

# **Social Worker Competencies and Task Analyses**



## **Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition**

# Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

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*For use with the Developmental Planning and Support Tool*

1. Involves and supports youth in an ongoing process to develop skills, resources, knowledge, and attributes that the youth defines as necessary for survival and success (i.e., incorporates positive youth development into practice)
2. Supports youth in establishing relationships and maintaining permanent connections.
3. Understands the unique cultural self-identity of youth and incorporates this understanding into case planning.
4. Effectively collaborates with youth, the youth's support system and with community agencies in developing, implementing, and evaluating a transition plan.
5. Advocates for youth's needs with outside agencies (e.g., schools) as warranted.
6. Understands the factors that contribute to placement stability and implements strategies to achieve placement stability (including sensitive management of placement transitions).
7. Demonstrates knowledge of adolescent development, characteristics, behaviors, and social challenges through thoughtful assessment and case planning.
8. Recognizes indicators of mental illness and developmental disabilities and initiates evaluation and potential service planning.
9. Demonstrates current knowledge of policies and programs relevant to adolescents in transition.

# Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

## Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

### **Competency 1: Involves and supports youth in an ongoing process to develop skills, resources, knowledge, and attributes that the youth defines as necessary for survival and success (i.e., incorporates positive youth development into practice)**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with youth</b>	<p>Identifies relationship building skills by shadowing experienced caseworker</p> <p>Articulates the relationship between a collaborative relationship and positive case outcomes</p> <p>Articulates the relationship between participation of youth and perceived power of caseworker</p>	<p>Keeps regular face-to-face contact with youth</p> <p>Communicates regularly with youth</p> <p>Returns calls promptly</p> <p>Keeps commitments</p> <p>Explains what is happening</p> <p>Clarifies roles and responsibilities, including limits of worker's role, whether and when youth will be consulted, etc.</p>	<p>Skillfully communicates with and engages youth, treating youth as a resource</p> <p>Prepares youth for effective participation in court hearings, IEPs, family team meetings, etc.</p> <p>Shares decision-making with youth whenever possible</p>	<p>Skillfully manages difficulties in relationships with youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintains focus on process; avoids power struggles</li> <li>▪ Acknowledges legitimacy of youth's negative reactions</li> <li>▪ Helps youth through transitions, transfers and terminations</li> </ul> <p>Models effective communication skills for less experienced workers</p>
<b>Supports positive youth development in all aspects of practice</b>	<p>Articulates the key developmental outcomes, opportunities and supports for successful transition to adulthood</p> <p>Articulates the need to begin this work in the child's preteen years</p>	<p>With supervisor, assesses youth's ability and motivation to achieve positive outcomes: physical and mental health; intellectual ability; employability; cultural, civic and social ability</p>	<p>Supports youth in identifying interests and abilities and developing and sustaining motivation to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for survival and success</p> <p>Uses relationship with youth to support youth's ongoing involvement with services and supports</p>	<p>Skillfully supports youth and others involved with youth to cope with setbacks and changes in plans and circumstances</p> <p>Works with community to increase services opportunities and supports to promote positive youth development</p>

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
		<p>With supervisor, youth, community, and family team, identifies local opportunities and supports for enhancing each youth's development</p> <p>Supports youth's ongoing engagement, participation and progress through case management</p>	<p>Coaches others in youth's life to help youth achieve skills necessary for survival and success</p>	

# Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Transitioning Youth in Transition

## Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

### **Competency 2: Supports youth in establishing relationships and maintaining permanent connections.**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Understands concepts and strategies for achieving youth permanency</b>	<p>Articulates options for legal permanency for youth, including guardianship</p> <p>Articulates importance of permanent connections for youth who do not achieve legal permanency</p> <p>Articulates the critical importance of maintaining sibling relationships</p>	<p>Articulates relationship among placement stability, the youth's emotional well-being and achievement of permanency</p>	<p>Knows tools and techniques for achieving permanency or permanent connections for older youth in care</p>	<p>Monitors field for new developments in achievement of permanency for older youth</p> <p>Educates others about new developments in achieving permanency</p>
<b>Supports youth in establishing and maintaining relationships</b>	<p>Throughout the life of the case, inquires about and records contact information for all caring adults involved in child's life</p> <p>Demonstrates sensitivity to family members and other adults who cannot care for the child but to whom the child is important, including putative fathers</p> <p>Articulates the importance of worker behavior (promise keeping, full disclosure, etc.) in helping youth learn/relearn trust of others</p>	<p>Manages case to assure that youth is consistently able to visits with siblings and caring adults</p> <p>Provides opportunities for youth to share concerns about relationships</p> <p>Makes appropriate referrals to supportive or counseling services to strengthen youth's ability to maintain relationships</p> <p>Models and reinforces norms of reciprocity and promise keeping in relationships</p>	<p>With youth, identifies and acts on opportunities for strengthening youth's relationships (e.g., extended visits, mentorships, etc.)</p> <p>With youth, monitors the strength of the youth's relationships and joins proactively with youth and others to help youth manage conflicts, set boundaries, and avoid permanent disruptions in relationships</p>	<p>Uses community networks to recruit appropriate mentors for youth</p>

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Supports youth in establishing and maintaining permanent connections</b>	<p>Articulates the need for youth to have permanent connections with caring adults to sustain their transition to and through adulthood</p> <p>Understand the potential for and demonstrate sensitivity to family members and other adults who cannot care for the child to nevertheless become permanent connections.</p>	<p>In collaboration with youth, uses tools and strategies to identify possible permanent connections for youth</p> <p>Addresses permanent connections in transition planning and family team meetings</p>	<p>Engages youth to uncover and address potential resistance to legal permanency</p> <p>Proactively uses resources, including treatment, respite, and hard services, to support the maintenance of permanent connections</p>	<p>Continues to work for permanency for the youth until case closure</p>

## Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

### Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

#### **Competency 3: Understands the unique cultural self-identity of youth and incorporates this understanding into case planning.**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Understands the unique cultural self-identity of youth</b>	<p>Defines “culture” and its relevance to older youth in care</p> <p>Recognizes that development of cultural self-identity is a key developmental task of adolescence</p> <p>Recognizes the additional challenges of identity development for youth in foster and group care</p>	<p>Explains the importance of creating safety for the youth to discuss cultural issues such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, spirituality, special needs and “foster care culture” as well as related issues of bullying, victimization and other forms of overt and indirect discrimination</p> <p>Explains techniques for encouraging but not forcing conversation with youth about cultural identity.</p> <p>Explains indicators other than youth report that youth’s cultural identity is not accepted in the home, foster home, school, community or peers.</p> <p>Except in emergencies or during the initial investigation, secures permission of the youth to initiate contact or conduct an interview at school</p>	<p>Initiates and/or creates opportunities for the youth to talk with worker about issues related to the youth’s developing cultural identity, acceptance or non-acceptance in the foster home, at school and with peers, bullying and discrimination</p> <p>Assesses for indicators that the youth’s cultural identity is not accepted by parents, foster home, school, community or peers.</p>	<p>Uses techniques such as ethnographic interviewing to learn more about the culture(s) with which youth identifies and how the youth’s own behavior and views may or may not reflect cultural norms</p> <p>Proactively ensures that youth are placed with families that accept and nurture the youth’s cultural identity and provide opportunities to strengthen cultural connections.</p>

