans

Los otros participantes

Other members: Michelle Lahmon, Teresa Owensby, Mariah Corder, Fernando Sandoval

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Key learnings:

There are long term consequences to disenfranchisement, including: Being abused, recoiling inside, disempowerment, lack of self esteem, lack of trust, etc.

If you have never been given choices in foster care, there are consequences and detriments to your later empowerment, including healthy sexual development. How do you learn to know what you like, how you feel, what feels good - if nothing was ever asked before? Sexual consent issues in foster youth can stem back to the earliest disempowerment as a foster youth.

Where do we start to empower a young person in foster care?

- To share information
- To have sexual / physical contact

Pros and cons of consent and passing of knowledge

Education and modeling

Sexual Health Education

Conversational: What is consent? What is abuse? What is healthy relationship building?

Educational: Textbooks, age appropriate. Provides education, and lets youth ask. Includes listening and feeling words (how does this make you feel?)

What can licensing do about consent?

Is it up to caregivers? How do we support them?

Prudent Parent law means that parents should teach youth about sexuality as part of their teen development.

Be proactive, not reactive. Build in a law that every foster parent should check into their teen youth's needs around sex education?

The QPI [Quality Parenting Initiative] is supposed to be incorporated into CCL [Community Care Licensing].

New Law: SB258 (youth age over 12 have the right to PPI, sexually transmitted infection sexual health education and information).

Is it only about the dangers of sex? Illness and unplanned pregnancy? Sexual assault, etc? Is there education about sexual pleasure (especially for young women)? If you don't know what you want, then you can't easily give consent...and know what you don't want.

Rape culture is alive and well in the U.S.

Consent education is deeply important and consent education starts well before sexual activity begins.

We can use adults getting massages as an example.

Grown people who get massages sometimes don't know what a regular massage is supposed to feel like - so when they get a massage that they don't feel comfortable with, what are the ways they can say no? If you don't get educated on what feels good and right, it is hard to know what doesn't.

Think about the physical and emotional feelings of attraction and desire.

Both have similar symptoms: sweaty palms, heart races, head feels nervous, anxious, scared, excited.

We need to learn many ways to say no and to make it clear. One participant says a study shows that women don't know how to say no or don't feel comfortable saying no.

We need to give education about how to say no and how to hear no.

One participant was taught in her school that instead of saying no, when you found yourself in a sexual situation that you didn't know how to stop (but wanted it to) then you should say, "Hey, let's go get a pizza."

One former foster youth said she was only taught about consent in one foster home.

Is there training out there?

YOUTH Training Project offers a training called "I'm Too Sexy for my Social Worker" and it is available free of charge to county child welfare departments.

Contact Jamie@calyouthconn.org for more information.

If foster parents are being restrictive to the point of not allowing dating or other normal teen activity, then perhaps those parents should not be working with teens but instead with younger children? How do we grow more culturally competent (around teen behavior) foster parents, versus making fewer of them?

Resources family approval program has a permanency assessment involved.

In this approval process it is about an adoption component where parenting approaches are evaluated and discussed. Parents are suggested to take classes when they have gaps in caregiver skills.

Giving sexual consent is a part of health awareness and wellness.



A young person needs self-agency and control in order to do this. There are also consent issues with what you can share, where information is kept, etc. Consent also applies to actions like hugs.

There is a larger question when it comes to foster youth and consent. Foster youth are rarely in a position of power and control in foster care.

Some examples of disenfranchisement includes:

- Being removed from where you live without your control
- Having your name changed against your will
- Being forced to call foster parents “Mom” and “Dad” (immediately after you are put into care)
- Being forced to go to church
- Being forced to wear clothes you don’t want to wear

There are long term consequences to disenfranchisement, including: being abused, recoiling inside, disempowerment, lack of self esteem, lack of trust, etc.

If you have never been given choices in foster care, there are consequences and detriments to your later empowerment, including healthy sexual development. How do you learn to know what you like, how you feel, what feels good - if nothing was ever asked before? Sexual consent issues in foster youth can stem back to earliest disempowerment as a foster youth.

Where do we start to empower a young person in foster care?

Critical Questions:

- Where in foster care is it built in to teach youth self-efficacy?
- When a youth enters care they could be taught to express themselves if something else comes up. A youth’s opinion could be asked for small things, like, “What do you want for lunch?” “What do you want to wear to school today?” “What movies do you like?” “What do you want to be called?” Education, school or academic questions? “What is important to you?” “What do you love (items, sports, activities, etc.)?”

If a youth is developing a personal passport, how about including favorite things?



Tema

Issue / Topic:

How to Have Conversations with Adults Who Have Religious / Cultural Beliefs that Get in the Way of Supporting the SOGIE [Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression] Development of Youth

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Carolyn Reyes

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Carolyn Reyes, Jodean Greene and Kelsey Hunter

Los otros participantes

Other members: Rosalind Nalls, Janine Bruce, Fernando Sandoval, Lori Clarke, Joel Segura, Angela Valdez, Joy Anderson, Mariah Corder, Patterson Emesibe

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

How do we support foster parents to support youth in their home, especially transgender youth?

What is healthy sexual development?
When youth are not manipulated or forced.

The larger culture and the culture of the family manipulates or tries to manipulate youths' sexuality. People parent from their own backgrounds / culture.

Foster parents must respect youths' personal rights.

In some homes, parents don't talk about sexuality. What are the harms to youth due to not talking?

Foster parents need guidance about how to advocate for transgender youth in school.
You can't support what you don't understand.

It's okay for parents to say, "In my view, you're wrong. BUT I love you."
They can hold any beliefs. But they cannot express them any way they want.
Actions matter more than beliefs.

Foster parents need training that's "real" - conversations with other foster parents who have gone through the same challenges they are going through.

A former foster youth shared her story about being bisexual and living for two years in a very religious home where she couldn't dress the way she wanted. If she wore "girl" clothes, they said it was sinful, and if she wore sweatpants, they told her to dress like a girl. Her social worker was also very religious and always sided with the foster parents. She was never asked if she wanted to be in a very religious home. She became really attached to the family and wished someone would have worked with the family to make the placement work for her.

Kelsey adds...

We talked about what brought us to this conversation. A few people were interested in how to work specifically with foster parents with religious or other beliefs.

We asked what is healthy sexual development? We decided there wasn't any set definition for this and it varies based on youth's experiences, a youth's family, and a youth's culture. We did agree that it is never manipulated or forced and that the youth has full knowledge.

Questions we had were how to raise kids in a way that doesn't serve an agenda? How to balance the parent's desire to offer guidance and advice, when they don't agree with the youth's decisions?

As mentioned above, foster parents have a right to their views. They do not have the right to impose those views on their foster youth. They should allow the young people to be who they are and have a responsibility to protect them and support them in growing into themselves.

Often, foster homes are affiliated with a religious institutions.

They are not talking about a youth's identity because they don't want to address it. And this can be just as emotionally harmful to the client than talking about it negative ways.

Foster parents need more education in order for them to provide support. They need to understand where the youth is coming from. There should be required trainings. There are already required trainings - however, trainings that connect the foster parent to what the youth is experiencing would be more relevant. A foster parent in our group identified that having a former foster youth talk about their experiences would be much more impactful.

One foster parent in our group spoke about her experience with a young boy who had a trauma history. She didn't know how to support him or feel like she had the resources for learning. She was afraid to bring it up because she did not want to re-traumatize him. She feels like she would be not prepared to have a transgender foster youth.

Youth need more education on this as well - to help give them the language for how to explain and advocate for themselves.

We asked the people in our group from a strong religious background to share about their experiences. Depending on their relationship with the person in their care, some people would talk about their own faith and understanding of the Christian faith. It would be helpful for Christian parents to focus on the concepts around God loving everyone, and the grace that is offered when you don't honor God with your choices. More so than the wrongs and punishments and such.

We agreed that we aren't trying to change beliefs - but we are trying to change behaviors. And that covert behaviors (and attitudes) can be just as harmful as overt behaviors (ostracizing). Again we talked about the need to highlight the impact of behaviors on the youth.

Foster parents need training on critical thinking - and on being open minded and it being okay that they believe one thing but can still act in an open-minded way. That it is not up to the parent to change the youth.

We talked about what we do when the foster parent / foster youth relationship just doesn't seem like a good fit. Should agency support close-minded foster parents in being licensed? We discussed about whether (for example) we could legally say no to a foster parent who is racist. We discussed the increased screening policies that are coming - which include psychosocial assessments that may lead to more thorough screening. We talked about how we wanted say no to a kinship placement if says for example a grandmother was racist or homophobic.

We discussed how a lot of parents genuinely believe that their values are helping the youth.

Even though we don't expect things to change right away, the expectation of caregivers having an open mind should be set - and to allow people to change over time. The foster parent in our group identified

that she connected with her own training around religion - and that connected to not forcing a youth to attend church. She felt like set rules around supporting youth in their development could be helpful for foster parents. It is good to be told that some beliefs can be hurtful to youth.

We also had a former foster youth share her experience of being with a religious foster parent. She wishes she would have been asked about her own beliefs and thoughts. She would have wanted to remain with that family - but would have preferred to be asked and supported in her own beliefs as well. As mentioned above, she felt unable to have that conversation, particularly because her social worker was also religious and sided with the foster parents.

Jodean adds...

What is healthy sexual development? Sexuality that is not forced or manipulated. Society manipulates all sexuality to some extent, but it is not forced. The individual enters into the activity willingly.

Personal rights and religious beliefs may be designed to protect the child, but this can also restrict and prohibit natural sexual exploration. It depends on how the personal rights and religion are projected and received.

Omit the “Just don’t” or “Should” statements.

Parents can’t support transgender wellness and identity if they don’t understand it. We need to start with training on the subject and get the parents comfortable talking about it. The child also needs education about what they are feeling and going through, because they don’t know.

Religion - It depends on how the scripture is interpreted. Different religions view sexuality differently.

The child should know that

“God loves everyone”

“They can be themselves and God will still love them”

“There’s grace for the time you don’t honor God”

They need to work with the young people on how God loves them.

Go through the Bible with them and read scripture with them to allow them to access what it means to them - rather than someone else imposing their interpretation.

Explain that the child has a right to their own expression.

Our role is to show respect and compassion.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Breaking Cycles

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Rita Naranjo

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Shelby Howard

Los otros participantes

Other members: Maignacia Villapudua-Soto, Vernice Cooper, Eidit Choochage, Karla Torres, Fernando Sandoval

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Rita discussed her experience of growing up in the system and becoming a mother at age 15.

“How am I going to be a mother? Who am I to be a mother?”

How she broke the cycle after having been raised by a mother who was addicted to drugs and wasn't able to care for her or her brothers - ALL 9 CHILDREN WERE TAKEN INTO CARE.

What allowed her to make the change:

She actively decided she was not going to be like her mother when she was faced with becoming a young mother. She saw her mother as the best example of what she didn't want to be. She had witnessed her mother shooting up while pregnant - and that created such a rage in her that she knew she would never do something like that.

She was willing to really face who her mother was and not be afraid of it. She wondered about how her mother had lost herself. In the last months of her mother's life she was able to bring her into her home and care for her, and to make peace with the pain her mother carried and had never been able to express, that led to her being the mother she was.

She found her own strength and power, first with small things, like “I am powerful because I can stand. I am powerful because I can walk.” “I am powerful because I have two hands and I can use them to create my own life.” She had a teacher in parenting class who asked her “What are you going to do?” and this question implied that she had the power to do SOMETHING. And that mattered.

She knew education would be her tool for survival - and she was always focused on survival, not only for herself, but for her younger siblings, her own children, and also for her mother. She was able to complete her education after getting pregnant, through continuation school. And she was able to apply for scholarships with the support of her continuation school, and started school with five thousand dollars in scholarships and eventually graduated with a Masters degree in 2012.

She found her voice and started telling her story, reinforcing that it was one of survival and overcoming, and strength, and power and courage. And in telling her story she helped others. And that increased those feelings of strength and power and courage. “Telling your story is life changing” and is how you build community. She felt that sense of community was so important when she was really



struggling. Just being able to look around a group home and to see that there were others in that situation too, felt like community.

She cared for others. In addition to becoming a mother when she was 15, by the time she was 18 she was raising her child as well as three of her younger brothers. She always had to survive for them, as well as for herself.

As a mother she has taught her children about responsibility for their own life, appreciation for what they have, and treating life as precious. She challenges her children to “care about you, for you”.



Rita is now an “advocate, artist, motivational storyteller, and trainer” as described on her business card for *OF MANY Creative Life Action Network*.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Legal Protections and Advocacy for Parenting Foster Youth

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Jennifer Rodriguez

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Kate Teague and Tyler Whittenberg

Los otros participantes

Other members: Cindy Cain

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Cindy mentioned that Legal Services for Children and Children Services are working on an agreement to see how to prevent children being taken away from their parent who is in foster care and to better support the teen foster parent.

(We did not discuss this any further, but I - Tyler Whittenberg - would like to be involved with developing the agreement.)

Possibilities for protecting the rights of young mothers and fathers in foster care and for better advocating for them as parents include:

Specialized recruiting of foster parents who can accept the mother / father and child as a foster family unit. Meaning that the support is directed at preserving that family and educating them about healthy parenting and co-parenting.

Improve the quality of caregivers and foster parents by choosing those foster parents who would like to act as a mentor for a young mother - and who are considering the best interests of the teen and their baby as a family, not just one or the other.

The foster parent of the young parent in foster care should get involved as early as possible - ideally during pregnancy. The foster parent could be trained as a doula [*birth companion and post-birth supporter - LH*] who supports the pregnant foster youth throughout their pregnancy and after. Cindy mentioned a pilot program called “Hatch” which trains former foster youth with children to be doulas, and then pairs the trained doula with a pregnant foster youth.

More public health support for the parenting foster youth.

Train foster parents on both teen development and infant development so that they better understand the needs of both parties, not just the baby. Also, so the foster parent supports and respects the foster youth as opposed to acting fearful toward their parenting of the infant. This could be done through modifying the foster parent curriculum.

Focus on keeping the young family together (add supports for the FATHER TO STAY IN THE CHILD’S LIFE).

Fresno has a co-parenting education pilot for their reunification services that could be adapted to fit co-parenting education for young parenting foster youth.

Cohabitation with the father should be a possibility as opposed to being disregarded or discouraged. There is already a relationship there, and this relationship should be supported if in the best interest of both the baby and the other parent.

Encourage fathers to participate and remove barriers to their participation:

If a mother wants the infant supplement, she may have to place the father on child support despite the father’s active involvement and inability to pay a court-determined child support payment.

Kate adds...

What is the line / protection for situations where the “agency” who is evaluating the fitness to be a parent also has responsibility for documenting the life of the youth who is in care and has lots of history and evidence?

- A situation where a youth is on the run, when the social worker and everyone else knew where she was, and while she was on the run social services initiated proceedings to remove her child (they used “abandonment” as the justification) because the social worker didn’t think she would be a good parent.
- Social services and social workers using information from the foster care case files seems to be more common than is really being talked about.
- What about when a social worker, who may have a relationship and history with the foster youth, does have concerns about youth’s ability to parent?
- Is it right to use a history of trauma and victimization which may have been left untreated by the foster care system as a justification for removal?

