

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON ENGAGING YOUTH IN
FINDING PERMANENCY

Program Implementation Primer

Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model® adapted for Yakama Nation

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The Quality Improvement Center on Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency (QIC-EY) Program Implementation Primer introduces the *Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model®* adapted for Yakama Nation and serves as a comprehensive guide for child welfare agencies considering its implementation. Designed for agencies ready to make a meaningful impact, this guide goes beyond a simple overview. It shares the insights and tools needed to assess interest, to ensure infrastructure readiness and to navigate implementation with confidence. It includes the following:

- **Logic Model:** a framework that illustrates how program resources and activities lead to intended outcomes
- **Core Components:** the essential functions and practices that need to be delivered consistently and with fidelity to ensure effectiveness
- **Program Delivery:** the amount and intensity of participant engagement necessary for achieving program success
- **Implementation Supports:** foundational resources that enable high-quality delivery (such as staffing, training, policies, supervision, partnerships and data systems)
- **Evaluation:** systematic measurement of fidelity in program delivery and of outcomes, performed to monitor progress and to demonstrate program impact
- **Implementation Lessons Learned and Tips:** common barriers to implementation and practical strategies for overcoming them
- **Additional Program Materials:** practical aids — program manuals, logic models, fidelity checklists, scripts and other resources — that support consistent and effective delivery

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1. Program Overview

The *TIP Model® adapted for Yakama Nation (TIP Model® Yakama Nation)* provides a structured approach for engaging young people in planning for adulthood, developing skills and competencies, and building the supports they need to pursue their goals. The model centers each young person as a unique individual and prioritizes youth voice and choice, helping young people achieve an appropriate balance between interdependence and independence as they transition into adulthood. The model uses a set of guidelines and core practices to guide how providers engage and work with young people. It also identifies transition domains that provide areas for young people to explore, set goals, and develop skills as they work toward greater self-sufficiency and achievement of their personal goals.

The *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* is based on the evidence-based *Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model®*, which was developed for providers working with young people ages 14 through 29. The Yakama Nation Behavioral Health Services agency adapted the model in 2022, infusing tribal culture into the approach including the nine virtues of Yakama Nation (Figure 1).

The Yakama Nation Nak-Nu-We-Sha (NNWS) Program, translated as "Foster Care and Child Welfare Services," implemented the TIP Model® Yakama Nation with one significant adaptation; the inclusion of a transition domain focused on permanency planning. The new domain will be discussed in the Core Component section of this primer.



Figure 1. The Nine Virtues of the Yakama Nation

2. Program Goals

The goals of the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* are to: engage transition-age youth in planning their own futures; provide them with non-stigmatizing, trauma-informed services and supports appropriate for each youth's developmental stage; and involve them, as relevant, with their families and other key players in their lives in a process that facilitates their movement toward greater self-sufficiency and successful achievement of their goals (Stars Training Academy, 2020).

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

As a result of participating in this program, youths will

- engage in strengths-based planning centered on each of them as an individual;
- become more focused on goals for their futures across all six transition domains;
- develop and carry out plans to prevent high-risk behaviors and situations;
- learn to express personal preferences, to make daily life choices and to display socially responsible behavior;
- gain competencies in self-sufficiency, including self-management, problem-solving, self-advocacy and self-evaluation;
- learn to resolve differences with key support persons; and
- become capable of participating effectively in planning their own futures.

Child welfare agencies and their systems will

- maintain a focus on outcomes at the youth, program and community levels through regular monitoring and evaluation; and
- enhance coordination and responsiveness of their services for transition-age youth.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

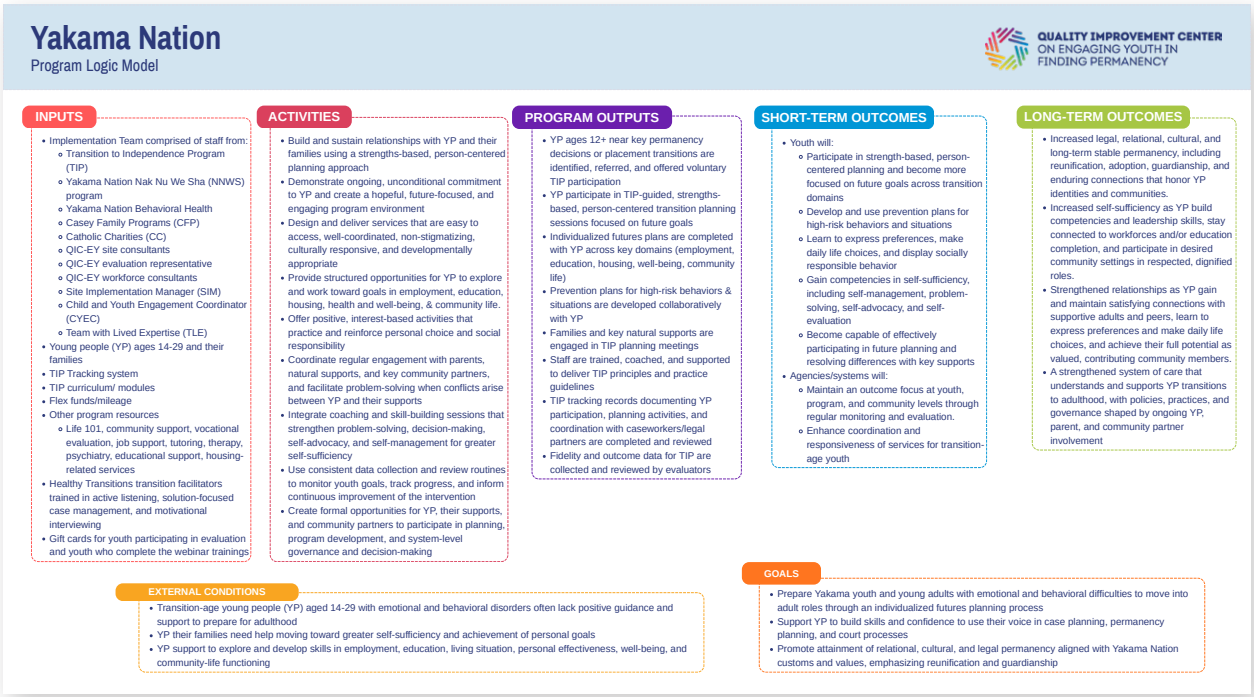
This program aims over time to achieve all of the following:

