

# YOUTH GUIDED CARE

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## The Role of the Peer Advocate in Residential Treatment

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# Learning Objectives

- Understand how to apply the Continuum of Care (CCR) strategies and values of youth guided care into daily practice
- Demonstrate an understanding of the Peer Advocate role throughout the life of a case
- Examine Peer Advocate strategies designed to empower youth and mobilize change
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to engage youth in organized advocacy efforts (e.g. Youth Council)

# Who are we?



## OUR MISSION

Cultivating hope and resilience to enrich the well-being of children, adults, families and communities



## OUR VISION

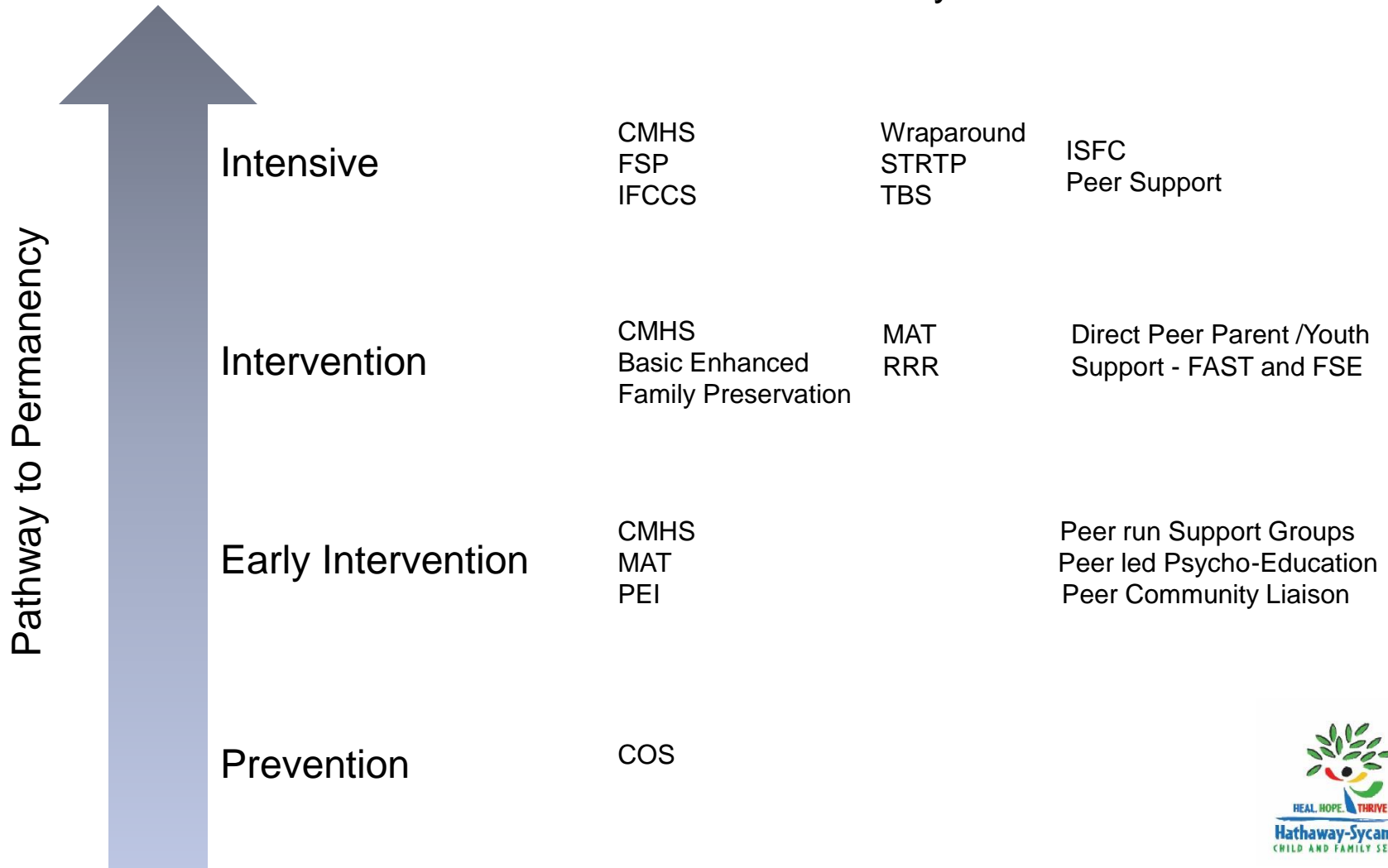
Stronger families, stronger communities

# What we've learned

- Youth are experts on their care
- Continuity of care focused on youth and family centered practices increases resiliency and permanency
- Youth guided practices transforms systems of care
- A Peer Advocate role greatly empowers youth to take an active stance in their treatment and permanency efforts

# Who do we serve?

Nearly 4,000 unduplicated youth, young adults, and their families each year:



# Learning Journey

- Family-Driven and Youth-Guided work improves culture of care and reduces mental health stigma
- Unified agency leadership advances a culture of peer to peer care
- Promote relationship based customer service as new “normal”
- Advance family permanency, engagement, support and advocacy as norm
- Parent and Youth input at all levels informs service and campus changes
- Peer support interventions compliment clinical services

# El Nido Campus

## Family Cottage(s)



# El Nido Campus

- **43 bed STRTP program** for male youth ages 11-18 and Non Minor Dependents (NMD's)
  - Specialty and core mental health services
  - CSEC
  - Rehabilitation services
  - Vocational services (e.g. silk screening)
  - Permanency services to include family finding and outreach
  - Family Cottages
  - Aftercare
- **16 bed Transitional Shelter Care (TSC) program** for male youth, ages 6-18
- **Community based services**