Several years ago, Jennifer had looked into the number of foster youth being referred to differential response in a county [*Differential Response: Assessing a situation to meet underlying needs rather than one single kind of response for all child protective situations - LH*]. One of her findings is that unlike parents who who were not in foster care, the foster youth were not receiving preventative services or family maintenance. It seemed like the removals were being fast-tracked.

Tyler mentioned hearing about a judge in New York who was holding a high accountability standard in his court for social services during hearings when the removal of a child from a foster youth was being considered:

- Think about identifying these good practitioners and using them as trainers.
- Create a policy to mandate a higher standard of care for foster youth who have referrals - provide wrap services.
- Create guidelines for attorneys: Is it the best interest of the baby or the best interest of the their client (the foster youth)? It should be the best interest of the client - and if the attorney has feelings about the baby needing to come into care and can't best represent and advocate for their client, they need to recuse themselves [*remove themselves from the case and have someone else take their place - LH*].

Whole family foster care when removal is necessary for the safety of the child: Instead of removing the child from the family and put that one child in foster care, put the whole family in foster care.

- Hard to figure out funding (IV-E funding is only available for the child to come into care).
- Recruit specialized foster parents to be parents to the parents.
- Re-think how to deal with trauma and wellness - because in whole-family foster care, the parent(s) would receive support to work through their trauma and develop wellness.
- Should there ever be circumstances for a child to be removed?

Quality of caregiving is the most important factor to pay attention to in child welfare. The system switches from viewing the foster youth from a perspective of vulnerability and victimization to viewing the former foster youth as a victimizing birth parent.

Some agencies have connected parenting foster youth with doulas or public health nurses to provide support to foster youth moms. Doulas are emotional coaches and help to construct an empowering experience to provide a positive kick-off to the parenting experience. This shifts the experience of pregnancy and giving birth from fear to a situation where the parent is feeling like they can be good mothers and have the information about how to start parenting. Also there is the potential for the doulas to shift the perspective of social workers, foster parents and lawyers who may not believe in the foster youth's ability to be a good parent.



Foster parents seem to have a higher fear of liability when the foster youth in their home is a parent. The fear is probably coming from licensing and agencies. This can create an intense situation for foster parents who may want to work with the foster youth to learn parenting - but are given a lot of pressure to provide for the safety of the child of the foster youth. Also, foster parents are encouraged to mentor the foster youth in parenting - but the foster youth is usually not prepared for the fact that the foster parent wants to help them learn parenting skills and instead can interpret it as judgment of their own parenting skills or as the foster parent interfering beyond their role.

The most basic part of legal advocacy is looking at the placement and making sure there are quality placements.

- One challenge is not recruiting foster parents but retaining them.
- Foster parent training is very child development heavy without providing much training on how to work effectively with the teen parent.
- It is important to work with foster parents to include fathers in the parenting.

What are some ways / opportunities to involve and engage the community to foster and support relationships that can organically evolve into deeper connections?

A situation was mentioned about a foster youth who did not have a lot of support - and when she was pregnant she did not have someone to throw a baby shower for her. Her youth advocate reached out to a senior living community to see if they would be willing to host a shower for the young person. The women in the community were so excited and have gone on to form a group that hosts baby showers for mothers who need it. They have also evolved into a community of grandmothers and they now host birthday parties for the children.

What about when the father of the foster youth's child is older (such as in his mid-late 20's)? How can the system work with it?

This happens - and the more usual situation is that the father is 18, 19, or 20, which can still be problematic for the system but falls into the range of "normal" relationships. Policies should be set up for these circumstances to remove barriers for the father to be involved and to reduce the fear of the mother about disclosing who the father is because she doesn't want him to get in trouble.

As mentioned above, the Youth Law Center piloted a curriculum in Fresno (New Beginnings) around co-parenting and attachment for parents who are in reunification.

Develop more trainings and emphasize this sort of work as an approach for supporting co-parenting.

Tema
Issue / Topic:

What Does My Judge Need to Know?

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Vanessa Hernandez

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Tyrone Hill and Kayla Corder

Los otros participantes

Other members: Shannan Wilber, Bill Bettencourt, Keith Dunley, Patterson Emesibe

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

What is judgment, but one's perceived opinion?

A lot of what is in court reports is inaccurate. The file never matches up.

And we are getting judged by something that happened a long time ago.

Is redemption possible?

“I use my court reports for scratch paper.”

People shouldn't read reports / files unless it is necessary.
Adults / foster former youth should have access to their case file.

The County did not trust me with my own information. I would rather talk to someone in CYC with the experience of what I'm going through than with my social worker.
You should find out who I am by asking me.

If I don't want the judge to know something, I don't tell my social worker.
Trust is earned. Too often people don't genuinely care, and those who do are gone soon.

There is no privacy.
In foster care you have no privacy - that is why I took such long showers.

“The worst thing you can tell a kid is ‘No matter what you do, you're moving!’ ”



Your record should be automatically sealed upon emancipation.

It shouldn't be so specific; keep it general.
The court should hear directly from the youth about how they are doing.
Keep the court report general, and keep the details in the case file.

Management; coping; safety.

There's a lot that shouldn't be shared.
Sexuality should not be shared - “Need-to-know-basis.”
Anything about sexuality shouldn't be shared unless you want it be.
It should be your own information.

What is an appropriate age to start seeing your own court report? Probably 12-15.
The age you should have control over what is in your court report should be 12 or 15.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Gender, Gender Expression and Gender Identity

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Noah Nash

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Noah Nash, Shelby Howard and Carolyn Reyes

Los otros participantes

Other members: Shannan Wilber, Jeanie Yoon, Gordon Jackson, Patterson Emesibe, Bill Bettencourt, Dawn-Marie Luna, Shane Wallin

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Providers should be versed and have tools and knowledge to support healthy gender exploration and identity formation for foster youth.

The statement was raised for conversation's sake: "You can't support something you can't understand." Is this true? How much do parents or workers need to understand to be able to support?

- What do providers need to understand [about such things as gender and sexuality before they can support the youth]?"
- The lack of understanding / knowledge / vocabulary can harm youth who are figuring out their place on the gender spectrum.
- What is healthy / natural - and when to maybe open a dialogue with the youth?
- That exploration is crucial to identity development.
- Their own biases.

Within a culture that often categorizes by gender, how do we create the space, that we agree is valuable and necessary, for children to explore and discover their own identity?

This is a challenge and need for all children, and most parents aren't actively creating this space of curiosity, so how are we supporting foster parents to do so in an increasingly dynamic and challenging circumstances?

The idea of gender identity has changed so much over the past 20 years. From a time when all that was discussed was sexual identity, to understanding that there were those who felt misaligned with their biological gender and creating the term "transgender", to the discovery that there were those who didn't necessarily align with one particular gender at all. In this evolving dialogue and discovery, how do we make space for conversation?

It is important as providers seeking to create safe and inclusive spaces to think about:

- How do we consciously design spaces where dialog can happen?
- How to signal that this is a place where we can have conversations about gender identity and expression?

- How do we counter dominant cultural expectations regarding gender within the bubble of foster care?
- How do we deal with adults who hide behind the guise of such things as science or data, but refuse to acknowledge the complexity, fluidity, and reality of gender?

What *has* worked? Some good news:

- Shane's experience: A youth in a facility was acting out, in part because their gender exploration / expression was not supported by the staff. Once the staff adjusted and accommodated, the situation (for example the youth's well being and behavior) improved. Education, empathy, and staff changes created a supportive and safe environment for said youth to do well and eventually transition as an adult. Shane paraphrased the youth's response: "Thank you for acknowledging what I'm going through, and what I want."
- Shannan's experience: Physicians have a language and rapport for gender. It is normalized, factual, and important to understand the intricacies of gender, including issues as dysphoria (the pain that comes from one's body / assigned sex not matching up with their gender) and safety (which adults can I disclose my gender to and how?).

There are "gender reveal" rituals and parties in this culture, signaling the importance that is being placed on gender even before birth.

- In Native American and Hawaiian culture there is more fluidity of gender as part of their expectations, and a belief that this is linked to the spirit. Our group discussed the importance of acknowledging how gender is viewed in other countries and cultures (for example "two spirit", third gender, and other ways of understanding and naming gender) and understanding how ideas are gender are constructed and perpetuated.

School Success and Opportunities Act has allowed non-normative gender identities to be more supported in school, including increased access to things that had been segregated based on gender.

Gender in the Courts

- Gender is important when it comes to pronouns, legal name and preferred names, and perceptions of what is or is not appropriate given formalities in legal spaces.
- Each court room varies by judge - some are supportive and want to learn. Others can create hostile and triggering spaces for youth (such as judges who bash youth for wearing clothes that break gender norms, or mis-gendering youth in court reports.)
- Solution / Idea: Create bench cards with standards for creating inclusive courts for all, with special regard to gender and sexuality. But what can you fit on a card that encompasses such a complex issue? Many thought that they could use a "bench card" for having any conversation on this topic.

Addressing Needs of Gender-nonconforming Youth

- Validate them with language, particularly correct pronoun. Some cultures have developed a new pronoun to express gender neutrality. Some have heard the terms "ze" (rather than he or she) and "zir" (rather than "her" or "him"). How might we make this more known in our culture?
- Provide unisex / gender-neutral spaces, including restrooms and housing when applicable (let youth choose).
- Simply having conversations and weaving ideas into our practice that challenges the binary and challenges the norm helps to push the envelope while also encouraging folks to recognize others and themselves on the gender spectrum.

How do these conversations happen with youth in a way that remains respectful?

“Follow the child’s lead.” - former principal / teacher

- Go to the point you feel comfortable and able to help / talk with the youth, and then pass it off (to the social worker, counselor, etc).
- Hear the child, set the climate, and create a space where the youth can arrive instead of be forced.

“Communicate that it’s okay.”

- Normalize gender identity / expression whenever possible in such things as speech and practice.
- Build rapport, establish yourself as a listener, and be conscious of opportunities to listen and learn from (and sometimes probe, tactfully with) a youth.
- Be conscious of space and comfort.
- Understand and challenge personal biases and misconceptions.

Legal Protections, Representation, and Privilege

Be empathetic to trauma / triggers (like dysphoria, or being forced to disclose your identity), unique challenges (like micro-aggressions*), and surrounding experiences of non cisgender* youth.

*Cisgender describes someone whose gender aligns with their assigned sex.

[Micro-aggressions is a word sometimes defined as ‘unintended discrimination’ - remarks someone makes where they are not perhaps conscious of the discriminatory effects of their choice of language because that language may be widely used in their community and yet may negatively segregate, impact or describe people of such differences as race, gender identity, academic or financial levels or physical abilities. - LH]*

The risk of encountering violence extends beyond just people not respecting pronouns. Noah wishes to stress how important the conversation is for the overall health and short / long term well being of all foster youth.

Bruce Jenner: Bruce Jenner is possibly transitioning as a transgender woman. There’s supposedly a TV special / documentary in the works to capture this. It could be an opportunity for public conversation and education. While some in media have been negative and stigmatizing, there have also been some who are more open, curious, and understanding, and this may give some who have limited exposure the chance to learn and understand. We discussed privilege and the intersection between being a rich, white, assigned-male-at-birth person versus being a transgender, poor, person of color, for example - and how those experiences are different (privilege).

Some tips we developed to be an ally:



- Understand the constant “coming out” process and how that can be scary, challenging, and tiring. Create an environment that conveys a sense of support through physical cues, like signs or logos, that share a sense of support.
- Follow the lead of the person, use their language, go where they want the conversation to go.
- Allow them to feel heard.
- Make room on paperwork for non-conforming (rather than just “male” and “female” - make an “other”)

- React to disclosures or information in a calm and neutral way rather than reacting strongly.
- Acknowledge the privilege that comes with having a biological identity and gender identity that aligns, and be aware of ways you may experience that privilege to make space for others whenever possible.

How to help people understand this need when they are coming from a place of limited understanding or a belief that it is a choice:

- Having a physician explain the issue as they would any other physiological condition.
- Have someone explain the discomfort when they aren't permitted to express their gender congruent with how they experience it.
- Have a member of the person's own clergy who is coming from a place of understanding explain in and validate it to others.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and Foster Care

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Michelle Lahmon

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Joel Seguro

Los otros participantes

Other members: Janine Bruce, Sophia Herman, Fernando Sandoval, Monica Pavia, Glenn Schnell, Angela Valdez, Vernice Cooper, Tyler Whittenberg, Angela Carmack, Patterson Emesibe

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

How to support a foster youth's healthy sexuality when they have a background of having been trafficked?

There has been a philosophy change about foster youth who have been trafficked. The youth are no longer generally being sent to juvenile hall or being referred to as "prostitutes" - they are now being called trafficked youth.

CSEC [Commercially Sexually Exploited Children] youth.
This is a term used to refer to both youth and to facilities.

Why are youth opting to being trafficked? When is it a choice? Is it always victimization?

The foster system can do a better job at providing for foster youth, taking away incentives to being trafficked. Is \$50 a month enough for youth to get their needs met without making “working” attractive?

It takes a whole system to address the issue - not just one component. There is now more of a willingness to address the issue than there was before.

Locked facilities are a perceived safety - but they mostly criminalize the youth.

There are programs out of state where the youth get placed in a locked facility for the initial stage, and then they get downgraded from there until they get integrated into other less restrictive programs. Any program that is locked still criminalizes the girls - as opposed to changing their minds about going back to being trafficked or being susceptible to being trafficked again.

Some children need to be caught sooner rather than wait until they are trafficked.

There is a high concentration of group homes in areas known for “that” (trafficking). It is part of a pyramid scheme between the girls sometimes. The girls who recruit no longer have to traffic themselves.

Are group homes the best choice for this population?

We need more homes that are willing to accept girls who are exploited.

Whose responsibility is it to address it?

It should be a shared responsibility. Providers point fingers at each other or just stick to their legal responsibility.

Youth are not taught about proper relationships; they are victims or not being taught properly about / in relationships. Current trainings for staff and foster parents should be for current times. PRIDE training is not addressing current issues.

Licensing lets group homes open up in dangerous neighborhoods. Licensing agencies may not know how to get the relevant information about what is going on in the group homes. There are group homes that participate in trafficking the youth.

There should be studies looking into the neighborhoods where group homes are open and how many trafficked youth there are in those regions.

There is a big difference between regulatory knowledge and street knowledge. Licensing does not ask the right questions to get what they need.

Group homes are big business for Johns. The criminal consequences are way less for being a pimp than for dealing drugs.

Putting a bunch of emotionally vulnerable children in the same place is not the best choice.

Are group homes that serve sexually trafficked youth suspect?

Sometimes group homes are needed for certain children who need structure.



One former foster youth in our discussion group shared her personal experience of being in a group home and knowing the system.

Outside agencies can work collaboratively with homes and group homes to ensure better outcomes.