- increased legal, relational and cultural permanency, including reunification, adoption, guardianship and enduring connections that honor each young person's identity and community
- increased self-sufficiency for young people as they build their leadership skills and other competencies; stay connected with workforces; achieve their educational goals; and participate in desired community settings in respected, dignified roles
- strengthened relationships for young people as they gain and maintain satisfying connections with supportive adults and peers; learn to express their own preferences; learn to make choices in their daily lives; and achieve their full potential as valued, contributing members of their communities
- a system of care -- strengthened through policies, practices and governance shaped by ongoing involvement with young people, their parents and guardians and community partners -- in which child welfare staff understand and support young people transitioning into adulthood

3. Logic Model

A logic model illustrates how to achieve expected outputs and outcomes of a program through implementation of its core components and activities. A logic model needs to explain clearly how specific activities and services are expected to produce or to influence their associated short- and long-term outcomes.

Agency resources, goals and other factors will impact the logic model. The Additional Program Materials section of this primer includes an example of a logic model, which can be modified to fit a particular agency's specific approach to implementation.



4. Core Components

Core components are critical to the identity and the aim of each program. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (Education Development Center, 2018), "Core components are the most essential and indispensable components of an intervention practice or program."

There are four interconnected components (Figure 2) that guide the implementation of the TIP Model® Yakama Nation. The nine virtues support connection to Yakama Nation heritage, the seven guidelines provide the philosophical approach to the work, the six transition domains identify the areas of life that provide a focus for planning and engagement, and the six core practices describe the activities and approaches used with young people.

A Transition Facilitator carries out and coordinates this work with each youth.

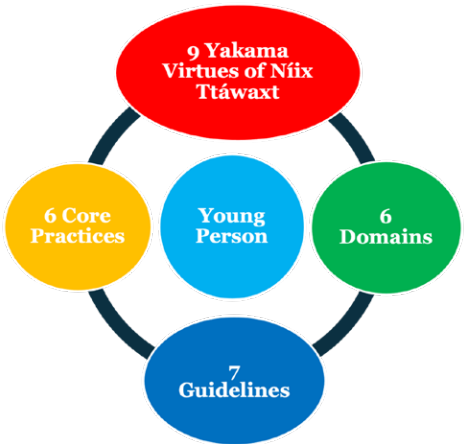


Figure 2. Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model® adapted for Yakama Nation

Nine Virtues

The *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* integrates the nine virtues of the Yakama Nation (Wilkins, 2008). As part of the program, youth listen to an audio recording of the nine virtues narrated in the tribe's traditional language by a tribal elder. The recording provides an opportunity for youth to learn and reconnect with the virtues and language of their heritage as part of their self-discovery process and to deepen their understanding of what it means to be from the Yakama Nation (Day et al, 2026).

Seven Guidelines

The *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* uses an adapted version of the seven guidelines of the original model in its approach to the work with young people performed by child welfare staff called "transition facilitators" (Day et al, 2026). The seven guidelines serve as the framework for the activities in which each youth and the youth's transition facilitator engage while working together during this program. These are the adapted guidelines:

1. Engage young people through relationship development, a planning process centered on each of them as an individual and a focus on their futures.
2. Tailor services and supports to make them accessible, coordinated, appealing, non-stigmatizing and appropriate for each youth's developmental stage.
3. Use storytelling to acknowledge and to develop the personal choices and social responsibility of young people.
4. Ensure a safety net of support for each youth by involving the young person's parents or guardians, other immediate and extended family members, plus other persons with whom the youth reports having close relationships.
5. Enhance the competencies of youths and young adults to help them achieve greater self-sufficiency and self-confidence.
6. Maintain a holistic system that focuses on positive outcomes for each young person, for the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* and for the tribal community.
7. Actively involve youths, persons with whom they feel close personal ties and community partners in the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* at the practice, program and community levels.