- **FFA/ISFC**



# Continuum of Care Reform

- Assembly bill 403 – CCR “ultimate goal of returning the child home whenever possible or to a permanent family through adoption or guardianship.”
- Based on belief and understanding that children who must live apart from their bio parents do best in committed, nurturing family homes.
- Reduces reliance on group care and is limited to short-term, therapeutic interventions that are just one part of the CCR.
- Necessitates policy, practice and infrastructure reform to hire and train staff to implement new requirements and build new program models.

# Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) Vision

All children live with a committed, permanent and nurturing family with strong community connections

Services and supports should be individualized and coordinated across systems and children shouldn't need to change placements to receive services

When needed, congregate care is a short-term, high quality, intensive intervention that is just one part of a continuum of care available to children and non-minor dependents

Effective accountability and transparency drives continuous quality improvement for state, counties and providers



# What is an STRTP?

STRTP is an acronym **Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program** which is one part of the continuum of care supporting children and youth in foster care.

The STRTP is a program that is culturally relevant, trauma informed, and is focused on improving outcomes for children, youth and non-minor dependent young adults as they move through the continuum, ultimately, returning to a home with family in the community.

Specialty mental health services and a team facilitated process called a Child Family Team support the child and family as they prepare for the child to transition home.



# Competing Agendas

Adult  
Agenda

Youth  
Agenda

## Words from a youth...

“Being involved and having a say in my care made me feel like I had control in the chaos that was my life when I was 14. In foster care, I forgot I was smart or that I had good ideas. Being part of a group of kids who were helping the adults make decisions made me feel pretty good.”