Youth learn from each other and how to master the system to gain power in their placement options. Youth know their rights and know how to negotiate with their social workers.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Is Sharing Really Caring - Or When Is It Too Much?

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Geri Shing

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Julio Montes

Los otros participantes

Other members: Tyrone Hill, Daniel Oquendo

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

My desire to delve into this topic stemmed from a conversation I had with my daughter about her best friend taking “selfies” in the nude and sending them to boyfriends - and her embarrassment in discovering that those pictures were on several forms of social media!

My gut reaction was “Dumbass! Didn’t she know that what goes on the Internet stays on the Internet?”

However, the more I thought about the subject I began to wonder how do we help foster youth from making the same mistakes.

The problems afflicting or related to foster kids sharing too much / misuse of social media:
How to discourage kids from posting inappropriate images of themselves or others on the Internet?

Perhaps technology could help in curbing or restricting access to certain websites or media outlets as a way to prevent foster kids from broadcasting inappropriate content of themselves or others.

Other methods to combat this are:

- Education about what happens to all of those posts.
- Perhaps speakers to explain the consequences of such action and how it impacted their lives.

An interesting thing that was pointed out by a former foster youth in our discussion group was that a lot of the time youth do not like to be told what to do. So we might think of the kind of attitude that values people who have walked that walk versus someone who is just lecturing to the kids.

The young person stated that sometimes, the reason that youth do not pay attention to what is being said is because adults (social workers, staff, law enforcement) assume that the children do not

understand. And the children state that by sugar-coating a subject or by approaching it from a pedantic point of view, they are, in essence, being lied to.

Sometimes, the former foster youth stated, it is better to learn the lesson the hard way - as unpleasant as the outcome could be - because it can be assured that that person will not do that again.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Virginity and Abstinence

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Meredith Ku

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Vaishali Singh-Sood and others

Los otros participantes

Other members: Grace Lee, Kate Teague, Heriberto Angel Arredondo Jr.

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Virginity is up for interpretation.

What is the definition based on?

What value does virginity hold?

Pop culture

Nobody said to have sex, but nobody said to not have sex.

Sex to show proof. Peer pressure to lose virginity in school.

Sex is an outlet - lonely and rejected

Assumed sexually active foster youth.

Guys don't care about losing virginity. Most guys don't think that far.

Virginity has no value.

Abstinence is a rule, rather than having a personal value.

Virginity comes with a lot of judgement.



There can be stigma (either way) or someone's sexual experience or lack of it may be assumed.

Virginity is marketed by religion - but people choose what they want to do with their body.

Because foster youth don't have consistent people in their lives, most of their perception and learning about these things comes from medicine, music, pornography, advertising.

Abstinence is OKAY

Love yourself. Starts with self esteem.

More communication.

Maybe using another word besides "virgin".

More resources and more support to stay abstinent.

Be helpful with abstaining from sex.

Sex and health confidentiality.

Are social workers the main support?

All social workers are not on the same page.

Social workers all vary in discussing or not discussing sex with young people. Should be standardized.

Gender / sexuality of the social worker may also play a part.

Some social workers and foster parents don't respect decisions.

Won't give necessary tools / birth control because you say they are not sexually active.

Make it personal. Make yourself a friend to the young person.

Sex and intimate relationships - the emotional attachment.

People are very clinical with their advice. Foster youth want love.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Supportive Responses to Sexual Curiosity

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: John Casey

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Cindy Cain

Los otros participantes

Other members: Amy Kirsztajn, Briana McGeough, Rosalind Nalls

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

This has Importance both with clinicians and with caregivers in the foster care system.

Don't respond with punitive actions - respond with curiosity.

Avoid demonizing the behavior and labeling.

- Many sexualized behaviors and curiosity are normal and natural and shouldn't be seen as abuse or connected to a history of abuse

Who is having sexual health discussions in the group home?

Responding to sexualized behaviors - how do you respond appropriately?

- Avoid shaming responses
- Normalize the behaviors
- Slow down your reaction - talk about it in supervision

Training is needed for staff.

Utilize school wellness center and the nurses at school for sexual education when it is outside of your role.

There is a difference between exploration and perpetration.

- Some sexualized behaviors are natural and are not perpetration

Be careful with documenting the behavior.

There are issues when "sexualized behaviors" are stated in an assessment document when they aren't described. Be thoughtful and thorough.

Don't make assumptions about history or sexual orientation.

- As you talk to other providers and family members about behaviors, make sure that you involve the youth on what pronoun they want used.

Advocate for how the young person wants you to advocate for them.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

How to Establish Boundaries when Educating Youth about Sex?

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Angel Russell

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Silvia Pizzini, Angel Russell and Vaishali Singh-Sood

Los otros participantes

Other members: Mariah Corder, Angela Carmack, Antonio Norman, Tammy Rivera

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Inconsistencies in sex education for foster youth ranges from providing them with no information at all to some places where there is quality education.

Regulations do not prohibit youth from having sex. Rather, regulations require that there is parent-like supervision such as talking with youth about choices, ensuring youth will be safe, and ensuring that youths' rights are not violated.

Youth should receive sex education starting at an early age, and this should progress through adolescence. Talking about body changes and about choices the youth can make in various situations - such as when faced with invitation to skip school to have sex.

Regulations do not require that foster parents and group home providers have these conversations, but they should. Training should include understanding the signs of abusive relationships and what healthy relationships look like - and should show a tolerance of everyone's choices (including abstinence).

If we prohibit conversations, we don't stop youth from their physical sexual development and from having sexual relationships, dating, and masturbating.

Supportive touch is important!

Staff can give hugs / touch hands to comfort youth in distress, but training can also suggest that they ask another staff to observe as protection for themselves and the youth. After supporting the youth, they can ask the youth for feedback about whether the comforting touch was helpful.

County child welfare agencies are responsible for training foster parents, group home staff, child welfare social workers and others about how to promote healthy sexual development of foster youth - including tolerance for differences, sex education, and an awareness of what youth need.

Having conversations about sexual development with youth is important for their social and emotional development, and prevents behaviors such as a young person's having to sneak around.

Foster parents and group home providers are key to supporting youth's healthy sexual development. Conversations can be in group sessions which underscore that sexual development is normal and can also happen with youth individually when confidentiality is needed.

Rural counties are challenged in getting resources for training foster parents, group home providers, social workers, and doctors, etc. - as well as for the youth themselves. We suggest a "Resourcemobile" (based on the bookmobile model) that can bring traveling resources to counties that cannot develop

their own resources. Bringing someone in from the outside can bring objective insights and avoid compromising confidentiality because in so many cases, everyone in the county knows each other.

Social workers should ensure that youth get education on sexual development, sexual choices, and sexual awareness. Additionally, youth with children of their own may need child care to attend sex education sessions.

Angel adds:

From a licensing perspective, there is no legal problem with a consensual act occurring - only action taken when this occurs under improper supervision in a controlled setting.

No classes are provided for foster children who do not attend sex education courses in school.

It is important for caregivers to talk about circumstances and opportunities that can happen with youth which include sex as well as relationships.

This is not happening in placements enough.
Homes legally don't have requirements to cover any sort of sex education.

It should be required to at least educate young people about body changes and sex fundamentals as well as about healthy relationships.

With the attitude that any individually preferred sexual choice and preference is okay - a practice of tolerance. Example: Abstinence is no better than healthy safe sexual activity - they are just different choices.

A lack of education and inconsistencies about sex fundamentals can lead to a foster youth making risky and unhealthy decisions regarding sex and relationships.

Religious / conservative homes may take a stance on no sex or anything - but this can lead to holes in a youth's knowledge of sex and can lead them to unsafe decisions.

WE NEED TO MAKE IT LEGISLATIVE that there is some sort of sex education requirement for homes to at least educate youth about the basics, and about safe sex and relationships.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Religion and Sexuality

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Teffani Taylor

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Teffani Taylor

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

If the youth has ANY religion it might assist in teaching a person to have a standard to gauge sexuality and add it to the “lifestyle” or religion.

How a person’s sexuality is identified or begins plays a critical part in ways they identify or associate with others in a sexual way. Meaning that if a person’s first sexual encounter was molestation or rape they can have a perverted version of sexuality and even of religion.

If a person chooses to have a religious relationship, respect should be given to assist. Meaning that if a person says they are a certain religion and they fail to adhere to the code of the religion they choose, without being harsh the foster parent or welfare worker needs to help them be proactive.

If a foster parent isn’t able to find an easy way to discuss sex, YOUTH Training Project has an “I’m Too Sexy for my Social Worker” training that will assist welfare workers and foster parents.

An acceptance of the thoughts that a normal teenager has - like feeling an attraction to a person - should be allowed in a respectful appropriate manner, with help assisting the youth to know their thoughts are normal and they are not strange for having them.

The teaching of religion and sexuality should be done for the youth in a safe space where the youth can feel comfortable to ask questions.

The youth should be informed about topics surrounding cultural and ethnic issues and their learning should include the concept of constantly learning.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Love After Heartache, Grief and Trauma

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Haydée Cuza

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Emily Higgs

Los otros participantes

Other members: Joy Anderson, Brianna Robertson, Vanessa Hernandez, Kayla Corder, Keith Dunley, Anna Johnson, Eidit Choochage, Hector Cerda, Jodean Greene

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Loneliness and emptiness are key themes after this situation.

After a breakup, people are often angry and need to do things to cope.

When a youth is put in foster care, it is kind of parallel to breaking up with your parents. It's dramatic and painful.

Loss can mean so many things - How do you rebuild and make connections after loss?

How do you ever talk about love again?

It is hard to fall in love after loss - it is scary learning to trust again.

One experience in foster care: I was treated with a lot of love that helped me love myself again. Watching my parents sign away their rights was a huge experience of grief and trauma.

It is equally as hard to talk about love as it is to talk about sex.

How do you tell a caregiver that you don't love them?

How can they hear that and not take it personally?

In foster care, they want you do what they say - and if you don't, they'll reject you.

So how is that love, and how is that family?

For most of my life, everyone in my life was paid to be in my life.

It made me question: Does unconditional love really exist?

My foster mother didn't love me enough because she didn't adopt us.

What would it look like if we did talk about love? How do we define love? How can we tell a youth what love is? What does it mean that someone can do a loving thing one moment, and then do a harmful thing the next moment?



I had some serious struggles with what it means that I had to “earn” love from my foster family. I am still learning to love myself as a result.

Negative labeling of foster youth makes it hard to tell yourself that you’re a good person.

We need a dynamic curriculum about what love is for current and foster youth and caregivers. What are the components of a healthy relationships?

Releasing shame is a big part of the journey.

I define love as when I feel safe.

The definition of love changes as you age.

Being healthy is noticing how you feel in different contexts and working to choose good love and good relationships.

It’s interesting how you can attract people who are not good for you.
How do you get out of situations when you know it is bad?
How do you keep away from situations that make you angry?
How do you keep the people you want in your life near you?



How do you tell someone they hurt you without being disrespectful - and how do you heal if you can’t have the conversation?

Open discussion and dialogue is necessary - peer-to-peer opportunities.

People give and receive love in different ways.

How do CASAs think they will be compatible with a youth after reading a case file?
We shared the idea that social workers not looking at a case file before meeting a youth would be powerful - and when they do meet a youth, they could ask questions to get to know the youth. And one question could be “What is love to you?”

How do you put a dollar amount on the type of care and love you are supposed to give a child?
How do you bring love into a group home when people are working in shifts?
How can there be permanency when someone is being paid?

Conditional and unconditional love: Can conditional love be enough if unconditional love isn’t possible?

In some homes everything is good until the biological family comes over for holidays, and then the foster youth is excluded. Same with respite care.

Do you treat group homes as a home, or as a hospital?
How do you impart love, when the reward for doing well is that you get to leave?

How do you absorb the impermanency of all of this?
Honesty and transparency is a really important piece of how workers and families can communicate about impermanence to youth. It is better to know up front that the relationship is conditional and limited, rather than figuring that out through implicit interactions.

There are ways to show love even in temporary placements, and this is perhaps a good opportunity to talk about conditional love.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Technology and Sexual Health Education

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Karla Torres

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Karla Torres

Los otros participantes

Other members: Elizabeth Davis, Kelsey Hunter, Jennifer Blanza, Tammy Rivera, Jamie Lee Evans

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Technology as a negative outlet:

- Cyber bullying
- Finding validation in peer comments / bullying and how it affects someone's identity formation
- Child pornography
- Sex trafficking
- Prostitution
- Reality versus perceived reality when it comes to viewing other people's "perfect" lives especially those of friends and celebrities - and how that can create a focus on sex and materialism

Using technology as a way to channel positive health education:

- Apps that will connect foster youth to positive mentors or messages (inspiring quotes)
- Connecting foster youth to long-lost family members
- Creating websites that will allow foster youth to share their stories and connect with former foster youth mentors in order to build a community
- Making sure agencies connect to the foster youth they serve so that foster youth have outlets on where to get their questions answered from a professional resource, versus from peers.

What needs to be done:

- Educating foster parents on safe limits around technology
 - Supervision
 - Ensuring that foster parents' own searches on for example, pornography, aren't being viewed by their children
 - How to monitor foster youth's cyber searches
- Educating foster youth on cyber etiquette, such as
 - Over-sharing
 - Bullying
 - Pornography
 - Online sex trafficking
- Creating clever / witty campaigns that engage youth to be more educated on the aforementioned examples



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Social Media and the Sexual Revolution - and How It Influences Our Youth

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Nef Franks

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Nef Franks

Los otros participantes

Other members: Teresa Owensby, Rita Naranjo, Thomas Stahl, Kelsey Hunter, Jennifer Blanza, Karla Torres, Jamie Lee Evans

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

The new issue of *Sports Illustrated* has a plus-size model.

Parenting can get harder because of social media.

There are some social media websites dedicated to building community.
But most of the time you see random dramas on social media - like baby daddy problems.

Some parents isolate the family from media, and pick and choose things for children to get involved in.
Some youth need to reach out to the world with social media.

At group homes, they will pay your cell phone bills so that youth can keep in constant communication with the house about logistics. At foster homes, there is a computer that you can access for education and work reasons.

The youth who are 13 and under have somebody watching over their shoulders, while the teenagers can do whatever they want, so as long as their school work is done.

In fact, in a higher level of care or being a level 12 youth, it is much harder to communicate on social media. Most facilities are locking up phones and only let youth use them when on family visits and / or whenever they let you.

There need to be house rules around cell phones - where there are times to use your phone and times you cannot - and there are rules about what you can and cannot share.

In general, there is a big loser in social media - yourself. There is a loss of face-to-face contact. Youth are texting their moms to get them water downstairs in the fridge, instead of getting up to get their own water.

While there is a loss in face-to-face communication, there is a gain in trust. It is easier to tell your foster parent / care providers things you don't want to say to their face via text. Why? I don't know - but is a lot easier for them to read it, so that they can think and be thoughtful about their youth instead of getting angry instantly in their face.

Maybe there needs to be an anonymous blog related to foster care, where youth are safe and can gain advice from other foster youth. Also, there needs to be an app for foster youth, that is accessible to all foster youth.