Six Transition Domains

Transition domains are used to organize conversations around areas of life that are meaningful to young people. The domains provide a practical way to engage young people in identifying their goals, strengths, needs and priorities for the future. The domains include:

- Employment and Career
- Educational Opportunities
- Living Situations
- Personal Effectiveness and Well-Being
- Community Life Functioning
- Permanency Planning

Yakama Nation NNWS added the Permanency Planning domain to support young people in using their own voices in case planning, permanency planning and court processes by building their skills and self-confidence. It also promotes relational, cultural and legal permanency aligned with Yakama Nation customs and values, with an emphasis on reunification and guardianship.

Six Core Practices

The six core practices of the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation*, also known as "chapters," guide the transition facilitator's engagement with the youth during each of their interactions. The facilitator chooses the chapters based on how the young person identifies their needs and goals. These are the six core practices:

- **Strengths, discovery and needs assessment:** The transition facilitator conducts this assessment to engage with the youth, to establish rapport, to build the young person's self-confidence and to identify existing and needed support systems. During their dialogues, the facilitator learns about the youth's interests, values, abilities, dreams, goals and aspirations. The facilitator encourages the youth to relate personal experiences and to express needs in a supportive environment. Through purposeful conversations and interactions with the youth called "strength talks," the facilitator identifies and develops an understanding of the young person's strengths, interests, abilities, values, relationships, cultural and community connections, aspirations, existing resources and areas where additional support is needed. These conversations help the facilitator to determine how to apply the other core practices to the youth's specific case in the areas of goal development, engagement strategies, support system development, connections to resources and opportunities for transitioning into maturity.

- **Futures planning:** The transition facilitator introduces the planning process by asking the youth to envision the life that the young person wishes to live. The facilitator also asks the youth to identify the supports and actions needed to achieve that life by reaching goals defined by the youth's own voice and choice. Initially, the facilitator guides the youth in setting goals and determining the steps needed to achieve them. Then the youth and the facilitator collaborate in tracking progress toward the young person's goals and planning what the youth can do during the next few days or weeks to advance further toward those goals. Gradually, the facilitator provides less and less guidance as the youth learns how to work through the futures planning process on one's own.
- **Think and reflect:** This brief statement refers to linking a young person's choices and behaviors with their likely consequences, either positive or negative. Think-and-reflect statements have the strongest impact when they are formed completely – or at least partially – by the young person's own words. This reveals to the transition facilitator how well the youth understands the likely outcomes associated with choices and behaviors.
- **Walking the good path (for us, with us, by us):** This refers to a method of teaching a skill through storytelling, giving instructions, modeling and practicing the skill in either a natural setting or a simulation. The transition facilitator applies this method to coach the young person to learn and to practice using skills commonly needed in adulthood. For example, to teach how to open a bank account, the facilitator may go with the youth to a bank and coach the young person through the process. Alternatively, in a simulation, the facilitator may coach the youth to prepare a list of questions about opening an account, to phone a banker to inquire which documents will be needed, then to use role play to practice meeting with a bank clerk and going through the steps involved in opening an account. Not only the transition facilitator but also other trusted adults and a peer support specialist with lived experience can use this method to help a young person apply a new skill with relevant people in settings such as home, school and community locales.
- **Community gifting (gifting a skill via "give a ways"):** The transition facilitator uses this technique to guide the youth through the process of solving a problem by making a decision leading to a solution in which the young person feels a sense of ownership. The facilitator's goal is to teach the youth to employ the "situation, options, disadvantages and solutions" (SODAs) method of problem-solving to empower the young person to make better decisions. In other words, the facilitator is "gifting" the method to the youth. With this "gift," the young person can improve one's own quality of life. To achieve this, the youth needs to take the lead in applying the SODAs method while the facilitator remains nonjudgmental.

> ***"Culturally grounded life skills development programs offer an opportunity to meet American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) communities' needs to restore cultural strengths, many of which are embedded in family, extended family, and community-based practices."***
>
> *- (Day et al., 2026)*

- **Prevention planning for high-risk behaviors and situations ("What's up?"):** The transition facilitator teaches this prevention planning process to help the youth address and avoid, when possible, risky behaviors and risky situations. The young person learns how to identify risks and to analyze how they can interfere with current functioning and eventual goal achievement. While learning how to navigate risky behaviors and situations, the youth gains an understanding of advantages, disadvantages, secondary gains, ambivalence and the stages of change.

As the youth works through each of the chapters, which can be introduced in any order, the facilitator ensures that the chapter is infused with at least one of the nine virtues and that it involves using at least one "TIP tool." TIP tools include worksheets such as the Strengths and Needs Chart, Goals and Dreams Worksheet, Life Choices Worksheet, Futures Planning Map, Circles of Support and Medicine Wheel, among others. As long as the youth's goals are met, the youth does not need to complete all six chapters to graduate from the program.

Transition Facilitator

The transition facilitator is a staff specialist who works directly with young persons and, as appropriate, with their families, other natural support persons and other professionals. The facilitator provides individualized support designed to help each youth identify and pursue the young person's own goals, strengthen skills and competencies, and build the relationships and supports needed to navigate successful transition into adulthood.

