

# **Strength Discovery Assessment Process**

**for Working with Transition-Age  
Youth and Young Adults**

## **Personnel Training Module**

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**Your feedback will be valued:**

In order for us to continue to improve the usefulness and effectiveness of the Personnel Training Module Series, we would value your feedback and suggestions. Thank you, Hewitt B. "Rusty" Clark, Ph.D.      [clark@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:clark@fmhi.usf.edu)

**Some relevant websites:**

Transition to Independence Process (TIP) system – U. of South Florida

<http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>

National Technical Assistance Center on Youth Transition – U. of South Florida

<http://ntacyt.fmhi.usf.edu>

Transition Center – U. of Florida

[www.thetransitioncenter.org](http://www.thetransitioncenter.org)

Florida Department of Education

[www.fldoe.org](http://www.fldoe.org)

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For more information regarding the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System and other transition issues, please visit our websites: <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu> <http://ntacyt.fmhi.usf.edu> or contact Hewitt B. "Rusty" Clark, Ph.D., Nicole Deschenes, M.Ed., or Jordan Knab, Ed.S., Department of Child and Family Studies, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, Tampa FL 33612. Email: [clark@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:clark@fmhi.usf.edu) [deschenes@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:deschenes@fmhi.usf.edu) [jknab@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:jknab@fmhi.usf.edu)

## **General Introduction to Personnel Training Modules**

The transition period for youth and young adults struggling with emotional/behavioral difficulties (EBD) involves unique barriers that put this particular population at significantly greater risk for school failure, involvement with correctional authorities, and/or dependency on social services. These youth have the highest rate of dropout from secondary school among all disability groups (Marder & D'Amico, 1992). They also experience the poorest outcomes in employment and independent living and have higher rates of arrests and incarceration (Davis & Vander Stoep, 1996; Marder & D'Amico, 1992; Vander Stoep, Davis, & Collins, 2000). The youth who have or are at risk of emotional/behavioral difficulties range from the adolescent girl who is suffering from severe depression due to previous sexual abuse to the adolescent boy who lives in a "war zone" type neighborhood and has been arrested recently for auto theft. Neither of these youth creates a "poster child image" around which to rally support.

Given the needs of these transition-aged youth and young adults, it is important that **Transition Facilitators**, and others working with and on behalf of these young people, have the skills and tools to help youth as they navigate transition to adulthood.

### **Personnel Training Modules**

The **Personnel Training Modules** have been developed to enhance the competencies of those who work with transition-aged youth and young adults. The modules make frequent reference to the **Transition Facilitator** and his or her role in assisting youth with EBD and utilizing the philosophy, values, skills, and processes in the modules. While the primary audience for the materials is *Transition Facilitators*, the material also will be useful to anyone committed to working with youth and young adults in transition (e.g. teachers, mental health specialists, employment specialists, guidance counselors, parents, foster parents, vocational rehabilitation counselors, juvenile justice personnel).

The Training Modules are:

- ❑ *Strength Discovery Assessment Process*
- ❑ *Developing and Using Rationales*
- ❑ *Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Processes*
  - *The SODAS Framework*
  - *The SCOCS Framework*
- ❑ *Check our websites for additional modules*

### **TIP Operations Manual**

It is extremely important for a reader to review the **Transition to Independence Process: TIP System Development & Operations Manual** prior to studying the *Personnel Training Modules*. The *TIP Operations Manual* provides a conceptual framework and specific principles that should guide one's work with youth and young adults with EBD. Our website addresses are provided at the end of this introduction for the reader's access to each of the *Personnel Training Modules*.

### **Module Format**

The modules are designed to build from one to the next and, therefore, should be presented and learned in the order listed above. Skills and processes learned in earlier modules (e.g. strength discovery process and rationales) are incorporated into the subsequent modules (e.g. problem-solving and negotiated decision-making).

Common formats are used across the *Personnel Training Modules*. Each module begins with an introduction, a connection to the TIP System and TIP Guidelines, a statement of the learning objectives, and a narrative description of the values, skills, and procedures related to the process being taught. The description includes a definition of the process, guidelines for its use, common challenges in utilizing the process, and examples of the process as it may be used by a *Transition Facilitator* or other personnel working with a transition-aged youth or young adult.

Appendices, which follow the narrative section of the module, contain forms that will be useful in implementing the processes and include helpful quick references and worksheets to use with young people and that they can have for their personal use. The appendices also contain the pre/post tests that each reader can utilize for a self-assessment of knowledge acquisition or that can be utilized by supervisors or trainers as they assess the quality of the training they provide on these modules.

### **Competency-Based Training Available**

***Behavior Rehearsal Manuals*** have been developed to accompany the *Personnel Training Modules* to ensure that adequate practice and feedback is provided to meet the standards for competency-based training. Members of the ***TIP Program Development and Evaluation Team*** can provide competency-based training utilizing the *Personnel Training Modules* and the *Behavior Rehearsal Manuals* and assist an organization in building its capacity for training current and future personnel designated to work with youth and young adults with challenges.