Some youth can also use and take advantage of the privilege of having phones.

In my experiences, youth have A.W.O.L.'d [gone absent without leave] because of their phone bill not being paid, or because their phones were taken away or turned off due to their behavior.

Some youth engage in sexual acts while on the run, as a form of rebellion against their foster parents not liking their sexual post on Instagram.

Some youth get their phone turned off in response to their Snapchatting in class - and their teachers call their care providers. Other schools take youths' phones away if they are nice enough.

Sometimes the phone provides comfort from loneliness.

This is a problem that I do and I notice other foster youth do, too: Foster youth compare their lives in group homes to reality shows and Instagram posts.

There isn't really a show about youth in the system who are fighting the cycle and odds. And when there is, it is not in the typical group home dynamic - it is an adopted kid with a support team and a family. And not many foster youth get to have a powerful support team that can also include family.

Some youth find their own family, all online.

Online campaigning is doing awesome, but it is not doing a lot unless somebody starts a movement.

There needs to be a community building workshop with social media involved, with a little bit of training about talking online.

There also needs to be a brochure, workshop, video, or something related to

- how to get some social media etiquette
- how positive social media experiences can work for everybody
- how negative social media hurts yourself and your future, and for
- how what you post can affect what type of jobs you're going to get.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

How to Recognize Signs of Abuse in a Relationship and Say No

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Jynnahlove Abshire

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Vaishali Singh-Sood and others

Los otros participantes

Other members: Chance Tarver, Lori Starnes, Teresa Owensby, Rita Naranjo, Daniel Oquendo, Nighat Iqbal

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Types of abuse

- physical
- mental
- verbal
- financial
- emotional
- sexual

The signs are very subtle.

- isolation
- separation
- control



Raise awareness.

Learn to recognize the signs that lead up to that. Teach how to recognize the signs and the triggers. Some of the signs go unseen.

Self-confidence and self-esteem drop.

Education and understanding of the cycle of abuse. Recognizing that it was not normal.

Recognize that perhaps it took time to develop. Cycles are created. It can escalate.

People not knowing they are being abused.

Wearing a mask and pretending.

Finding ways to excuse or dismiss the signs.

Just because you say it is okay, doesn't mean it is.

Controlling and separation are abuse. Manipulation of a person's thinking and feelings.

Nonverbal threats.

Being a "pleaser".

Be conscious of how others perceive things.

Understand the different forms of abuse. Both the “well-known” forms and the hidden, less known kinds.

What are the outlets? How do you provide help?
How do you get help as a victim? As an abuser?

Coming to terms.
Productive communication. Having / fostering a language to talk about it.

It’s about self-control.
Recognizing your role in it. What you are doing.
Expectations.
Allowing yourself boundaries.
Seeing red flags.

There is also unintended self-abuse.

Fear of the unknown.

Various forms of education via technology. Non-judgmental.
Social media blog? Forum.

Many avenues. A combined effort.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

How to Work with Children Who Have Been Molested / Sexually Abused

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Miracle Fauli-Garibay

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Miracle Fauli-Garibay and Jodean Greene

Los otros participantes

Other members: Amanda Sommers, Nighat Iqbal, Megan Huerta, Robin Smith, Angel Russell, Daniel Oquendo, Vanessa Hernandez

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Talk to FFA [Foster Family Agencies]

This is a violation of personal rights, and there needs to be a certain way that people are trained.

Parents? Social workers? Whose role is it to talk to children about being sexually abused?

What happens when a caregiver is not informed and doesn’t know how to talk to children who have been through these horrific situations?

Social workers can often place children without even explaining it to them, and might place them in a home that is not a good fit.

Seek knowledge to provide services. Does every county offer these services?

California Youth Connection and YOUTH Training Project need to present this topic at trainings since it is a topic left out of many people's training, and since it is hard for youth to discuss. In a training, foster parents and social workers can hear about it from former foster youth.

There need to be trainings about molestation and sexual abuse, since most foster youth have been in these situations. People need to be trained on how to identify a youth who has been sexually abused.

Often a child doesn't want help, but they are showing signs that they have been molested.

It needs to be regulated that caregivers must be aware of and informed about this topic and that they need to talk to youth about it. The caregivers don't need to enforce this topic on the youth, but they do need to support that child - whether if it means taking them to therapy to help them cope or to slowly talk about it with them.

We don't talk enough about boys being getting molested and sexually abused. They also need help. Many people ignore this. They need more help because it hurts their masculinity, and they to hold it in more, which hurts them mentally, emotionally, and physically. So there need to be services for them, also - so young boys can cope.

If no one is informed such as the caregiver and social worker, then how exactly is that hurt child receiving support?

Certain questions on the questionnaire for caregivers need to be changed, such as: Would you be willing to take a child who has been molested?

Every caregiver needs to be able to take a child who has been molested, because that is their job. That is the whole point of being a foster parent - to take a child in who is a victim of abuse and to nurture and support them.

Jodean Greene adds...

Everyone thinks it is everyone else's responsibility.

Kids are afraid that they will be judged if they tell - or may they not want to talk about it.

Providers need to know how to identify a child who has been molested.



The providers should have a comprehensive intake process which asks detailed question for the social worker before placement and for the child upon entry. Further assessment should be over the next 30 days to established the Needs and Services Plans.

The provider is responsible for working with the social worker to obtain resources to provide the necessary services for the child to effectively meet the child's needs.

The provider should have routine check-ins with the child to address all issues such as school, living arrangements, needs, self - even sexuality and coping. In time, the provider will obtain more information about the child from these conversations and both the child and the provider will be able to establish trust.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Sexual Assault and Coping

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Teffani Taylor

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Teffani Taylor

Los otros participantes

Other members: Tammy Rivera, Karla Torres, Robin Smith, Megan Huerta, Daileane Connors, Daniel Oquendo

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

When a youth says they were sexually assaulted, the best thing for them is to be supported: being in a trusted space and being consistent with the support.

Victims taken from a foster home should be given an assessment about how the home made them feel - from comfort issues to food issues.

The child welfare worker and the youth should together gather evidence that would build a case.

Don't label the youth as if they are a liar, if enough evidence is given. Because it will make them feel like they are isolated.

Exit review questionnaires should be given to every youth when they are placed in another home - to ensure the safety of the next youth to enter the home.

The pros and cons of each home should be documented. Evaluations should be kept with the Licensing Department.

The homes should be randomly checked by Licensing to assess the information given from the foster child who took the questionnaire. The ombudsmen should keep the data from the youth questionnaire (KEEP NAMES CONFIDENTIAL) - and any information found should be cross-reported with Health and Safety.

Homes should be closed once evidence of an assault is shown.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Exploring Sexuality and Identity

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Patterson Emesibe

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Patterson Emesibe

Los otros participantes

Other members: Kayla Corder, Miracle Fauli-Garibay, Noah Nash, Karla Torres, Heriberto Angel Arredondo Jr.

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Women showing their cleavage:

There are biases in this culture that say that women who show cleavage are sexually active. The other misconception is that if she is showing her body that she must have also been molested.

The question behind this conversation is: Why is expressing femininity through showing your body so closely associated with promiscuity?

This is also a double standard, because men do the same thing - but this is seen as a positive thing in society. Men can go around and sleep with any women in society and they are praised for it and it is seen as an expression of their manhood. If a women were to do the same there would be slut shaming and told that it is a wrong way of expressing your femininity.

New thread - Racial identity in care

Before a foster youth is placed into a home, they are sorted by skin color and then placed into a home. What agencies don't take into consideration is that color / race doesn't always mean that is how this youth identifies.

A youth who was Cuban was placed in a black home. From there she lost her Spanish and traditions that she was growing up with.

Also this makes it very isolating for a youth who is exploring their identity by making connections with their peers.

This multiracial Cuban youth - being black and Spanish - would go to school and would identify as Cuban. Their Mexican / Spanish friends' reaction would be "Do you speak Spanish?" And she felt outcasted. When she would go to her black friends she would say "I am Cuban" and their response would be "Come on girl, you know you only black. Why you trying to add other things?" Coming to the end of her struggle, she counts her success as checking both boxes on forms that ask her about her identity.

Another person shared...

I am Mexican and white and I grew up with a white and Samoan foster parent. This didn't have a major impact on my life because my Samoan foster dad could pass as Mexican - which allowed me to navigate through my school experience without being the center of attention.

Foster youth have their own ethnicity but grow up in different homes.
I feel like there should be training on identity for foster parents.

Going from placement to placement with the added trauma of rejection of one's identity is hard - and a common experience for foster youth. Identity = such things as race, gender, orientation, socio-economic level and abilities.

Another person shared...

Coming from a Nigerian home and being placed in a black home was different. Culture differences in upbringing were apparent every day in the home. It affected his siblings and made it hard to know what the foster parent wanted. This also created distance between individuals in the home.

Question:

Are there same sex foster parents?

There are same sex foster parents - the issue is, are their homes licensed as a couple or as a single individual? How do we create more homes like this? Because there was not an issue in the foster youth's health and wellness.

New Thread

Sex education is learned by peers. Foster youth and all other youth are learning from their peers. This is the normal experience of youth.

Males' education about sex - for foster and non-foster youth in our group - was through pornography. Trying to live up to the standard that has been shown to them through the internet.
Female foster and non-foster youth were educated in many ways that included pornography but also were not totally from porn.

Youth in group homes may be labeled with defiant behavior because of their masturbation.

Understanding the culture and upbringing of one's parents plays into sex education.

The cycle of no education continues every time a parent ignores teaching this to a child.
Sex education must happen for parents and youth and can be coupled with sex trafficking education, when youth exit care through emancipation. Foster youth are the most vulnerable to sex trafficking.

Also sex trafficking and pornography are industries that support one another.
A victim of sex trafficking maybe seen on a porn set without folks knowing that the woman is a sex trafficked victim.

Education about identity and sexual health must be given to care providers and to youth.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

How to Improve Licensing Standards to Support Healthy Sexual Development of Foster Youth?

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Teresa Owensby

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Teresa Owensby

Los otros participantes

Other members: Fernando Sandoval, Bill Bettencourt, Angie Valdez, Carolyn Reyes, Michelle Lahmon, Tyrone Hill

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Caregivers focus too much on being politically correct, and as a result the message is lost or not understood by youth.

Group home staff may be punished for answering questions related to sex.

Information sharing is different between licensed caregivers and group homes.

- Group home staffs are less likely to provide information regarding sexual development or answer questions related to sex.
- Some licensed caregivers do discuss sexual development, but youth are often not comfortable asking questions.

“Age Appropriate” - What does this “really” mean? The group discussed that this term has several meanings:

- Making a decision for a youth to participate in an activity that is age appropriate - means based upon such things as the child’s actual age, mental age, maturity, and behavior.
- Provide information that is age appropriate - means written at a level that is easily understood by the youth.

“Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards”

- Caregivers are reluctant to apply the RPPS [Responsible and Prudent Parent Standards] - as they receive conflicting advice from social workers and from licensing staff.
- Caregivers feel they will be punished for making a wrong decision when making a decision using the RPPS.

Caregivers fear that if they provide information regarding sex, it could be misunderstood to be promoting sex.

Licensing policies are often difficult to understand. They are not user-friendly.

Caregivers need to gain trust with youth, and ask the youth if they have questions regarding his / her sexual development.

Sexual development is a difficult topic to discuss as it often makes people feel uncomfortable. Caregivers often struggle with providing answers to questions - as they don't want to misinform youth or say something that might be interpreted to be harassing - or - cause them to be cited by licensing staff.

Social workers also need to be available to answer sexual development questions.

All (caregivers, licensing staff, social workers, and youth) would benefit from training about sexual development.

Conflict Resolution: Group home staff often do not know how to deal with certain situations within the group - which forces youth to have to handle (resolve) the issue on their own and to rely on their peers to answer questions - which could lead to youth being provided incorrect information regarding sexuality.

Breakdown the barriers. Sex doesn't need to be a negotiation conversation.

There is a lack of information available regarding healthy sexual development.

Most youth never have a conversation regarding sexual development.

Is it appropriate for a group home staff show youth how to properly use a condom?



Education, training, and communication are necessary to ensure youth are supported in their sexual development.

Caregivers

Licensing Staff

Social Workers

Youth

Tema

Issue / Topic:

I'm a Teen Mother in Foster Care ... Is There Hope for Me?

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Rita Naranjo

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Rita Naranjo

Los otros participantes

Other members: Nighat Iqbal, Brianna Robertson

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

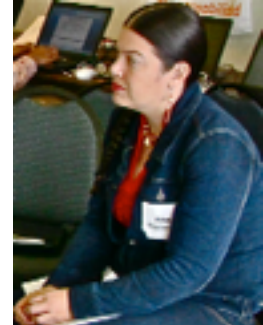
Being a mother at an early age while at the same time being a foster youth, we often face the challenge of people believing in us and in who we can become.

I, Rita was a mother at the age of 15 and had grown up in foster care and was also on probation. My goal is to share my story so that I can be an example of another truth to our story - that we are more than a statistic and that no one can predetermine our lives. We are conscious people who are wise, courageous, and conscious of our life circumstances. We are not blind to what we are living through.

Brianna shared her story of being a mother and of fighting to overcome many stigmas - as well as current struggles she is facing with her family while striving to shape and create a positive future for herself and her daughter. She is trying to find a better job. Although she has earned her Master's degree she is still struggling with finding a good job.

Nighat joined the conversation and passed on her contact information as a resource for Brianna to support her in possibly finding work within the county.

I (Rita) thought that was an awesome way to step up - Brianna being open about her employment needs and Nighat's willingness to pass on her contact information as a resource!
Awesome!



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Gender Roles and Values - and Boundaries and Respect - In Relationships

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Conveners: Jynnahlove Abshire and Meredith Ku

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Various folks

Los otros participantes

Other members: Heriberto Angel Arredondo Jr., Maignacia Villapudua-Soto

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Male / Female

Communication is IMPORTANT in relationships

Relationships should have mutual respect and understand each others' boundaries

Shouldn't have gender roles

Relationships need to be 50 / 50

Relationships need a mutual agreement

Relationships should have happiness

Be open in your relationship from the beginning

Be able to share thoughts without getting angry

Can religion take a part in a relationship?

Relationships are going to have fights, but it's the way you fix your disagreement that matter

Have expectations in a relationship

Need to find a balance in a relationship



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Healthy Relationships

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Vanessa Hernandez

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Hector Cerda and Vaishali Singh-Sood

Los otros participantes

Other members: Anna Johnson, Joy Anderson, Noah Nash, Lori Starnes, Dawn-Marie Luna, Rochelle Trochtenberg

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

This conversation actually carried over with many of the same folks who attended the “Love After Grief and Loss” discussion. Our discussion began with talking about setting boundaries that are healthy / unhealthy when we establish relationships.

There was a conversation about teachers, educators, caregivers and social workers possibly judging youth in care because those youth are acting within a certain behavior or boundary that they were taught at home - such as telling lies to survive from being abused, or yelling and or fighting because it was modeled behavior. And in some instances, adult professionals might not recognize that youth are acting this way in order to survive.