The facilitator 's role is goal-focused. Rather than directing each youth's transition planning, the facilitator works alongside the young person to maximize engagement and to help the youth build on strengths and resources while developing meaningful life skills. The facilitator supports the youth's progress across the relevant transition domains.

In addition, the facilitator helps the young person to bring the right people into the transition process at the right time. Family members, other support persons and service providers become involved based on their relevance to the young person's current needs and goals, not simply because they already are part of the youth's service system. The young person remains at the center of the process while the facilitator helps to connect and to coordinate supports around what the youth is trying to accomplish.

> ***"One of my goals [was] to become a better person and to look for a job and attend school. I currently don't got a job still, but I will be attending school, and that's pretty cool, because I have a family to provide for now, and after that school is done, I would have a job and everything and they helped me through everything, because if they didn't set up a goal system, I don't think I would have done anything. I think I would have just stayed at home and did nothing, honestly."***
>
> *- Youth Participant*

5. Program Delivery (Intensity and Duration)

The TIP Model® Yakama Nation offers flexible durations of the program, ranging from 6 to 9 months. It can extend even longer, based on an assessment of each young person's individual needs. Transition facilitators may deliver the Yakama TIP Mode ® either in person or virtually and through individual sessions with each youth or in group settings.

The Yakama Nation NNWS Program delivered the Yakama TIP Model © via the following five stages:

STAGE 1: REFERRAL (CONNECTING AND BUILDING TRUST)

This initial stage focuses on establishing connection with the young person in a way that centers on safety, trust and youth choice. Prioritizing a relationship-first approach, the transition facilitator intentionally and nonjudgmentally meets each young person wherever the youth is emotionally, culturally and practically. The facilitator welcomes the youth to participate in the *Yakama TIP Model©* (or to re-engage with the process after a pause). The facilitator remains present, responsive and consistent in contacts with the youth, communicating frequently (two to three contacts per week, as appropriate) to build rapport and to reduce the risk of disengagement. During this stage, the transition facilitator applies the following engagement strategies:

- Use strengths-based, nonjudgmental language.
- Identify the youth's immediate needs and barriers to fulfilling them.
- Connect the youth to resources for meeting basic needs, when appropriate.
- Celebrate small steps (e.g, the youth returning a text message or showing up in response to an invitation to meet).

The goal of this early stage is for the youth to feel seen, respected and supported from the first interaction with the facilitator.

STAGE 2: YOUTH PARTICIPATION (CHOOSING TO ENGAGE, TO SHAPE SUPPORT, TO EXERT YOUTH CHOICE)

This second stage focuses on letting the youth choose how and when to engage with the facilitator as well as encouraging the young person to identify helpful supports and to participate in shaping them. This stage emphasizes voluntary participation, autonomy and shared decision-making. The transition facilitator supports the youth's voice in choosing the preferred means of communication, determining priorities and setting goals. The youth has input in deciding which areas of life to work on first. The facilitator remains consistently present and accessible, checking in frequently with the young person (two to three contacts per week, as appropriate) to build momentum and to reduce barriers to engagement. In this stage, the facilitator applies these practices:

- Celebrate efforts and small wins to reinforce the youth's self-confidence and motivation.
- Give incentives (e.g., gift cards).
- Provide opportunities for meaningful engagement (e.g., shared meals, one-on-one activities).

STAGE 3: ORIENTATION AND EXPECTATIONS (CLARITY, SAFETY AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING)

During this third stage, the facilitator focuses on establishing clarity, transparency and a shared understanding of what the *Yakama TIP Model* © looks like and how the youth can make use of them. Specifically, the facilitator seeks to ensure that the young person understands the purpose of TIP, the supports available, the youth's rights and choices, and how to advocate for oneself. The facilitator maintains a consistent presence, communicating with the youth through frequent check-ins (two to three contacts per week, as appropriate) to reinforce understanding, to answer questions and to build a sense of safety and predictability for the young person. The facilitator also identifies and addresses barriers to participating in the Yakama TIP Model© (e.g., lack of access to transportation, schedule conflicts, lack of resources).

STAGE 4: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION (DOING THE WORK TOGETHER)

During the fourth stage, the facilitator provides consistent engagement, presence and practical support while the young person works toward achieving youth-driven goals. This stage centers on putting plans into action across the youth's key life domains, such as education, employment, stability of housing, wellness, relationships, cultural connections and life skills. The facilitator remains a consistent, reliable presence through frequent communications (two to three contacts per week, as appropriate), such as one-on-one check-ins, school visits, community-based engagement and provision of transportation when needed. Together, the facilitator and the youth track the young person's progress, using strengths-based measures. The facilitator intentionally recognizes the youth for effort, personal growth and small wins.

