

# Helping NC's Foster Youth Gain Self-Sufficiency

## Understand the **Needs** of youth (and former youth) in Foster Care:

- Youth in foster care have experienced some type of trauma, and their developmental needs vary.
- Many foster youth have a lack of a natural supports, and are likely to exit foster care without a support system in place.
- Youth exiting foster care are less likely to obtain a high school diploma, enroll in college, and are more likely to be perpetrators of crimes.

## Know the **Values and Principles** of Foster Care 18 to 21:

- Ensure that all young adults establish and maintain permanent lifelong connections to caring and committed adults.
- Allow young adults to gain real life experiences with independence, and allow them to learn from their mistakes.
- Work in partnership with young adults to develop and reach independent living goals.
- Empower young adult to take ownership of planning and developing goals, while learning decision-making skills along the way.

## Consider Young adults as **Partners in Planning**:

- Engage them as a partner in planning for permanence through independence.
- Help them identify key members of their Transition Support Team.
- Provide support in developing independent living skills.
- Respect that young adults have valuable insights, that can help develop solutions.
- Believe that young adults can provide valuable contributions in planning for their future.
- Recognize that the young adult will be part of the solution.

## Offer **Support** to Young Adults in Foster Care:

- Create opportunities for involvement in extracurricular and community groups to ensure the young adult is spending time with multiple caring adults.
- Provide information, skills, and supports the young adult needs to drive the direction of their own life – help them see the results of their choices and actions.
- Focus on helping the young adult find and engage with family – support him/her in establishing healthy, lasting family relationships.
- Recognize that simply extending existing foster care programs and policies, which were put in place for children and youth under age 18, will not meet the developmental needs of young adults ages 18 to 21.

## Talking to Young Adults:

- The goal is to help you succeed.
- You are an equal party in decision making and transition planning.
- The program offers supports all young adults need, such as meaningful adult relationships.
- It's voluntary: You can stop services any time.
- Social workers will be there to offer guidance and support when you're making decisions.
- You play a part in planning for your future.

**“Nothing about me without me!”**

THE KEY IS TO PROVIDE **QUALITY TRANSITION PLANNING** THAT IS **YOUNG ADULT CENTERED AND STRENGTH BASED**, WHILE OFFERING **GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT** ALONG THE WAY