In regards to boundaries, the idea was discussed about how to have conversations with foster youth and other adults when boundaries are crossed.

It was also noted that foster youth might not have the skill set to be able to acknowledge or identify patterns of when they might feel someone is practicing unhealthy patterns of behavior towards them - such as crossing a boundary. And that as young people, they need that support and training / conversations to develop a skill set to set healthy boundaries with all the people they develop relationships with.

One discussion was about being in foster care and that as a younger person you don't even know what is the concept of boundaries. It is something that adults are expected to do for youth - but the conversation was also about how some adults in this world don't always know how to set healthy boundaries themselves.

We discussed how we learn what we live in. When we live in negative environments, we don't get to see healthy boundaries modeled for us - and it needs to be modeled.

The discussion then turned to the idea of a need for awareness, training and development of a curriculum for caregivers and foster youth so they can set their boundaries much better and initiate conversation.

There was one discussion about how sometimes youth setting their boundaries for the better can also push them away from the people they love - so they will need emotional support as they develop this skill set.

The conversation then led towards developing a "negotiating" type of skill set at a much younger age. Most people don't get this type of skill until college. Youth with understanding about how to "negotiate" or initiate conversations that allow a two-way discussion to compromise can lead to a much more healthy, vibrant adult life. Whereas youth who don't learn this skill can allow themselves to just become overrun, overpowered and less likely to advocate for themselves for the needs they expect in relationships with anyone. These needs in relationship could include such things as the salary for a job, romantic needs in a partnership, or respect from professionals.

Then our discussion went from general relationships to just strictly romantic relationships. Specifically to a question about whether foster youth should or should not date other foster youth. This thought stems from some foster youth feeling that there aren't any stable homes with stable celebrations of holidays or events to look forward to on either side of the relationship. The response was that while maybe that is a standard for some former foster youth, foster youth dating can be beneficial if you can help find each others' "holidays" .

Another response was that the system which takes youth from their families needs to provide the stability and the support so that foster youth who develop relationships can do so no matter what is their placement status.

There was also conversation around the idea that if foster youth date non-foster youth, then there can be a disconnect in upbringing, whereas one will not understand the other and it can lead to challenges.

There was a discussion about how foster youth in relationships are always looking for something - such as normal relationships - and that foster youth are less likely to be able to provide this to others or to each other. If there is a system of support - which should exist and not be absent just because they are in foster care - then that can help them figure it out and succeed.

Overall the conversation closed with the idea that young people in care need to learn respectful relationships that are attained through addressing conflict and disagreement in a healthy boundary-setting way.

Foster youth should not be denied the opportunity to develop a strong romantic relationship with anyone. And they should not have to hold prejudice against their own foster youth community when seeking out strong relationships - including romantic relationships - just because they are in care.

The training, support and modeling of behavior needs to be provided for them to succeed in relationships.



Vaishali adds...

Barriers for foster youth

Adults teaching boundaries
Setting professional / personal line
Balancing it

Love - conditional / unconditional What does love look like? Self worth. Self value. Self trust.

Past experiences that include trauma

Teaching children different environments

Redirecting
Getting information
Patterns of behavior
Acknowledgment

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Fatherhood and Supporting Young Fathers in Foster Care

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Tyler Whittenberg

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Shelby Howard and Elizabeth Davis

Los otros participantes

Other members: Shane Wallin, Gordon Jackson, Chelsea Stoner, Nighat Iqbal, Angela Carmack, Antonio Norman, Amy Kirsztajn, John Casey, Amanda Sommers

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Shelby writes...

Dads are often forgotten in the process of youth in care.

On clinical assessments sometimes the information about the dad is as limited as “unknown” or “whereabouts not currently known” or “uninvolved.”

There needs to be a greater commitment from service professionals to ask the questions about where Dad is, who Dad is, and how he can be supported to be involved, as well as his family. Sometimes dads are actually easy to find, if we just do the work to ask.

The system often asks the dad to prove their interest in involvement, rather than assuming - as we do with mothers - that they want and need to be an active part in their child's life. There are some larger cultural barriers of not seeing fathers as the "nurturer" or as an essential component to child development that seems to limit the effort put into including them. Research has proven the importance of paternal influence and more needs to be done to include them.



There are some programs being piloted with encouraging success, that focus on parenting support for teen dads. One program is focused on juvenile detention centers. When these dads are being supported both educationally and through access to be active parents, there is a change in their behavior in the detention center - and peers have reacted to them differently. This has also created a trend in the hall that is encouraging others to want to participate.

We talked about engaging dads in these types of programs - outside of detention centers. Dads who have gone through the process already have been the most effective promoters, as they are able to speak to their own experience.

Our group had some discussion about how to support dads who are significantly older than the minor dependent. There is a complication of legal repercussions for the dad, but that should not impact their ability to have a relationship with their child.

There is a need for more funding for these father-specific programs, and a need for all providers / those working with youth in foster care to not forget about the dads.

Elizabeth adds...

Observation: A positive role-model to represent the discussion - a fathering former foster youth with his children - joining the group and making a most significant, powerful impact (even in silence) to the group and discussion.

Discussion:

How can we support fathers?

Parenting fathers

Co-parenting programs (focus on family)

Behavior changes seen in juveniles who consistently see their child

Never seeing foster parents accepting co-parenting youth (Could it be done under AB 12?, reunifying families, incorporating training)

What's already available?

Identifying family in needs

Pilot co-parenting program in Fresno (parenting curriculum including attachment issues, relationship curriculum including healthy relationships and conflict resolution)

Personal experience "Received structure from foster mother", making differences in outcomes.

What to do when there's a large age gap between mother and father?, "Being around the child is always important."

Culture chains



Community outreach
Family finding, simply asking the questions

Psychoeducation (through education, programs, presentation)

“Power of Paternity” (Potential name for a program), federal grants for young fathers, “I Am My Brother’s Keeper” program by Obama

Needs:

Language: asking about the father

There needs to be more of that discussion from everyone. We all hold the responsibility to ask these questions and not just omit it because it is embedded in our culture to do so. Put in simpler terms, as humans, as a part of the human services field, the question stands: Who do you know that is part of your family, and who or what do you want to know more of?

Increasing informal supports or lack thereof

This discussion went along the same theme of asking the question and looking where to search in order to connect those in need to more support.

Not making the fathering foster youth “prove they want to be here” because it is making it optional.

Fathers who are also foster youth should not be told “You need to prove you want to be a father”. Instead, we as a society should be assisting them in providing them with the tools they need to be there, to want to be there, to know what they can do to be there despite their own experiences.

Dads with life experience could go along to father-friendly programs presentations and invitations.

We need community outreach and we have seen a lot of community outreach programs slowly disappear due to insufficient funds or cancellation of funds. There are many reasons for funding being lost including lack of participants - so, then, how can we reach out to the male population in need, to grab their attention and normalize their need for help and support?

Bringing “a vehicle to drive the discussion” (“Making the right amount of noise” to get things going, possibly talking to the Child Welfare Council).

How do we do it? What does it take to change?

Placements for co-parenting youth

Are there any placements that take in foster youth who wish to co-parent? The importance of attachment and future resilience around it.

Does the location of fathers of parenting foster youth come into consideration?

Along the same lines of attachment and allowing the opportunity for fathers to be close and not 30-plus miles away due to placement limitations: Providing more opportunity to these fathers to be successful and raise and create their own family (successful family) and finally break the cycle they have lived in before.

Action Items:

Tyler - who is the facilitator of a group from a Sacramento youth law center - will be sending more information on the pilot program currently running in Fresno and information about gaining federal grants for implementing these services all around. Many members exchanged business cards and the rest is yet to come... With collaboration and open discussions like these, the gaps will continue to be bridged.



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Discrimination Against LGBTQ Youth In Foster Homes and Group Homes

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Angel Russell

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-takers: Various folks

Los otros participantes

Other members: Briana McGeough, Keith Dunley, Monica Pavia, Glen Schnell, Rosalind Nalls, Chance Tarver, Jodean Greene, Maignacia Villapudua-Soto, Joel Segura, Geraldine Shing

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

This applies to both youth and staff.

Some youth were never exposed to this lifestyle - so they have no experience on how to respond and how not to offend. It was never brought up or addressed.

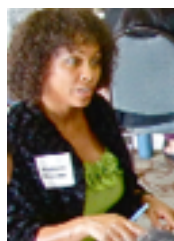
The key is to give kids information. Not to push anything.

Kids need information on basic information -and- about different lifestyles.

Some parents don't expose the child because they are unsure of how the child may react.

Staff must have legal regulations and training not only about LGBTQ but also how to keep their own beliefs out of their professional life.

People often don't realize they are biased until they are exposed to different lifestyles and different ways of thinking.



The sexual connection needs to be taken out of the idea of sexual orientation. LGBTQ people are always stigmatized by their being LGBTQ attached to being sexual.

Also there are assumptions. Example: A five-year-old boy wants to wear dresses. This is usually attached to an assumption that he is gay. Or that he wants to have sex with boys. Or that he wants to be a girl.

There is ignorance about the assumption of sexualization of a situation. And an assumption of sexual activity with sexual preference.

Sexuality isn't talked about enough.

A question facing parents: Do you talk about homosexuality? Or wait to do so? The key is to educate the child about the fact that there are all different types of lifestyles and choices - to practice tolerance. And to allow the child to make their own opinion about sexual orientation and about their own orientation. To allow the youth to explore.



If youth are exposed to different types of people and given this freedom, that does not directly affect their own orientation. Educate and expose youth to all different types of people throughout their life.

Make sure to have age-appropriate conversations at different ages, and continue these conversations throughout their lives. Never avoid or suppress “the talk” at any inquisitive age.

Should we take gender out of toys?

Intentionally expose children to both “types” of toys.

Example: A boy says he doesn’t want to jump rope because that is for girls.

- Ask them: Why do you think it is for a girl?
- Listen and respond with examples of how both girl and boy athletes use jump ropes.

The key is to stay neutral: Do not teach a child to have pre-conceived notions about gender roles and stereotypes.

Show the child the spectrum of different things.

Do you expose them to a lifestyle, or wait for them to come out to begin talking about it?

Everything in moderation.

Educate, but do not push.

Acknowledge that stereotypes are there, however avoid pushing them onto the youth.

Playing with Barbies won’t change a boy’s sexual orientation.

Give young people education about LGBTQ people and teach tolerance.

Let a child come to their own conclusion about their very own identity and sexual orientation.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Who Owns Information about a Foster Youth’s Sexuality?

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Shannan Wilber

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Sophia Herman

Los otros participantes

Other members: Grace Lee, Kate Teague, Thomas Stahl, Sylvia Pizzini, Rosalind Nalls

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

A Santa Clara Judge collaborated with the local CYC Santa Clara chapter to review her personal guidelines in regards to making decisions in the court room.

How do you make sure the people making decisions have enough information about the youth to make decisions while protecting the youth?

Most judges have the practice of “the more information the better”. Once that door of “tell me everything” has opened, everything documented in the court report is available for multiple entities to read. Sometimes the information about sexuality is important but is not necessary to include.

There are little carve-outs. Youth can consent to care. You can control the information. For example, if youth can consent to birth control, they can control that that information is or is not reported in the court report. The caveats [legal conditions] are being interpreted differently on a county-by-county basis.

Is it normal that everyone knows your sexuality?

We as social service agents have to normalize the conversation about sexuality. But youth should be able to say who they want their sexuality shared with.

All providers are expected and required to be non-discriminatory - but yet they do have discriminations, and the system supports them. The nature of the system is to have all kinds of intimate conversations with families and social services. But that act in itself is not normal! How do we normalize the lives of our youth when they are consistently expected to air out their dirty laundry to strangers on a regular basis?



“Everything I do and everything I am is being recorded.”

Foster youths’ lives are so dictated by the system. Sometimes they cannot have the most basic experiences, because people have to be fingerprinted to hang out or visit with them. This includes for such things as sleepovers and dating. This is even harder when youth are placed in group homes.

Most times we are thoughtful as social workers about the information that is being disclosed. It is when people are not thoughtful that they are hurtful to the youth with the information they are disclosing.

Child welfare professionals should talk to youth about sexuality issues, and it should never go onto a court report unless it is relevant and unless the youth consents.

When youth come out in their own timeline, they can have a positive experience. And when youth are outed, they typically have a negative experience.

Non-Minor Dependents get their court reports in the mail. Youth older than 12 years old have access to their court report through their attorney. This typically happens right before court - and it leaves little space for a youth to disagree with what is written. Many times families and youth disagree with what is written in the court reports - and yet this information follows them throughout their relationship with social services. There is currently no structured way to disagree with court reports.

Some professionals write good court reports by keeping in mind that youth may read these files later. This is however not very common, and many reports are filled with opinion versus with factual information. A lot of workers feel compelled to write about everything - including when the youth get into trouble. How often do your mistakes follow you around? In foster care your mistakes follow you around forever.

When social workers write about youth, sometimes they write all the bad things the youth have done to justify a placement change, so that the performance review does not look bad. Counties are looking to have fewer placement changes and so youth behavior is documented to justify placement changes or reasons for reunification failure.

We should practice only documenting the things that relevant to the child and their needs for placement. Young peoples’ sexuality is not something that is bad or wrong. It should not be documented unless you are worried they are going to hurt another person due to their sexuality.

Many social workers are getting right out of school and “hitting the floor running” without any real training on how to write court reports or case files. Many social workers are anxious about writing these reports. How do you deliver the information? How do you own the information? How do you write the information? What is needed and what is private? Some social workers write everything that sometimes has no purpose or place in the reports. Case files are like journaling - and court reports

should not be that. A good practice is that people should put more in the case file than the court report.

It is a good practice to always ask the youth if they feel comfortable with the personal information in the court report.

There are multiple layers of control of information. Verbal, written case files, and court reports. Who owns the information included in the files? The relationship you have with that youth should be the first stop for questions. Such as asking them when they are ready to come out, because they know how the people in their community will react to that information best. It is them who has to live with the aftermath.



Foster parents always want to know about past behaviors. Youths want to make a good impression on foster placements. How do you manage all the needs and pressures - yet still provide / support a placement and the needs of both foster parents and youth?

Ask youth what they want to share. Ask youth, and create a space for this conversation. "I want to know everything you want to tell me" - versus having the case file be the only thing that speaks to foster parents or reading the file before you met the youth.

Are there conversations happening about how to welcome youth into the home?
About how much to share? And is the information being shared being shared because it's a need-to-know? Or because it's a liability?

Some social workers have a practice where they let youth visit multiple families and choose which family they want to live with. We have to encourage the adults to paint a real picture of life at their home and build relationships - versus youth thinking they are being painted a picture of something not offered. Sometimes youth reflect and learn that they should have chosen another family versus the one they chose.

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Queer Youth in Foster Care Deserve...