STAGE 5: TRANSITION AND COMMENCEMENT (ONGOING AND OVERLAPPING PROCESS)

During the program's final stage, the facilitator focuses on walking alongside the youth through consistent presence, frequent communication and youth-led planning for transition into the next chapter of life. Transition is framed as an ongoing, overlapping process that includes discovery of strengths, futures planning, goal setting, plan-in-action with tracking of progress, and goal achievement. During this fifth stage, the facilitator applies the following practices:

- Ensure that the young person drives development of the transition plan.
- Celebrate milestones marking the youth's personal growth.
- Celebrate little wins.
- Use affirming language to build the youth's self-confidence.
- Remain consistently present for the young person.
- Ensure the youth's sense of empowerment.
- Ensure that the youth graduates from the program connected with supportive persons, resources and a clear transition plan that the young person helped to produce.
- Give the youth warm handoffs to ongoing supports and resources.

VI. Implementation Supports

Staffing

Effective program delivery requires qualified administrative and program staff who have the skills to support youth engagement, to facilitate orientation activities and to manage logistics. To implement this program effectively, child welfare agencies need to determine the necessary number of staff members, to consider staff-to-youth ratios and to plan for recruitment and retention. They also need to anticipate potential barriers to implementation, such as turnover, limited expertise and competing responsibilities.

Professionals known as "transition facilitators" guide youth participants through this program. Staff members in this role typically hold entry-level positions and, at a minimum, possess a bachelor's degree in social work, psychology, sociology, counseling, human development, mental health care, education, criminal justice or a closely related field. Experience in tribal social work is encouraged for transition facilitators working with young people and their families in a tribal community. Facilitators implementing the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* need to understand the Yakama Nation's nine virtues.

Trained in active listening, solution-focused case management and motivational interviewing practices, transition facilitators are responsible for supporting youths and young adults in setting self-generated, short- and long-term goals across the transition domains described by the program's developers (Stars Training Academy, 2020).

Their duties include conducting outreach, processing referrals, coordinating one-on-one meetings with each young person to complete a needs assessment, and engaging with the young person to complete the services outlined in the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation.* Fulfilling these duties often involves working closely with a youth's social worker, school and cultural mentors as well as other service providers. The recommended caseload for a full-time transition facilitator is 12 to 15 youths.

Training and Coaching

Effective implementation of a program requires both training and coaching to ensure program fidelity and optimal quality. Plans for training need to describe the program's curriculum and to detail who will be trained, who will conduct the training, the length of the initial training and any booster sessions, plus certification requirements that may apply. Coaching and supervision provide support for staff members as they apply the model in practice; they also maintain adherence to program standards. Coaching may include individual or group sessions scheduled at regular intervals. These sessions need clearly defined start and end times. Agency leaders need to determine the structure and frequency of coaching sessions to ensure that their staff members receive support consistently while delivering the program as intended.

Each transition facilitator is required to complete a 12-hour training conducted by a master certified trainer. Recertification is not required. Yakama Nation Behavioral Health Services and the Yakama Nation NNWS Program both have master certified trainers who can teach the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation.*

Staff members may need additional training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to support effective engagement with youth. For example, the QIC-EY's *Transforming Engagement:*

Keeping Children and Youth at the Center of Our Work (QIC-EY, 2025) training provides practical strategies for achieving authentic engagement with youth. It equips caseworkers and other staff to support youth participation in permanency planning and decision-making.

Policies and Procedures

Clear policies and procedures are essential to support implementation of the program and to ensure fidelity in its delivery. This includes documentation of any adaptations required to integrate the model into existing agency practices. It also includes identification of potential barriers that could hinder implementation. Establishing formal guidance helps staff members to understand expectations, promotes consistency across the intervention group and supports successful delivery of the selected model.

Adherence to established policies and procedures enables staff members to facilitate service delivery to youth participants through consistent implementation of the core practices across all five program stages. The program's policies and the guidelines in the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* serve as valuable resources during onboarding of new staff members. They also help to ensure that staff members are meeting the needs of young people while carrying out necessary tasks in accordance with practice standards set by their child welfare agencies.

Fidelity

To ensure implementation of this program as intended, fidelity measurements and protocols are used to assess whether practitioners are delivering the core components of the model. Fidelity tracking needs to include forms to capture key details about each session and meeting, such as start and end times, who delivered the program, the delivery format (in person, virtual, hybrid) and the time spent preparing for and following up after the session.

The *TIP Model®* developer designed fidelity measures for it. These are described in the model's program listing under the topic areas of "Mentoring Programs (Child and Adolescent)" and "Youth Transitioning Into Adulthood Programs" on the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse website (California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare, n.d.). To fit its tribal practice, the Yakama Nation NNWS Program adapted the process for monitoring implementation fidelity.

The original *TIP Model®* included a separate fidelity form for each program chapter. However, Yakama NNWS staff found maintaining multiple forms cumbersome and requested a streamlined approach. In response, the project team developed a single fidelity tool that can be used across all chapters. After delivery of each chapter or core practice, the transition facilitator completes a fidelity review. This review provides documentation that the intended intervention was implemented, including completion of the current chapter, the amount of service provided (e.g., time spent, number of visits and other contacts as well as travel, when applicable) and the youth's overall progress through the program.