# Opportunity for Youth Voice

Youth Council

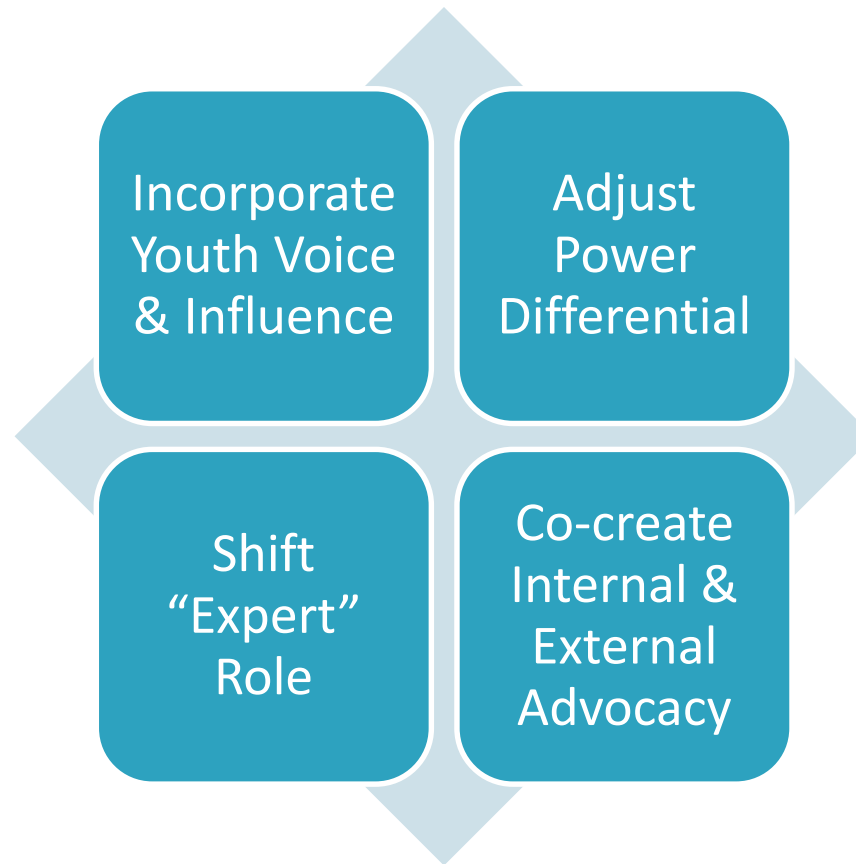
Consult on  
Events &  
Activities

Survey

Check-ins

Customer  
Service

# Peer Advocacy



# Intake Process

- Welcome kit
- Engagement
- Youth support plan



# Personal Rights Check In

- Monthly samples in both Transitional Shelter Care (TSC) and STRTP



# Youth Council

- Purpose
- Role of Peer Advocate and Youth
- Sample Agenda



# Ongoing Engagement

- Regular assistance and support throughout stay (navigating system, advocacy, support, “voice”)
- CFT Process
- Surveys
- Mentoring

# Youth Development

- Vocational
- ILP-TH Housing
- California Youth Connection (CYC)

# Empowering Youth

## Engage, Support and Empower Youth

Young people have the right to be empowered, educated, and supported in having a strong decision making role in addressing their needs and planning their lives

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Support strong youth voice ...</b></li><li>• <b>Provide youth with opportunities to connect and interact...</b></li><li>• <b>Assure opportunities to participate in the operation of the residential program...</b></li><li>• <b>Use youth advocates...</b></li><li>• <b>Promote youth empowerment...</b></li><li>• <b>Include families not only with the treatment plan, but with activities...</b></li><li>• <b>Support youth in exploring their cultural identities and enhancing positive cross-cultural interaction...</b></li><li>• <b>Value youth contributions...</b></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do youth (during the residential intervention) have an active role in establishing their treatment goals, educational plans, and continuing to engage in activities that match their individual strengths and talents in their home communities?</li><li>• During the residential intervention do youth have opportunities to give meaningful input into program practices, and build their sense of empowerment and decision making skills?</li><li>• Are youth allowed to attend public school when appropriate, as well as spend time in the community (preferably the youth's home community) developing pro social peers through positive activities and events?</li><li>• Are youth encouraged to explore their cultural identities towards a positive sense of self and pro-social approaches to cross-cultural tensions?</li><li>• Are youth advocates made available to engage, guide, support, and help empower the youth in the program?</li></ul> |
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# Hiring Process

- Current residents participate in the hiring process for employment positions in the residential program
- Hire former foster youth in various roles

# Discharge/Aftercare

- Provide support and voice as youth transition to permanency
- Connect to community of origin



# Advocacy Efforts

- Legislative-local and national level
- California Youth Connection (CYC)



# Questions or Answers?

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