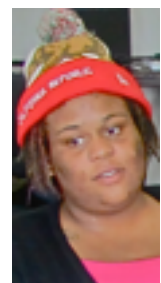
La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Nef Franks

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

[Nef invites you to jot down some ideas in response to this topic - and then invites you to email to share your thoughts and questions, programs and comments:
neff@calyouthconn.org]



Tema

Issue / Topic:

Foster Youth, Physical Activity and How to “Be” in Your Body

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Jamie Lee Evans

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Jamie Lee Evans

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

Foster Youth, according to research - and in this youth organizer's personal and anecdotal experience - show that former foster youth have poor health outcomes and issues in their late teens and early 20's with health management.

Connecting teenage physical activity and sexual health may seem like a stretch, but consider this question: If youth are not able to experience full or even partial physical embodiment, it makes this former foster youth wonder, how sexual empowerment or embodiment is possible?

When a youth does not know how to care for themselves physically, they will end up feeling dull, tired, drained, exhausted and generally bad in their body. If a youth feels negative about their body because they are flabby, puny, super-sized or just out of shape, it is hard for them to feel 100% sexy or like an equal sexual partner.

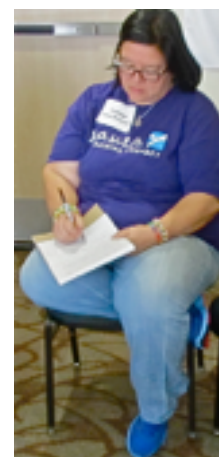
Sexuality is a complicated experience to navigate. There are many questions, insecurities, and fears that are part of deciding to be sexual with someone. When a youth is confident in their body (no matter the size) and has had the experience of challenging themselves physically, growing a muscle, increasing their strength - literally stretching and growing - they are more likely to be in tuned to what their body can do and what they might want to do with their body sexually.

Physical empowerment equals better sexual health. Yep, that's what I just said.

When I think about the amount of wasted hours on youth in traditional talk therapy, with therapists who the youth can't relate to or dare I say even like, I think about wasted hours of opportunity to have a youth more connected to themselves, enlightened, educated and made self aware.

As a person who struggled with my health in my early 40's, based on a few decades of questionable health habits, I stumbled upon the work with a personal trainer. There was one particular day I worked with my trainer that exploded an epiphany in my brain. I was doing bench presses and my trainer was standing over me. I was new to training, maybe been in it for about a month, and my trainer "spotted" me while I pushed a near impossible amount of weight above, exhaling as I pushed upwards and inhaling relief as the weight was able to come back down to the rack.

After a set that I felt pretty miserable at, the trainer said, "Okay, we will now add five more pounds." I looked up at him from the bench and said, "Ha ha good one," as he set up five pound weights on each side. I thought he was kidding. I couldn't believe it. But since I was paying him, I decided to shut up and push. Slowly I got the weight up. Three sets went by and I was shocked. Then he said he would be adding five more pounds. I said, "Really? Have you seen how I am struggling? I would like to keep my teeth please." To which he said, "You got this" and



proceeded and added five more pounds to each side. I shut up again and pushed up. This scenario was repeated one more time with 2.5 pound weights on each side added one final time. That means I ended up lifting 25 more pounds than I thought I could. I couldn't believe it. I was in shock. And I was proud. Stoked. Happy. Elated. Did I mention proud?

I also felt supported, and empowered - as though I was able to accomplish more because I was working with someone who actually knew my abilities and potential more than myself. He saw something in me that I didn't see. I gotta admit, I shed a tear during this session.

Afterwards I walked away with a sense of appreciation and wellness and accomplishment. I also thought how great it would have been to have someone like this believe in me and work with me twice a week when I was in foster care. When I was a teenager. When I was learning to believe in myself, push myself, and grow.

Bench pressing directly connected to sexual growth and development? Yes. Just yes. When a youth feels strong in their body, they are better able to know what feels good to them and what doesn't. That makes them capable of giving legitimate consent. Makes them more likely to be able to seek out the partners of their dreams versus succumbing to the dreams or nightmares of someone else.

Foster youth could benefit from:

- Regular physical exercise
- Personal training / physical coaching and guidance
- Gym memberships
- Team memberships
- Watching other youth or professionals play inspiring sports
- The purchase of clothing specifically cute and appropriate for physical activities

Tema

Issue / Topic:

Support for Pregnant and Parenting Foster Youth

La persona que haya identificado el tema de la discusión

Convener: Mariah Corder

La / Las persona(s) que toman las notas

Notes-taker: Mariah Corder

Los otros participantes

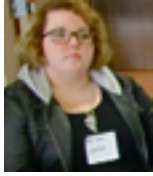
Other members: Jennifer Blanza, Eidit Choochage, Kelsey Hunter, Daniel Oquendo

Notas de la discusión, conocimientos claves, preguntas pendientes, observaciones, y cosas para hacer y siguientes pasos si apropiadas a esta discusión:

Discussion notes, key understandings, outstanding questions, observations, and, if appropriate to this discussion: action items, next steps:

We thought the infant supplement should be increased to at least double, and that case files need to not be accessible.

Preventing the foster care cycle is important and also preserving the relationship between a foster youth and a foster parent. Preserving the youth-to-caregiver relationship can prevent the removal of the youth and infant from the foster home.



The youth of a foster parent is not a foster youth themselves.

Youth over the age of 12 must be provided with medically correct sexual education if they request it.

Questions:

What is the role of the co-parent?

If foster siblings become pregnant or get the other youth pregnant, is it the “fault” of the foster parent for not supervising the youth?

Whose responsibility is it to have the safe sex talks with the foster youth? When should this occur?

Is it the social worker’s call to remove a child from their parent if they see the parent is unfit?

Is it an option for a youth to get an abortion?

If a youth chooses to get an abortion, must a foster parent take them to get the procedure? Or does a social worker do it? If neither one takes them, is that denying them the right to medical procedures?

Can a social worker or foster parent advise a youth to not get, or to get, an abortion?

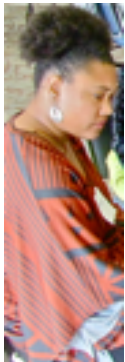


Tema

Issue / Topic:

Post-Conference Reflections

Miracle E. Fauli-Garibay shares this post-conference reflection about education programs:

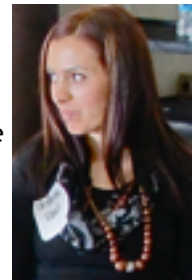


I came up with a recommendation to have age based education programs teach about sexuality targeting foster youth, especially with all the different topics that we came up with at the conference.

It will be great to have to those be taught at school in high school and college settings.

Elizabeth Davis reflects back about the conference as a whole and these are the thoughts and words that resonated for her:

- Feeling of connectedness, fathering, being part of revolutionary discussions
- Being part of the bridge
- Building the bridges between two worlds (such as discussion with foster youth and licensing).
- “Fill-up station”
- “Removing the blame on the youth and putting the blame back on the system where it should be”
- “Everything I do and everything I am is recorded” - one foster youth
- “You can’t give consent without being given more than one choice” - in regards to foster youth not being provided with choices, always being told what to do and the expectation of them knowing how to have or what is consent without that.
- “What would the world look like if workers didn’t look at a chart before meeting a youth?”



Closing Circle Comments and Reflections

Good afternoon. I am going to model crispness. It is great to hear what everyone has to say. I am an administrator for the State of California. My life is a meeting. I sit in many a meeting. When I first came today, and I saw the structure, I said, "I don't know how loosey-goosey this thing is going to be. How much can we get accomplished?" but indeed, I am walking away with a great sense of the power of this format, and most importantly, this dynamic dialogue between people who care, searching to make the difference. The piece I take away with me is that I learned a lot of some of the concerns, some of the issues. I thought education was challenging - and yet I have learned so much more. I recognize my role now in moving ahead. How am I going to do what we need to do. A recognition of the importance of this work, and an abundance of needs.

Coming in today, I didn't know what I was going to experience. I have never been to this kind of forum before. I am leaving with a lot of "aha!" moments. One that struck me was in the first group I was in, about breaking cycles. It really resonated with me, hearing a motivation behind not following in a caregiver's footsteps for this person, this daughter with her siblings. But another thing she meant was creating more resources, more books, and more information about the courage and the power that foster youth have. Not just about surviving, but about the power and strength they have. About creating change through that.

For me it was very similar to what she was talking about - not knowing what I was going to get out of it. I was really really pleased to find the feeling that he is an educator, some of us are social workers, some of us are in licensing - seeing our different roles and seeing how connected we really are. How we can all come together being in one circle, with great flowing discussion about all these things. It is a great feeling to be a part of these revolutionary discussions. I don't see what we are talking about very often - father, foster youth, sexual education for foster youth... I was very pleased to be a part of this, and I look forward to staying connected. And to continue to connect more all the dots about these same things looking forward.

This was my first experience with Open Space, and also what awesome conversations happened. As soon as I got here, my mind was blown. Each conversation I walked into. I'm still processing. One thing, an "aha" moment, was seeing people saying, "Tell me something good that our agency does." Being willing to hear what each person can do better. Having open ears to what each person can do made it fulfilling. And so many things I can do were incorporated into all that. I had to go outside to process what I was thinking, write things down, and step back into the room. I cannot wait to do this again!

Today served as sort of a fill-up station for me. I can go back to my agency full not just of resources but also thoughts. It is easy in this type of work to get drained. And this was rejuvenating.

This is my third say on the job. The list of topics on the agenda - LGBT gender identity and expression... they told me it was going to be a conversation around healthy sexual development for youth, and that the youth were going to steer it. I felt it would be transformative and productive, because meetings usually aren't productive half the time. Some of the things in the discussions around healthy relationships, foster youth dating other foster youth - the negative notions behind it - someone meant that the blame is put on young people. We need to remove the blame from young peoples' bodies - and put it on the system, and hold it accountable. I am going to be working forward with these thoughts and ideas as I am implementing the work we are doing in the Central Valley. I am grateful to be here.

This morning what was impactful for me was watching a lot of the topics being posted up on the agenda wall. From what I could tell mostly by the youth in the room. To me, that was really exciting. We are courageous people. We have been through a lot. We have courage to talk about these things. I say "we" because I feel very much a part of my foster youth community - even though I'm getting up there. Another thing that was really important for me was to bring up a topic about breaking cycles. As a former foster your, as a mother who is also preparing for the future, for my children - to recognize that our stories are still very relevant. Hopefully they will still be when I am in my 80's, my 90's,

maybe my 100's. I really want to continue to tell my story, because I know it does have a big impact. We are examples of people who have survived with thoughtfulness. With strategy. With courage. With love. With hope for the future. For other generations. I want to thank the group members - the participants - for their willingness to ask me questions about how I got to where I am today. It still takes a lot - every day of my life - to have courage to continue, every day with love and hope for the future. Thank you to the participants for being good listeners, for giving their lives and their attention, for staying involved, hoping to make a difference.

Any time I come to meet up with Lisa I am so blessed. I am appreciative of the people who are able to step outside of their own comfort zone of what they are supposed to do - to listen to someone who has been in foster care share their story of how things really go. In the reality of not just what happens in mandating and regulations and rules, but to be able to be, "Oh. I never thought of it that way. Now I have a better understanding, although I still have to do my job at the end of the day." That was great.

The first thing I thought of was, "I wish they would have had something like this when I was a youth." To be able to talk to other people. To have an opportunity to speak openly. And to hear you are not the only one who has been through something. The only time I have really wished I was younger was today. I appreciate this dialogue. Our job dealing with human services sometimes has rules and policies - and those rules and policies don't always work for everyone. This reminds us how important it is to individualize everything.

When I first came in I expected tables. And I was analyzing all the chairs in the circle, and then the paper on the floor - and I was thinking, "What are they going to do here?" I was trying to analyze "What is going to happen here?" Which... I thought it was great. I think it was different. I enjoyed when all the people were writing down their topics. "Wow. That's interesting." "Oh my god, I never thought about that." One really great topic that was really powerful to me talked about recognizing the power. The power that we have. That was strong. And this young lady - she broke the cycle. She said, "No. This is not going to happen to me. I'm going to break the cycle. I'm going to change the way sometimes we stereotype others because of what happened to one person. It's not going to happen to me. I'm going to use the tools of education so I can help other people. It's not going to happen to me." It was very powerful. Now she is a speaker. She got her Masters degree. Now she is helping other foster children. And she brought in her brothers and sisters into her own care. I am so glad I was a part of this.

I am coming away from this conversation with a greater insight of these issues, from the other side of what I do. Working from the youth and not an adversarial situation is a conversation I come away with with greater insight.

I would like to thank everyone here for their participation. Because without the collective thoughts from everyone, I don't think we would have accomplished what we did here today. The word "brave" comes to mind. You came open to sharing. Whichever organization you are from, you didn't shy away from that. Which was pretty impressive.

This was a very interesting format for this type of meeting. It was interesting hearing everyone's different opinions and perspectives, and from all different backgrounds. I was glad I was a part of it.

Thank you for the invitation for us to come here today. I thoroughly enjoyed being here. I was a little uncomfortable initially. I spend my life attending meetings. But I even felt safe to share. It was very positive. Thank you.

When I first came I was a little hesitant. I had never doing anything like this before. I was kind of excited. It was a new experience. The group I enjoyed the most was how to support youth who have experienced sexual trauma - because it was amazing. It was great to collaborate with officials and to share my own experiences, as well as getting treated to their different perspectives. It was amazing. We opened up about positive improvements, and an official asked me what kind of music I like because we were talking about youth as whole people. I like having that become part of my identity, becoming part of me in the future. I am really thankful for that.

This was interesting. I really feel thankful that I was invited to attend this conversation, and it was really information that I will take away - that youth understand the choices they want. Choices that... sometimes in our capacities, we don't have choices. But understanding our choices is part of a phase of growing up. What I'm going to take away with me is that sometimes the choices we make come with consequences. And you may want to prevent us from those consequences happening. But at the same time, you need to respect and honor our choices.

I am also very grateful for having been invited to have this experience. To meet everyone, and to really share the power of education and networking. I think that as a result of this conference and when we see the publication comes out of it, we can then again remind ourselves later about the value of all of the resources and connections we made throughout this day. For me it was very important. And I think that some of the ideas that we focused on - the groups I was involved in - revolved a lot around education. And sharing and meeting everyone here was an educational process for me. Hopefully we will stay in contact, so we can elevate that sharing of information. Thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to the next conference.

I have never participated in a forum like this. I thought this was really educational for me - to be in small groups and to talk about the work we do and the experiences we have. The similarities and the differences with our work and the jobs we do. I really appreciated that. Thank you to the organizations that extended the invitation to our department to participate.

I echo what you just said. This is the first experience I have had participating in this process. It was very enjoyable. And I was struck by the topic of healthy sexual development for young people in foster care - and all the topics folks chose to talk about. And how it speaks to the complexity of the work that needs to be done. I appreciated the diversity of the group that was here. That was important. And the work that is before the Council and the State. Taking this information onward, we will be informed through this process. And I think that the context of intersectionality - of all the aspects of identity and development around race, culture, ethnicity, class - it is an important piece to check as a framework this important work.