Besides providing documentation of service delivery, the fidelity tool also captures information about each youth and the intervention process, including the following:

- the youth's permanency goal and current living situation
- the youth's personal goals, strengths, motivation, barriers to and progress toward achieving goals
- the specific tools and strategies used during the chapter
- whether the nine virtues of the Níix Ttáwaaxt (Yakama Nation) were incorporated into practice and how they were applied
- planned next steps and additional strategies for supporting the youth's progress
- the transition facilitator's reflections about what worked well, challenges encountered, new issues identified and indicators of successful implementation

Rather than serving solely as a compliance measure, the fidelity tool functions also as a practice improvement instrument. The information it captures supports reflective supervision, coaching and continuous quality improvement. It gives program leaders the information needed to monitor whether the intervention is being delivered consistently across all transition facilitators and chapters, to identify implementation challenges and to assess adherence to the core components of the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation.*

Transition facilitators use the fidelity tool for each youth. They also meet each month with a mental health specialist experienced in using the model. During these meetings, the facilitator discusses current cases with the specialist and gets assistance monitoring fidelity to the model.

Data Systems

Data systems are necessary to support program implementation and to ensure accurate monitoring of fidelity and outcomes. Effective data systems require clear processes for collecting and managing information about the delivery of core components as well as indicators of program impact and satisfaction. Necessary modifications to hardware, software and data format should be identified early, along with potential barriers to timely implementation (e.g., limitations of system flexibility or competing priorities of information technology staff). Well-defined expectations and technological tools promote consistent data collection, strengthen accountability and support continuous evaluation of the selected model.

Data in this program is collected through client intake and consent forms, a case file review tool, exit/discharge forms, the Yakama Nation TIP Solutions Review (TSR) and the chapter-based fidelity tool. Staff members can use the data from these forms and tools to evaluate implementation of the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* and its impact on participating young people. Collecting this type of information can help staff members to show how much the program contributes to a system of care that supports youths' transitions into adulthood and helps young people to achieve their full potential as valued, contributing members of society.

Program Experts

Each program expert brings specialized knowledge, experience or both in the design, implementation and ongoing delivery of the program. Experts may include the model developer, the model purveyor and other individuals who can provide guidance regarding program fidelity, best practices and effective strategies for implementation. Experts also may support adaptation of the program to fit local contexts, including cultural considerations and relational permanency practices. Experts help to ensure that the program is delivered as intended and that the needs of youth and their families are met.

The **Stars Training Academy** serves as the purveyor of the original *TIP Model®*. The purveyor offers *TIP Model®* consultants, who collaborate with child-serving agencies individually and in community coalitions of agencies to support program implementation and sustainability. For more information about implementation of the *TIP Model®*, please contact Joseph Solomita, LCSW, Managing Director, Stars Behavioral Health Group, Stars Training Academy, at **jsolomita@starsinc.com**.

The Yakama Nation Behavioral Health Services agency adapted model with the Stars Training Academy to ensure that it aligns with the cultural practices of the Yakama Nation. Professor Angelique Day, MSW, PhD (a Ho-Chunk Nation descendant), and Research Professor Cynthia R. Pearson, PhD, Director of Research in the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute, both in the School of Social Work at the University of Washington, designed the cultural adaptations. For more information about those adaptations for the Yakama Nation, please contact Professor Day at **dayangel@uw.edu**.

Partner Systems and Community Linkages

Successful implementation of a program by child welfare agencies relies on strong partnerships with external systems and collaborators, such as mental health providers, educational institutions, courts, substance use treatment providers and other relevant organizations. Child welfare agencies need to identify partners already engaged with them as well as those to be brought on board. Agency staff also need to determine the strategies, resources and support necessary to engage effectively with these partners. Strong collaboration ensures coordinated services, expands program reach and supports positive outcomes for youth and their families.

Successful implementation of the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* relies on strong partnerships and coordination with community networks. Although some tribal communities may have limited, formal services and resources, they often possess significant strengths through relationships with tribal elders, mentors, cultural leaders, individuals with lived experience and other community champions. These relationships are central to helping young people develop the connections and supports needed for successful transitions into adulthood and permanency.

The *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* was designed to leverage resources both within the tribal community and among local partners. Implementation typically involves collaboration with a broad network of providers, including those in the following fields:

- education
- health care (including behavioral health)
- domestic violence prevention
- law enforcement and the judicial system
- workforce development
- social services
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- independent-living programs
- childcare
- cultural and language programs

By coordinating these resources, communities can provide more comprehensive services and can strengthen permanency planning for young people.

Meaningful engagement with youth, their families and their prospective permanent caregivers is essential throughout the permanency planning process. Regular communication and collaboration among tribal and other community partners help to facilitate referrals, to coordinate services, to identify barriers and to develop strategies for supporting each young person's goals.

A distinctive feature of the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* is its intentional involvement of cultural experts throughout implementation. Tribal elders, language teachers, instructors on tribal culture, mentors and other respected members of the community help to integrate tribal values, traditions and cultural teachings into service delivery. These partnerships strengthen the cultural identity of young people in the program while supporting their relational, cultural and legal permanency.

Organizations implementing the *TIP Model® Yakama Nation* need to identify and to engage with these partners early in the program's implementation. Transition facilitators also need training to prepare them for collaborating effectively with cultural experts and community partners. This will help to ensure the integration of culturally relevant teachings and practices throughout the intervention rather than as separate activities.