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Incorporates youth's cultural identity into case planning</b>	Recognizes the potential harm to the youth if placements, services, treatments and supports are not culturally appropriate.	<p>With supervisor, identifies culturally appropriate placements, services, treatments and supports.</p> <p>With supervisor, identifies "red flags" for potentially culturally inappropriate placements, services, treatment and supports</p>	<p>Treatment plans reflect knowledge of youth's unique cultural needs and youth input into these needs?</p> <p>Recommends culturally appropriate placements, services, treatments, and supports.</p> <p>Where placements or services are not supportive of the youth's cultural self-identify, intervenes on behalf of the youth to improve the situation or change the placement or service</p> <p>Where youth's cultural identity and/or the cultural practices of the youth's placement have created conflict with his or her family, provides the family with information and the youth and family with resources to support reintegration of the youth into the home</p>	<p>In group supervision, attends to indicators of culturally inappropriate placements, services, treatments and supports</p> <p>Case planning reflects full participation by youth and goals and services that promote youth's cultural identity</p>
<b>Practices in a culturally competent manner with older youth in foster care</b>	<p>Uses sensitive, respectful language when speaking with and about older youth in care and their families</p> <p>Articulates the difference between culturally competent and culturally destructive casework practice</p>	<p>Recognizes one's own cultural values and begins to name relevance of these when working with youth</p> <p>Actively seeks information relevant to the diversity of the youth client population</p>	<p>Consistently uses skills that respectfully engage youth, their families, and foster families across cultural differences</p> <p>Acknowledges the pervasiveness of culturally biased practice and non-defensively receives feedback on cultural</p>	<p>Seeks out social and professional environments to challenge continued growth and development</p> <p>Engages older youth in full participation in case planning and works effectively with youth of varied cultural backgrounds to achieve the youth's goals</p>

			elements of practice	
	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
			Advocates for importance of culturally competent practice for all staff; role models critical self-reflection in group meetings and individual conversations	

## Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

### Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

#### **Competency 4: Effectively collaborates with youth, the youth’s support system and with community agencies in developing, implementing and evaluation a transition plan.**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Collaboratively develops transition plans</b>	Observes experienced workers and/or transition planning specialists collaboratively develop plans	With supervisor and youth, identifies a network of supportive adults and community agencies to enlist in collaborative planning  With supervision, writes a timely, realistic, measurable transition plan	Engages youth, the youth’s support system, and community agencies as a team to develop the youth’s transition plan  Writes plans which anticipate changes in motivation, goals, and circumstances (Plan B, concurrent planning)	Uses strategies and develops plans which maximize the youth’s participation in all aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation
<b>Collaboratively implements the transition plan</b>	With supervision, identifies tasks and follows through on commitments	Through effective case management, assures timely provision of services, opportunities and supports.	Coaches, networks and advocates to assist the parties to implement the plan  Uses strategies to develop and reinforce the youth’s motivation to make progress toward goals  With supervisor, identifies barriers to collaboration and pursues strategies to address these barriers	Identifies gaps in available services and works collaboratively within community to improve/increase service availability
<b>Collaboratively evaluates the transition plan</b>	Articulates the importance of sharing responsibility for evaluating the plan	With supervisor, can identify outcomes and goals for transition plan	Helps youth and team define desired changes and time frames (short, medium and long range goals) Regularly reviews and adjusts transition plan with the youth, the youth’s support system, and community agencies	Actively engages in developing best practice; works effectively in transition teams and transition meetings; may serve as a mentor to less experienced workers

**Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition**  
 Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

**Competency 5: Advocates for youth’s needs within IDHS and outside agencies (e.g., schools) as warranted.**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Advocates for youth’s needs</b>	Describes community resources available to meet needs of youth	Identifies and accesses case-relevant IDHS & community resources in consultation with supervisor  Develops relationships with outside agencies for families on caseload  Knows the informal and formal processes for advocating for the youth within each system (e.g., conferences, IEPs, service appeals, etc.)  Makes referrals and transmits authorized information	Develops own referral and information network  Coaches youth and youth’s support system to effectively advocate for their own needs  Understands the goals/processes/needs of other agencies and uses this knowledge for effective advocacy and collaborative problem solving  Uses tools of effective advocacy (e.g., conflict resolution, public speaking, writing, negotiation, mediation)	Identifies service gaps and participates in resource development activities  Identifies additional community resources  Participates and/or leads in system-wide or community collaboration efforts to improve outcomes for transitioning youth  Seeks additional training in conflict resolution, advocacy, cross-disciplinary fields, etc.

## Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

### Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

#### **Competency 6: Understands the factors that contribute to placement stability and implements strategies to achieve placement stability (including sensitive management of placement transitions).**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Understands factors contributing to placement stability</b>	<p>Articulates definition of placement stability</p> <p>Describes the importance of placement stability</p>	<p>Recognizes when youth is experiencing instability in placement</p> <p>Consults with supervisor about cases in which a placement is unstable</p>	<p>Identifies potential for placement instability based on conversations with youth, foster family, and collaterals, as well as by direct observation</p>	<p>Increases own knowledge and understanding of most effective practices to promote stability in placements through readings, trainings.</p>
<b>Implements strategies to achieve placement stability</b>	<p>Learns about available resources to stabilize placements (short-term respite, intensive visitation, counseling services)</p> <p>Learns policies for making changes in placements</p>	<p>With supervision, develops plans to address placement instability</p> <p>With supervision, makes referrals for resources to stabilize placements, and follows through on referrals</p> <p>When changes in placements are needed, uses supervision to ensure a smooth transition</p>	<p>Intervenes proactively in order to prevent a placement disruption (increasing visits with youth and foster parents, arranging counseling services prior to a placement crisis)</p> <p>When changes in placements are needed, helps youth and caregivers to understand the change and helps youth to adjust to new situation</p>	<p>Acts as a resource on best practices for stabilizing placements; knows the community's most effective services and how to expedite them; may act as a mentor for less experienced workers</p> <p>When changes in placements are needed, prioritizes the youth's needs, anticipates resources that may be needed, and intensifies contact with the youth and caregivers to provide a smooth transition</p>

## Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

### Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

**Competency 7: Demonstrates knowledge of adolescent development, characteristics, behaviors, and social challenges through thoughtful assessment and case planning.**

	Trainee	Novice	Professional	Advanced Professional
<b>Adolescent Development, Behaviors, Challenges Values</b>	<p>Articulates importance of considering adolescent development into case planning</p> <p>Tends to pathologize common adolescent behaviors</p>	<p>With prompting of supervisor, can discuss the developmental status of adolescents on caseload</p> <p>With prompting of supervisor, can identify strengths and normalize common adolescent behaviors</p>	<p>Independently describes the individual developmental issues of adolescents on caseload</p> <p>Independently identifies strengths of youth and understands youth behaviors in context of social challenges and developmental context</p> <p>Models strength based approach with youth's caregivers, teachers, etc.</p>	<p>Models importance of considering adolescent development and a strength-based approach to common youth behaviors in team consultation</p>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<p>Learns how information about adolescent development can be integrated into case planning</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of how to access reference information on typical adolescent development</p>	<p>Can identify educational, health promotion, and other community resources which support healthy adolescent development</p> <p>Knows how to approach youth about sensitive issues such as bullying and reproductive health.</p>	<p>Demonstrates knowledge of developmental "red flags" that indicate a need for further assessment</p>	<p>Independently enhances knowledge base through various educational modalities</p> <p>Interprets for and instructs team regarding adolescent developmental issues</p>
<b>Skills</b>		<p>Assists youth's team in planning to meet his/her developmental and educational needs</p>	<p>Independently advocates for or assists caregiver in advocating for child's educational needs in school settings</p>	<p>Uses creative problem solving and collaboration to enhance developmental services or supports for children on caseload</p>

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
		In consultation with supervisor, incorporates knowledge of youth's development and social challenges into case planning	Assesses for indications of bullying  Comfortably discusses with youth their need for reproductive health services  Incorporates knowledge of adolescent development into case planning	

## Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

### Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

**Competency 8a:** Recognizes indicators of mental illness and initiates evaluation and potential service planning

	Trainee	Novice	Professional	Advanced Professional
<b>Knowledge</b>	<p>Recognizes imminent risks for suicide and trauma in children and young adults</p> <p>Learns how mental health information is integrated into case planning</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of how to access reference information on child mental illness and medications</p>	<p>Recognizes well-known medications for childhood disorders</p> <p>Understands how child mental health conditions may contribute to child abuse and neglect or increase risk to the child</p> <p>Can articulate specific protective factors in cases of child mental illness</p>	<p>Recognizes major mental disorders affecting children</p> <p>Knows five DSM categories and classes of psychotropic medications for each</p>	<p>Independently enhances knowledge base through various educational modalities</p>
<b>Skills</b>	<p>Consults with supervisor on how to read and interpret a mental health evaluation</p> <p>Observes/listens in on caseworker or supervisor modeling communication with mental health evaluator and in explaining diagnoses to youth and family team</p>	<p>With supervision, reads and interprets mental health evaluations</p> <p>Can articulate key questions to ask mental health evaluators</p> <p>With supervisor, crafts a treatment plan that provides appropriate support while minimizing placement or school disruption</p>	<p>Understands and interprets mental health evaluations</p> <p>Communicates effectively with mental health evaluators</p> <p>Can explain diagnoses and side effects of medication to family team members in plain language</p> <p>Uses strategies to enhance protective factors and reduce risks to children of mental illness</p> <p>Makes treatment plans that provide appropriate support while minimizing placement or</p>	<p>Interprets reports for and instructs others on the team</p> <p>Develops professional relationships with mental health providers in the community</p> <p>Develops enhanced strategies to work with youth with mental illness</p>

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**Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition**  
 Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

**Competency 8b Recognizes indicators of development disability in youth and initiates evaluation and potential service planning**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Recognizes indicators of developmental disability in youth</b>	<p>Learns about indicators of developmental disability</p> <p>Learns about different types of disabilities</p>	<p>Recognizes indicators of developmental disability in youth on their caseload</p> <p>Understands how developmental disabilities may contribute to youths' ability to transition successfully</p>	<p>Recognizes potential impacts of specific disabilities on youths' transition</p> <p>Maintains a balance between understanding youths' limitations with youths' capacities</p>	<p>Independently enhances knowledge about developmental disabilities through different educational modalities</p> <p>Acts as a resource to co-workers with less knowledge and expertise in developmental disabilities</p>
<b>Initiates evaluation and potential service planning</b>	<p>Learns about procedures for initiating evaluations</p> <p>Learns about programs and services available in communities, including waiver programs</p> <p>Learns about how services to youth with special needs change at age 18</p>	<p>Makes referrals for evaluations, services and waiver programs as indicated.</p> <p>With supervision, develops case plans, including transition plans, that reflect understanding of special needs</p>	<p>Develops plans with youth that effectively integrate services from multiple providers and informal support systems</p> <p>Works effectively with youth, caregivers, informal support systems, and service providers in implementing plans, including transition plans</p>	<p>Develops professional relationships with providers in the community, including transition committees;</p> <p>Develops enhanced strategies for working with youth with special needs</p> <p>Interprets reports for and instructs co-workers on serving youth with special needs</p>

**Social Worker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition**  
 Task Analysis by Developmental Stage

**Competency 9: Demonstrates current knowledge of policies and programs relevant to adolescents in transition.**

	<b>Trainee</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Advanced Professional</b>
<b>Demonstrates current knowledge of policies and programs relevant to adolescents in transition</b>	<p>Discusses the purpose of policy and programs relevant to adolescents in transition.</p> <p>Follows local office procedures with supervision</p>	<p>Identifies relevant policy and procedure in manuals and IAC as needed for casework and confirms with supervisor</p> <p>Identifies resources available to youth in transition; seeks assistance of supervisor and TPS to determine youth's eligibility</p>	<p>Incorporates manual, IAC, How-Do-I Guides, etc. in case planning with look-ups as necessary.</p> <p>Seeks supervisory guidance for clarification of complex situations involving policies and programs</p> <p>Acts as a planning resource to youth and youth's team, advising the team about available programs and incorporating eligibility requirements (e.g., age of discharge, etc.) into planning.</p> <p>Casework complies with policy consistently and accurately</p>	<p>Coaches and mentors others toward competency in this area</p> <p>Participates in opportunities to identify and advocate for policy change</p>