I was in a meeting with Sylvia and Jamie when the planning was happening. And I was and am so moved by Sylvia's openness. Jamie was introducing this concept of having this Open Space thing happen, and Sylvia didn't miss a beat. She was hearing something for the first time - it was completely foreign to you - and to me. And you said, "Let's do it!" And I was so moved by that. In the same way I have been moved today by peoples' willingness to talk about whatever. The freedom that has been in the room. Particularly about these topics around which there is so much silence. I am grateful about that. When I entered the room I was struck with how many young people were here, and my heart was just filled with joy to see so many young people. And to see so much diversity in terms of race and ethnicity. Thank you.

When I walked in the room... A little context: Every single day I am in all-day meetings. Like we are typically at tables, with agendas. Even with people I love. But nonetheless, meetings. So when I walked in, it was really exciting. There were a lot of people I don't know. "That's great!" And the circle thing. And the paper on the floor. "Well, this is different. But it's not 'business as usual.' Bring it on!" A couple of things occurred to me several times. I am a lawyer. One thing I was thinking over and over again is how often the law dictates how people behave - rather than how peoples' experiences could be dictating the law. And how we get it wrong sometimes. And in particular, a couple of the groups today were really about how the personal or private information of foster youth is just out there and shared with so many people. And what that experience is like. So I popped up to go look at our notes - and I wanted to share something that someone wanted to share in the group - that made a big impact on me. He said, "Everything I do and everything I am is being recorded." And I am just really still thinking about what that experience must be like - trying to take that in, and thinking about what I can do as a lawyer to try to take that into consideration. I really appreciate that. Thank you.

I really appreciate the Open Space that was provided for me to share in the groups - and their willingness to listen to my experiences. And to my suggestions to improve the lives of other foster

youth. It was really awesome to hear their perspective of things, too. I only have my own perspective to base my life on. But their experiences were really cool to reflect on. So thank you, for sharing.

I just am grateful to myself, for prioritizing this day. Because I could have gone to many other meetings - and thankfully, I did not. Being a grandmother and having an experience of foster care - it is really good to see the generation today stepping forward and being in your power. I am really grateful to everyone for continuing to listen and to make this better. I was really struck by when you spoke to the group earlier in this circle - you put it into words. When you said "We move the shame and the blame from the bodies of the youth, and onto the system. And we hold the system accountable."

I am a very non-linear person. I drive Type A personalities crazy. I think this rock with the fossils in it is symbolic of how much change happens in the world from conversations. This is a unique collaboration of lawyers and social workers and policy makers and licensing - and former foster youth who have lived to tell the story and are doing really well and role modeling - current and former foster youth. These kinds of things don't happen unless folks in the field have a desire to make a difference, and to help sexual development improve. A desire to fix things. Meetings like this typically don't come together. This is a great role model of collaboration. It is important that you tell people that it can be done. Foster youth can come together with truly diverse service people to make really good recommendations. There were really good conversations about consent. When you talk about how foster youth are challenged to give consent. Because of how foster care does things, youth are told what to do. Where to live. Sometimes your name is even changed. You are told to call your foster parents Mom and Dad one day after you are in there. There's no control of your own. And all of a sudden you are supposed to be a fully empowered person? To give sexual consent? That doesn't make sense. Consent starts at age 4 or whatever, whenever you get education and choices, it begins. I want to thank the youth who prioritized this meeting. Some youth got stipends, and some did not. And everyone cared about this topic. And we normalized conversations about sexuality. About naming sexuality. And we normalized it. Nobody even hesitated about that stuff here - you just talked about it.

I think this was a beautiful experience. It was my first time doing this. I liked the facilitator - she did a good job. I think the topics that were talked about today were really good - people really dug in with their hearts and also dug for experiences. Maybe even experiences that they felt unsettled or had trauma about. I was glad to know that. I got to share a lot. We were able to appreciate everyone's confidentiality. I thought that I was walking into a talk about sex - and I realized we were more talking about how can we talk about sex to our youth, without it being taboo. Or without a silence taboo. It's not talked about. I mean, what is sex? Youth should be talking about it. People are not going to talk about it. Are the social workers going to talk about it? I hope that somebody can take this into the community.

I appreciated everyone listening to our stories. This is one of the few places where I actually feel that young can be heard - or rather, that we get a voice. I am really grateful that everyone who came here is passionate about it. That we are not just here because we were told to be here. I definitely want to come to another meeting like this.

I think someone mentioned the bravery of everyone in the room today in these conversations. And I have a lot of gratitude for the current and former foster youth in the room. And I think about the passion in the room, and about how much creativity there is.

I also was quite humbled by what was shared in all of the groups. In particular, "Love After Grief and Heartbreak" - where people were sharing things. I felt so honored to be there, and to hear what they shared. Especially around the nature of what is conditional love, and how we experience that, and how it's really hard. I think the most concrete thing I am taking away is around what the world would look like if workers and providers didn't look at a chart before they met you. And how that would shift how we engaged.

I am very very glad. Today I walked in without much experience. And I never went to an Open Space event. I saw the banners around the room and different folks from different areas in life - and all to come together in a space to talk about such important issues. Issues that I am passionate about. The biggest thing I take away is the stories. And it always surprises me how impactful someone's story can

be - it can change the way you think, the way you move. In this room, people can tell their stories, and people can go out into the world thinking about those stories. I am so lucky to have heard the stories I heard, and I appreciated everyone being so open about their own life journeys. I was very touched, and I am thankful. And ready for Part Two, so make it happen!

I appreciated the genuineness of every participant, and also the diversity of backgrounds and experience. And getting to have a meeting format that felt really equally open to everyone from different life experiences, ages and positions. There was not a sense of hierarchy in that. I really appreciated that. I am taking away the fact that there is a lot more opportunity than I was aware of. I can bring this diversity of thought to the people I supervise, and make sure I access those diverse thoughts and experiences better.

I appreciated there wasn't an introduction at the beginning of the meeting - "What do you do?" "Where are you from?" - it really didn't happen here. And it forced me to really listen to peoples' stories, and to speak my mind. To not put down a barrier. It definitely opened that kind of a door for me and made me think. And it made me really look at people when we were speaking with youth, and made me think about what and how we do things when we are in positions of power.

I am really happy I came into this. I was supposed to work today. I was skeptical, on my two-hour ride down here, and I didn't get paid for the hours I could have worked today. But then I really enjoyed this, and whether it was free or not, I would do it again, if I had to take the whole week off to do it. To hear stuff from people my age, from older people, from others who have been through what I have been going through in the past. It was really good to hear other peoples' stories.

When I think about today, I feel really appreciative that some of the older people went through what I've gone through in the past. It was really good to hear others' stories.

I feel really appreciative that the dialogue and conversations and interest in my getting to know who was here also extended into lunch. It is grounding to share a meal with someone you don't know and still have great dialogue. And also even to just have lunch. I can't even remember what I did for lunch throughout my work week.

I was really struck by how siloed people can get, and how everyone is running around. Our jobs are so busy. Our lives are so busy. So much of my work is with child welfare and probation, and yet I notice how one-dimensional it has been. Coming here I have seen so many different aspects of this work and this life, and I think that this needs to happen so much more often - because it really changes the way that one thinks. And we need to bring this back and have staff involved and have more forums like this, where there is a more diverse type of thinking.

Like many others, this was my first time in the Open Space format - and I was very skeptical. I thought first that this was not my cup of tea. My mother told me that I'm not an early adopter [*laughter*]. I have had very few opportunities to be with former foster youth and foster youth. There are stories that come to mind as I think about today that I think will inform the way I think about it. And I want to bring more changes like this one, with more diversity, to our office. I am looking forward to that.

I want to give a big thank you to Jamie and to the YOUTH Training Project for making it possible for me to be here today. I will never forget this - it was definitely a life-altering event. And thank you to everyone here. I feel like everyone here is an innovator. And they have their own challenges in their systems. They know it can be better. And hopefully we made strides in figuring what are some possible steps to take. I'm going to take away a lot of thought. I feel like my eyes were definitely opened to the possibilities and the changes that could be made, and that I could personally make. And it is also an evaluation of my old life. My self. I am glad I was able to realize that. Change starts with one person. You got to look at yourself - whether you are looking at a different legislation or something personal. You got to start with your self first. So thank you everyone.

I really loved this format. The discussions were what I really loved. I was able to meet a lot of people and had personal conversations with people who I had thought were distant stars; distant fairies. I got to know them today. They're not fairies - they're people. Which is great. On a micro level, the

conversation about virginity and abstinence - the physical and the psychological interpretation and what that implies, and what experiences the youth have in the system - that is a take-away that is even more emotional than what one may express.

I am taking away a reminder about what it means to really deeply and authentically connect. I appreciated that Lisa went one step beyond “put your cell phone on silent” but more than that: Be real. Be present. Put it away, to have openness to encounter each other differently. That was one thing I really embraced and enjoyed. And I am taking away lots of sparks of energy and thoughts. Often we come up with a rule or a regulation and a training - when what we really need is conversation. Because that’s what changes things.

Thursdays are my Fridays. Usually I’m watching Batman and drinking a beer. I’m a college student. When I saw everyone putting up their agenda, I was skeptical. But I did it. And the topic I chose was really important - how to talk to youth who have been molested. And I was glad I talked about it. We talked about trainings for caregivers and social workers. As I was typing my notes, I realized that we exclude boys. We always focus on girls who have been hurt - but we don’t talk about boys. They’re hurt because that affects their masculinity. It hurt them to not talk about them. I love the feeling to empower people and myself - to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. I plan to be a leader in policy. So thank you very much for this opportunity.

I was glad I went almost last in this circle, because I am a very reflective person. As I walked in today, I was a multitude of different faces. Different colors. Various ages. Everyone came, even though they didn’t all get paid to come. I was in foster care for fourteen years. I changed into the person I am today based off of support and resources that I was able to take part in and because of those advocating for foster youth while I was in care. As people get older they want to give back - people who came before me made it happen. As I age, hopefully I can impact those who are in foster care as well. Thank you.

That was beautiful. I’m always going to listen to Jamie. I’m a Type A person. We are a team, and Jamie brought the inspirations she had from many of you to plan an event that would move us forward, to support foster youth and their healthy sexual development. She brought that to the table. She came up with this idea. She brought Lisa. And with Adeke and Andrea we were this small-yet-mighty planning team. Thank you for helping us capture your wisdom, allowing you to show us your bravery and your good thinking around these issues. I am so appreciative of everyone here. My goal is to take all of this and to make it into actionable strategies - to move forward. To keep teaming with all of you to improve the lives of beautiful people in foster care.

I am happy to be the Co-Chair of the subcommittee where this idea was born - of doing something. I want to take a moment to appreciate the power of decision-making. You decided what to wear, how to comb your hair, which clothes to wear - and also you decided to be here. And not only to be here: You decide to engage. You decided to participate in great ways. And great things have happened in the world because decisions have been made, giving birth to other decisions for those sitting in the State Capitol. You have contributed to that greatly. It is so abundantly appreciated, and thank you. It starts. Thank you for your partnership, and for your teamwork. For providing us with an opportunity that we won’t soon forget, which has provided us with new opportunities to renew our understanding and to make decisions. That, too, is greatly appreciated.

About Open Space Technology

This conference was convened using the meeting and conferencing process called Open Space Technology. 'Technology' in this case means simply a tool; a process. However like most facilitated processes - as those of you who convene groups may know - there is much more to the productivity and use of this tool than putting topics on the wall and conversing in circles.



Open Space is a method used around the world for convening participant-driven conferences, interdisciplinary knowledge-sharing and task work, sharing of best practices, participatory decision-making and understanding each other across differences. It has also been used for conflict transformation in places like Northern Iraq, Israeli and Palestinian lands, Haiti, East Timor and Serbia. In Open Space, people typically work together more quickly, break through to new thinking, and appreciate each other in new ways. One facilitator can convene 20 or 2000+ people.

The time span for this process can be from ½ day to several days in length - there are different deliverables associated with different length Open Space events. The longer the event, the deeper and richer the depth of thinking, energy, momentum, new ideas, stakeholder involvement and community building. As participants move between sessions, they build on each others' thoughts while their thinking and interaction shifts from cognitive and linear to more intuitive and interconnected levels of thinking. A multi-day Open Space offers participants a chance to 'percolate' overnight, helping them to cluster and reorganize their thinking, process their experiences and jump into a new day of Open Space with new energy and ideas for discussion. A several-day event can also include completing the Open Space and then shifting into action planning, if this is appropriate for the task, group and context of the meeting.



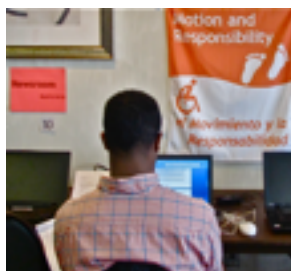
Open Space was originated in 1985 when Harrison Owen designed and planned a conference, then noticed that all the best work was done during the coffee breaks. All the networking, deal-making, visioning, and collaboration. All the new ideas, new products and new programs came from small circles of people chatting over similar passions and interests. Just as it happens in life. So for the next conference he designed a process that would be all coffee-break energy, all the time. Thus Open Space Technology was born. To date this method has been used in over 140 countries and a diversity of settings, cultures and industries.

Learn How and When to Use Open Space



A deceptively simple process, it is essential to learn when Open Space is the right tool and when it is not, how to adjust the design for action planning, conflict resolution, or other variations, and why your intervening during an Open Space (for example if there is conflict in the group), organizing participants' topics and sessions for them or shortening certain sections of this process can be the worst thing to do. Just like any tool, it is not the right tool for all jobs and it is best to learn well when and how to use it.

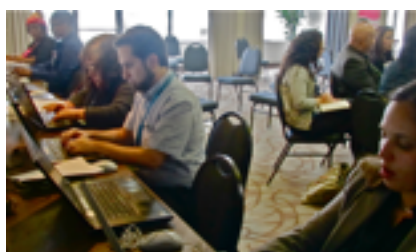
Thorough, thoughtful pre-work ensures the success of the meeting - the core planning team and facilitator work together on communication, design, planning, logistics, decisions regarding site and food, documentation and more. It is also important to know the deliverables and the limitations of doing a short Open Space versus a one- or two-day Open Space. If the sessions are shorter than (for example) one hour, only the quick-responders get to share their thoughts, which diminishes the richness of thinking from diverse participants. And if it is too short a time frame for the basic form of Opening Circle and agenda co-creation, multiple discussion sessions, and Closing Circle



comments and reflection - another great interactive process should be used, not Open Space.

It is also important to know that if you only use one part (for example) of this process, or morph or hybridize it, the originator and specialists in this process around the world request that you not name it Open Space. Only naming the full-form with its particular guidelines and facilitator role as Open Space helps raise organizations' and communities' capacities for knowing what tools are best for dialogue and task work.

Harrison Owen's "Open Space Technology: A User's Guide" (Berrett-Koehler, Inc., San Francisco) is a book that tells about development of the process, the theory behind it, and the basic method.