Other Resources (Meeting Space, Materials, etc.)

Implementation of a program often requires access to tangible resources, including space for orientation sessions and other meetings, materials and supplies for activities, plus technology for virtual or hybrid delivery. Additional considerations may include travel expenses, meals or snacks for participants and help with logistics that contribute to a welcoming and functional environment for staff and youth. Availability of these resources is essential for smooth program operation and participant engagement.

Tribal elders engaging in program delivery to share their knowledge with youths will need culturally relevant supplies. Supplies may include materials for stringing beads, cloth for fashioning ribbon skirts and shirts, plus gifts for the elders to thank them for their time and care.

Funds to support program activities may be needed (e.g., to pay for meals or snacks and rental fees for meeting rooms). Staff may need to provide transportation as well to ensure that all youths can participate in program activities. This may involve driving to meet with a youth in person or driving youths to cultural events in the tribal community or to workshops on independent-living skills.

VII. Evaluation

This program was implemented and rigorously evaluated in the Yakama Nation, based on a logic model, a theory of change and the following question:

For Yakama Nation youth, will participation in the healthy transitions program result in having a greater connection with culture, caring adults in their lives and a greater voice in setting their permanency goals compared with not participating in the healthy transitions program?

To answer this question, a research team carried out a study with a quasi-experimental design in which an intervention group received implementation of the program model and a comparison group received services as usual. The team collected fidelity data from workers in the intervention group to measure and to understand better the delivery of the model. Baseline and follow-up surveys of youth outcomes and case review forms were collected from both groups to learn how the program impacted actual outcomes. The research team also conducted youth focus groups to get open-ended feedback from youths about their experiences in the program. Finally, a cost evaluation was performed to understand the cost of implementing and delivering the program. Highlights of the evaluation results can be found on the QIC-EY website: **www.qic-ey.org**.

8. Implementation Lessons Learned and Tips

Successful implementation of the Yakama Nation Healthy Transitions: Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model® requires thoughtful planning, coordination and clear communication. The following guidance is organized into two parts:

1. **Program Planning and Preparation:** overarching lessons learned related to setting up the program
2. **Engagement Lessons Learned and Tips:** practical guidance for implementing each stage of the program

Program Planning and Preparation

Begin by establishing a strong foundation to ensure smooth execution of the program.

FORMATION OF A PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Lessons Learned

- A cross-disciplinary planning team strengthens coordination and shared ownership. Bringing together individuals with different roles, experiences and perspectives supports coordination and creates shared responsibility for implementation.
- Early relationship building with internal and external partners supports buy-in and alignment of partners with agency staff and each other. Establishing relationships early helps partners to understand the program, their roles in its implementation and how their work connects with that of agency staff.
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities support effective implementation. When team members understand their responsibilities and decision-making roles, communication and coordination become more efficient.

Tips

- Clarify roles and responsibilities early to streamline communication, decision-making and coordination between team members.
- Schedule team check-ins regularly to monitor progress, to troubleshoot challenges, to address emerging needs and to maintain alignment among team members.
- Engage with partners early in the planning process to establish their roles and responsibilities rather than waiting until implementation is underway.

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY PARTNERS

Lessons Learned

- Program success depends on collaboration with a range of child welfare workers, court personnel and other community partners. Coordination between the individuals and the organizations involved in supporting youth is essential for effective implementation.
- Individuals who have lived experience provide critical insights about meaningful engagement with youth. Their perspectives help to ensure that program design and implementation reflect the experiences, needs and preferences of young people..

Tips

- Include a range of perspectives on the planning team. Consider including the following:
  - » child welfare professionals
  - » individuals with lived experience
  - » court partners
  - » agency leaders
  - » other key community partners and service providers
- Involve young people currently or formerly in foster care as early as possible. Include their perspectives in program design, planning and implementation to ensure that the program is meaningful and responsive to youth needs.

PLAN FOR PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Lessons Learned

- Practical barriers can affect youth participation and program continuity. Lack of transportation and schedule conflicts can limit turnout, causing difficulty in maintaining participation over time.
- Transition facilitators and youths need a consistent mechanism for communicating with each other. Young people need a reliable way to reach their facilitators between their scheduled contacts to receive support and to get their emerging needs addressed.
- Effective implementation depends on transition facilitators well-suited to their roles. Facilitators need more than training on the model. They also need to embody flexibility, commitment, self-awareness and skillfulness in child-and-youth engagement.
- Activities may take longer than expected. The amount of time needed to complete visits and chapters varies from one youth to another, so program planners need to schedule sufficient time for each young person.
- A young person's circumstances can change quickly because of changes in placement, school, employment, family responsibilities and other life events. Successful implementation depends on each facilitator knowing when to adapt the frequency, location and type of contact with a youth while maintaining a relationship with the young person.
- Progression through the program may pause during periods of disengagement, setbacks and changing goals. Maintaining the relationship and allowing the youth to reconnect without passing judgment on the young person is important for continued engagement.
- The expected program duration of 6 to 9 months may be too conservative. Focusing on relationship building during the first part of the program is important before a youth is ready to complete a needs assessment or to develop goals..