If your strongest way of learning is experiential, you may wish to attend an Open Space methodology workshop in your region or to invite an Open Space specialist to come teach in your organization or community. Workshops cover the elements of planning, design, invitation, creation of the theme / focusing question, logistics, preparation, variations, how action planning happens with Open Space, when and when not to use this method, and more. For more information on workshops around the world contact Lisa Heft at lisaheft@openingspace.net.

As you can tell from your experience in our conference, Open Space meetings, conferences and forums are great for sharing knowledge, resources, challenges, experiences, points of view, puzzles and solutions for both existing and emergent issues and opportunities. Open Space meetings are participant-driven, energetic and creative, while at the same time allowing participants to share ideas and best practices, collaborate on challenges and solutions, and appreciate each other across perceived or actual differences. This shifts the dynamic of experts + audience to everyone-has-knowledge-to-share.

If you wish to use Open Space for a conference, retreat, meeting or forum, I am happy to share thoughts with you about how different amounts of time (half-day, one day, 2 or 2.5 days) for an Open Space provide different deliverables. There are times to include action planning and ways to do it after Open Space, things to do and to not do if you are using Open Space for conflict transformation, reasons for placing Open Space at certain parts of a conference and not at others if combining it with traditional keynotes, panels or workshops, things to think about if you wish to invite people of different levels of power and abilities, and a very particular role for the facilitator if conflict emerges. If you seek a facilitator in a particular region of the world or materials in specific languages do contact me as well as I may have the contacts or resources you need. I look forward to answering any questions you may have. May your future be rich with learning, productivity and discovery.

Lisa Heft Consultant, Facilitator, Educator lisaheft@openingspace.net 510 548-8449

Lisa Heft is President Emerita of the Open Space Institute of the US and Fellow Emerita with Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution. She is an internationally renowned facilitator and interactive learning specialist known for her facilitation and workshops on dialogic and interactive methods for engaging deeper reflection, learning and interchange and her ability to bring diverse people together in dialogue and co-creation. Clients in 19 countries have included the International AIDS Conferences, U.S. Departments of Labor, Transportation, Education and Health and Human Services, National Forum for Geosciences Information Technology, One Ocean Marine Forum, U.S. Scholar-Athlete Games, Canadian Council for Tobacco Control, Earth Island Institute, Monterey Institute of International Studies, the partnership of United States Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps, US Agency for International Development and the Centers for Disease Control in Mozambique, the Open Society Institute, the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, Heifer International and Centerforce at San Quentin State Prison.

Supporting Healthy Sexual Development of Foster Youth
February 5, 2015

Participants



Jynnahlove Abshire

Youth Trainer, YOUTH Training Project
3805 Meramonte Way, Sacramento, CA 95826
702-542-8547 j.love2795@gmail.com

Joy Anderson

California Youth Connection
658 24th Ave #6, Santa Cruz, CA 95062
925-321-8568 joy_music09@yahoo.com

Heriberto Angel Arredondo Jr.

2391 Black Oak Street, Turlock, CA 95382
209-252-4902 heriberto_arredondo1@aol.com

Bill Bettencourt

Senior Associate, The Center for the Study of Social Policy
1575 Eye St., NW, Ste 500, Washington, District of Columbia 20005
415-748-1053 bill.bettencourt@cssp.org

Jennifer Blanza

Assistant Director of Training, Seneca Family of Agencies
6925 Chabot Road, Oakland, CA 94618
415-238-9945 jennifer_blanza@senecacenter.org

Janine Bruce

Research Associate, Stanford School of Medicine
1265 Welch Road, Suite 240, Stanford, CA 94305
650-725-0923 jsbruce@stanford.edu

Cindy Cain

Social Worker Supervisor, Children's Law Center of California
8950 Cal Center Drive #301, Sacramento, CA 92826
916-520-2025 cainc@clcsac.org

Angela Carmack

Regional Manager, DSS CCL Children's Residential
2580 N First Street Ste. 350, San Jose, CA 95131
408-324-2121 angela.carmack@dss.ca.gov

John Casey

Wraparound Services Supervisor, Seneca Family of Agencies
2513 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415-271-7981 jtcasey23@gmail.com, john_casey@senecacenter.org

Hector Cerda

Regional Coordinator, California Youth Connection
1625 E. Shaw, Suite 106, Fresno, CA 93710
559-228-4080 hector@calyouthconn.org

Eidit Choochage

Wraparound Supervisor, Seneca Family of Agencies
2513 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415-693-8590 eidit_choochage@senecacenter.org

Lori Clarke

Managing Partner, Convergent Horizons
950 6th Ave #322, San Diego, CA 92101
619-200-4159 LSClarkeBalzano@aol.com

Daileane Connors

Youth Intern, YIM cdaileane@gmail.com

Vernice Cooper

Social Worker, County of Napa
2344 Old Sonoma Road, Napa, CA 94559
707-259-8693 vernice.cooper@countyofnapa.org

Kayla Corder

Member, California Youth Connection
1717 Carousel Dr., Modesto, CA 95356
209-589-5310 kcorder54@gmail.com

Mariah Corder

Youth Advocate, California Youth Connection
575 MacArthur, San Jose, CA

Haydée Cuza

Executive Director, PEERS
333 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250, Oakland, CA 94621
510-832-7337 HCuza@peersnet.org

Elizabeth Davis

Youth Partner, Seneca Family of Agencies, Orange County Wraparound
18302 Irvine Blvd. Ste. 300, Tustin, CA 92780
714-371-7997 elizabeth_davis@senecacenter.org , edavis@kinshipcenter.org

Keith Dunley**Patterson Emesibe**

Chapter Chair, California Youth Connection
1030 Scott Court, Marina, CA 93933
760-662-9266 pemesibe@gmail.com

Jamie Lee Evans

Director of Training, California Youth Connection
1611 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 1100, Oakland, CA 94612
510-407-5226 jamie@calyouthconn.org

Miracle E. Fauli-Garibay

Member, California Youth Connection
575 MacArthur, San Jose, California
mirmir209@gmail.com , miracle@calyouthconn.org

Neff Franks

California Youth Connection Bay Area Policy Intern
1611 Telegraph Ave, Ste 1100, Oakland, CA 94612
415-442-5095 neff@calyouthconn.org

Jodean Greene

Licensing Program Manager I, California Department of Social Services
2525 Natomas Park Drive, Suite 270, Sacramento, CA 95834
916-263-4711 jodean.greene@dss.ca.gov

Sophia Herman

Field Coordinator, YOUTH Training Project
1611 Telegraph Ave., Suite 1100, Oakland, CA 94611
415-442-5060 sophia@calyouthconn.org

Vanessa Hernandez

Statewide Policy Coordinator, California Youth Connection
2037 Royal Oaks Dr, Sacramento, CA 95815
951-741-1371 vanessa@calyouthconn.org

Emily Higgs

Intern, Seneca Family of Agencies
2513 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
emily_higgs@senecacenter.org, higgs.emily@gmail.com

Tyrone Hill

Member, California Youth Connection
1337 Riverside Ct., Merced, CA 95340
209-756-7411 patience.virtue.grace.peace@gmail.com

Shelby Howard

Regional Director, Seneca Family of Agencies
8750 Mountain Blvd, Oakland, CA 94605
415-238-5226 shelby_howard@senecacenter.org

Megan Huerta

Member, California Youth Connection
202 South Street, Orland, CA 95963
530-720-2447

Kelsey Hunter

Wraparound Supervisor, Seneca Family of Agencies
2513 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415-264-6367 kelsey_hunter@senecacenter.org

Nighat Iqbal

Associate Governmental Program Analyst, California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
iqbal.Nighat@dss.ca.gov

Gordon Jackson

Director, California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
916-319-0911 gjackson@cde.ca.gov

Anna Johnson

Policy Analyst, National Center for Youth Law
405 14th St., Oakland, CA 94612
510-835-8098 x 3035 ajohnson@youthlaw.org

Amy Kirsztajn
Director of Long Term Services
Seneca Family of Agencies
2513 24th St, San Francisco, CA 94110
415-672-9383 amy_kirsztajn@senecacenter.org

Meredith Ku
California Youth Connection Youth Training Program
1353 Soccorra Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA
669-253-9594 himee.inoue@gmail.com

Michelle Lahmon
Department of Social Services
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
916-651-7038 michelle.lahmon@dss.ca.gov

Grace Lee
ILP Coordinator, Napa County Child Welfare Services
2261 Elm St. Bldg. H, Napa, CA 94558
707-253-4856 eun.Lee@countyofnapa.org

Michelle Love
Director, Alameda County CFS
675 Hegenberger, Oakland CA
510-577-7714 lovemi@acgov.org

Dawn-Marie Luna
Regional Coordinator, California Youth Connection
dawn-marie@calyouthconn.org

Briana McGeough
6925 Chabot St, Oakland, CA 94703
briana.mcgeough@berkeley.edu

Megan McQuaid
Training Director, Seneca Family of Agencies
Chabot Road, Oakland, CA 94618
650-283-4600 megan_mcquaid@senecacenter.org

Julio Montes
Licensing Program Analyst, Community Care Licensing Division, California Department of Social Services
851 Traeger Avenue, Suite 360, San Bruno, CA 94066
650-266-8800

Rosalind Nalls
CWW II, Alameda County Social Services
P.O. Box 917 ATTN:J817, Oakland, CA 94607
510-780-8980 nallsra@acgov.org

Rita Naranjo
Youth Advocate / PCWTA Trainer, Of Many: CLAN / PCWTA
860 Cypress Point Way, Oceanside, CA 92058
760-583-9402 rita_naranjo@yahoo.com

Noah Nash
Trainer, YOUTH Training Project
cnash@mills.edu

Antonio Norman

Daniel Oquendo

Licensed Program Analyst, California Department of Social Services
2580 N. 1st Street, San Jose, CA
408-499-2636 daniel.oquendo@dss.ca.gov

Teresa Owensby

Children's Residential Policy Manager, CCDS / Community Care Licensing Division / Technical Assistance
and Policy Branch, California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
916-838-1666 teresa.Owensby@dss.ca.gov

Monica Pavia

Licensing Program Analyst, California Department of Social Services
2580 N 1st #350, San Jose, CA 95131
408-309-9923 monica.pavia@dss.ca.gov

Sylvia Pizzini

Assistant Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency
1600 9th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
510-390-6832 sylvia.Pizzini@chhs.ca.gov

Carolyn Reyes

getREAL California Project Director, Family Builders
401 Grand Avenue, Suite 400, Oakland, CA, 94610
510-272-0204 creyes@familybuilders.org

Tammy Rivera

Program Manager, California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, OB8 3rd Floor, Sacramento, CA 95691
916-653-2727 tammy.rivera@dss.ca.gov

Brianna Robertson

Youth Trainer, YOUTH Training Project
510-978-2191 briannar@hotmail.com

Jennifer Rodriguez

Executive Director, Youth Law Center
200 Pine Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94104
415-314-4386 jrodriguez@ylc.org

Angelica Russell

Co-Chair and Intern, California Youth Connection
1611 Telegraph Ave, Oakland, CA 94612
650-784-1079 angelicalrussell@gmail.com

Fernando Sandoval

Bureau Chief, California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
916-654-0118 fernando.sandoval@dss.ca.gov

Andrea Schiavoni

Assistant Director of Strategic Initiatives, Seneca Family of Agencies
6925 Chabot Road, Oakland, CA 94618
510-654-4004 x 2245 Andrea_Schiavoni@senecacenter.org

Glenn Schnell

California Community Care Licensing Division, California Department of Social Services
2580 North First Street Suite 350, San Jose, CA 95131
408-324-2116 glenn.schnell@dss.ca.gov

Joel Segura

Licensing Program Analyst, Community Care Licensing Division, California Department of Social Services
2580 North First St, San Jose, CA 95131
408-313-1325 joel.segura@dss.ca.gov

Geraldine Shing

Licensing Program Analyst, California Community Care Licensing Division, California Department of Social Services
851 Traeger Ave Ste 360, San Bruno, CA 94066
650-266-8000 geraldine.shing@dss.ca.gov

Vaishali Singh-Sood

California Community Care Licensing Division, California Department of Social Services
2580 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95131
408-314-1046 vaishali.singh-sood@dss.ca.gov

Robin Smith

FYS Coordinator, Glenn County Office of Education
311 S. Villa Ave., Willows, CA 95988
530-934-6575 x 3176 rsmith@glenncoe.org

Amanda Sommers

Supervisor, Seneca Family of Agencies
2513 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415-793-7718 amanda_sommers@senecacenter.org

Thomas Stahl

Licensing Program Manager II, California Department of Social Services
2525 Natomas Park Drive, Sacramento, CA
thomas.Stahl@dss.ca.gov

Lori Starnes

Chief, California Community Care Licensing / Technical Assistance and Policy Branch, California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
916-651-3456 lori.Starnes@dss.ca.gov

Chelsea Stoner

Social Worker Supervisor, Napa County Child Welfare
2261 Elm Street, Napa, CA 94558
707-253-4137 chelsea.stoner@countyofnapa.org

Chance Tarver

Bay Area Policy Intern, Alameda County, California Youth Connection
1611 Telegraph Ave., Suite 1100, Oakland, CA 94612
415 442-5060 chancet@calyouthconn.org

Teffani Taylor

P.O. Box 4324, Long Beach, CA 90804
562-446-5247 teffanitaylor@yahoo.com

Kate Teague

Regional Coordinator, California Youth Connection
1611 Telegraph Ave, Ste 1100, Oakland, CA 94612
415-442-5060 kate@calyouthconn.org

Karla Torres

Seneca Family of Agencies
18302 Irvine Blvd., Tustin, CA, 92780
714-474-4601 karla_torres@senecacenter.org, ktorres@kinshipcenter.org

Rochelle Trochtenberg

Lead Youth Organizer / Former Foster Youth, Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration
550 I St., Eureka, CA 95501
707-362-1999 rochelle.hctayc@gmail.com

Angela Valdez

Program Administrator California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, MS 8-3-54, Sacramento, CA 95814
916-657-2429 angela.valdez@dss.ca.gov

Maignacia Villapudua-Soto

California Department of Social Services
2770 Natomas, Sacramento, CA
maignacia.Villapudua-Soto@dss.ca.gov

Shane Wallin

Wraparound Supervisor, Seneca Family of Agencies
2514 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415-238-5698 shane_wallin@senecacenter.org

Jabari West

California Youth Connection
Rocklin, CA
510-600-9843 masterjoneswest@yahoo.com

Tyler Whittenberg

Staff Attorney, Youth Law Center
200 Pine Street, San Francisco, CA 94104
415-543-3379 x 3914 twhittenberg@ylc.org

Shannan Wilber

Youth Policy Director, National Center for Lesbian Rights
870 Market Street #370, San Francisco, CA 94102
415-392-6257 swilber@nclrights.org , shannan@lsc-sf.org

Jeanie Yoon

Wellness Coordinator, California Youth Connection
1611 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 1100, Oakland, CA 94612
415-442-5060 jeanie@calyouthconn.org

This conference was facilitated by

Lisa Heft

Consultant, Facilitator, Educator, *Opening Space*
2325 Oregon Street, Berkeley, CA 94705
510-548-8449 lisaheft@openingspace.net