PLAN FOR PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Tips

- Anticipate transportation barriers. Identify options for reducing interruptions in a youth's participation due to lack of transportation.
- Establish a clear, consistent process for each youth to contact the young person's facilitator between scheduled visits.
- Develop strategies for identifying facilitator candidates who have the characteristics needed to engage successfully with children and youth.
- Ensure that staff levels and workloads allow adequate time for program delivery and documentation.
- Establish flexible procedures to accommodate school and work schedules and to manage schedule conflicts that may affect youth or facilitator availability.
- Establish procedures for managing significant interruptions in youth participation, such as placement changes and extended absences, so that facilitators will know how to respond when a disruption occurs in the program's expected timeline.
- Build sufficient time into the schedule for visits and chapter activities rather than assuming that each activity will be completed within a fixed amount of time.
- Plan for a program time frame of 9 to 12 months to allow sufficient time for relationship building, changes in pace and unexpected circumstances.

Engagement Lessons Learned and Tips

ENGAGEMENT LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

Lessons Learned

- Relationships need to come before the process. Youth engagement is strongest when the transition facilitator invests first in building trust, acting consistently, following through on commitments and allowing each young person to determine the pace of the facilitator-youth relationship.
- Establishing trust takes time. It is built through consistent actions. Many youths carry the emotional baggage of mistrust because of their exhausting or inconsistent experiences with child welfare systems. Youth respond to repeated actions, not one-time events or box checking. As they develop trust, they become more likely to share information about their abilities, culture, experiences, relationships and aspirations.
- Discovery of strengths is an ongoing process, not simply a formal assessment. Strengths become visible through relationship building, observations and everyday interactions. Helping young people to recognize, to name and to build upon their own strengths is as important as identifying their strengths for them.
- Youth voice needs to influence the work, not simply be included in it. Engagement with young people increases when they have meaningful choices about their own goals, activities, services they receive and how they wish to participate.
- Some youths may have trouble engaging with the program from the beginning. Early challenges with engaging and keeping up the pace may affect a young person's ability to progress through the program.
- Initial challenges, including those that involve engaging and keeping pace, tend to decrease as the number of completed chapters increases. This is because youths become more familiar with the program as they progress from chapter to chapter.
- Young people learn not only through conversations and completion of worksheets but also and especially through meaningful experiences. Real-world experiences enable youths to practice in meaningful contexts their skills in communication, decision-making, self-advocacy and problem-solving.
- Group engagement can complement one-on-one work. Opportunities for youths to develop relationships, to practice skills, to build self-confidence and to experience a sense of belonging can complement individualized work toward youth-identified goals.
- An evidence-based model is strongest when implemented in a culturally responsive way. The model provides the framework. Community values, relationships, cultural identity and ways of engaging with young people shape how to put the framework into practice.
- Fidelity in program implementation entails more than completing forms and activities. It is strongest when the program's principles become part of everyday interactions with youth. These principles include strengths-based conversations, youth-driven planning, relationship building and helping youths to connect their goals to concrete next steps.
- Youth feedback strengthens program delivery. It can guide how transition facilitators communicate, follow through and remain accountable. The insights that youth feedback provides can support improved youth engagement.

ENGAGEMENT LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

Tips

- Invest in building the relationship before expecting a youth to engage in a formal needs assessment or goal planning.
- Approach preparation and visitation with patience, compassion and respect. Allow time for each youth to open up and to participate at the young person's own pace. Keep opportunities for engagement flexible to fit the youth's schedule and circumstances.
- Integrate "strength talks" into everyday interactions rather than limiting them to formal sessions. Look for opportunities to explore and to reinforce strengths during individual check-ins, goal development conversations, shared experiences and other engagements with a youth. With the young person's agreement, invite caregivers, family members and other supportive people to share their perspectives. These may broaden understanding of the youth's strengths and support system.
- Clearly explain that the young person is a partner in the transition process and has meaningful choices regarding one's own goals, activities, services received and extent of participation in the program. Begin with the youth's priorities rather than those identified for the youth by adults or child welfare systems.
- Maintain regular contacts with each youth, including informal check-ins that are not always centered on completing a task or addressing a problem. Follow-through on commitments and small acts of consistency can enhance trust significantly.
- Expect the youth's goals to change. Revisit them periodically with the young person rather than viewing a changed goal as a lack of progress.
- When a youth disengages, continue appropriate outreach efforts. Provide opportunities for the youth to reconnect without requiring the young person to "start over."
- Provide real-life experiences for the youth to practice applying skills in communication, leadership, employment, education, independent living and self-advocacy.
- Provide opportunities for youths in the program to connect with one another. Continue individualized work with each youth as well.
- Learn what matters culturally and locally before determining exactly how to deliver the program within a community.
- Preserve the core principles of the program while allowing flexibility in how to practice applying those principles.
- Incorporate youth feedback throughout program implementation. Allow that feedback to change agency practices when appropriate.

9. Additional Program Materials

Find program materials that support implementation here:

SCAN HERE

CLICK HERE

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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER
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