### **Website and Contact Information**

If you want additional information regarding these modules, other transition-related program and evaluation resources, or consultation services,

Please visit our web sites:

Transition to Independence Process:

TIP web site: <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu/>

National Technical Assistance Center on Youth Transition

NTAC-YT web site: <http://ntacyt.fmhi.usf.edu/>

Or please contact Hewitt B. "Rusty" Clark, Nicole Deschenes, or Jordan Knab:  
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## Issues of Cultural Diversity

It is important to acknowledge that the cultural orientation of young people and families intersects with the acceptability and applicability of processes and orientations to problem solving and conflict resolution. The skills and procedures in the modules have not been evaluated for use with diverse cultures. Therefore it is very important for the Transition Facilitator to consider the youth and family culture when choosing an approach. It may be necessary to modify the language used and the processes so that they are acceptable and helpful to persons in diverse cultures.

Some general recommendations for improving the cultural fit of these modules with the culture of the youth and family are:

- ❑ Play an active role in examining your own beliefs and assumptions about different cultures and races.
- ❑ Be aware that language barriers can play a significant role in exacerbating conflict.
- ❑ Remain open to learning from each youth and family.
- ❑ Ask permission of family members before involving them in a problem-solving or decision-making process. Briefly explain the process and ask them if this fits for them and would be helpful or feel okay to them. Then be sure to honor their decision.
- ❑ Ask youth and/or parents (caregivers) who should be involved.
- ❑ Educate yourself about the cultural orientation of the family, youth, or others involved in a negotiated decision-making process like SCOCS. Some cultural orientations are more collectively oriented than individually oriented and you may need to modify your approach based on the cultural orientation of those involved.
- ❑ Below are some resources and readings that will help you adapt your approach:

### Selected Readings and Resources

- Collier, M. J. (2003). Understanding cultural identities in intercultural communication: A ten-step inventory. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (pp. 412-429). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Hernandez, M. & Isaacs, T. (1998). *Promoting cultural competencies in children's mental health services*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing, Co., Inc.
- Stewart, E.C. & Bennet, M.J. (1991). *American cultural patterns: A cross-cultural perspective*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing, Co., Inc.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1994). Managing intercultural conflicts effectively. In L. Samovar & R.E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (7th ed., pp. 360-372). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Yoshida, (1994) Interpersonal versus non-interpersonal realities. In R.W. Brislin & T. Yoshida (Eds.). *Improving intercultural interactions: Modules for cross-cultural training programs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## **Introduction to this Module on**

## **Strength Discovery Assessment**

The mission of the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) system is to assist young people with emotional and/or behavioral difficulties (EBD) in making a successful transition into adulthood, with all young persons achieving, within their potential, their goals in the transition domains of employment, education, living situation, and community life functioning. The TIP system is driven by seven guidelines at the practice level – and strengthened by the extent to which the program and community system levels are aligned to support these guidelines and the related collaboration required. The first TIP System Guideline, which specifically ties into this module, is to engage young people through relationship development, person-centered planning, and a focus on their futures. An essential element of this guideline is “using a strength-based approach with young people and their key players” (Clark, 2005 Revised). (The *TIP System Development and Operations Manual* and other articles and documents related to transition issues, program development, research, and evaluation are available through the TIP system website: <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>.)

This training module was designed to teach those who work with transition-age youth and young adults how to use a strength-based assessment that provides for: a) collaborative working relationship with the young person and his/her family; b) identification of the strengths and resources of the young person, his/her family, and his/her other key players; and c) identification of the needs and obstacles facing the young person and his/her family in the pursuit of dreams and goals. This Strength Discovery Module assessment process provides the base upon which future planning can

occur and feeds directly into the development of a Transition Facilitation Plan that recognizes the needs of youth and families and builds on their strengths.

As mentioned in the general introduction, this module makes frequent reference to the transition facilitator as the main person who works with the young person. While the primary audience for this material is transition facilitators, the material may also be useful for others who work with youth in transition (e.g. teachers, guidance counselors, parents, job coaches).

### **Learning Objectives for Strength Discovery Assessment**

After completing this module, you should be able to:

- differentiate between strength-based and traditional approaches to assessment
- explain the purposes of conducting a Strength Discovery assessment
- describe what Strength Discovery is and how it is conducted
- describe when to use Strength Discovery
- demonstrate how to use Strength Discovery through a role play
- explain how Strength Discovery supports the Person-centered planning process

# **Strength Discovery Assessment Process for Transition-Age Youth and Young Adults**

## **Strength Discovery**

This module introduces a strength-based assessment approach called Strength Discovery. Strength Discovery has been defined by VanDenBerg & Grealish (1996) as a "strengths chat", developed from a strength-based approach, which "helps build child and family cooperation and encourages the family to trust the professionals who are involved in the planning process" (p. 13).

Strength Discovery is being adapted from VanDenBerg & Grealish (1996) to serve the transition-age youth and young adult population with EBD. Commonly, other assessments include only a limited piece on identifying the strengths of an individual (e.g. Facilitator's Guide, 1999), combined with the complex process of identifying a number of other variables, primarily deficits. In contrast, the purpose of the Strength Discovery assessment seeks to identify strengths and resources of the young person, his/her family, and his/her other supports so that an Transition Facilitation Plan can be developed from the strength-based foundation that emerges through this assessment. The Strength Discovery assessment focuses exclusively on identifying strengths and resources, and expanding this process to include key players around the individual who can play an integral part in the intervention by providing support and resources to the individual. When such key players are not identified, their roles may be minimized or overlooked throughout the transition process, thereby reducing the possible resources that may be available to support the young person.

Challenging circumstances can arise for youth in transition with EBD. Recognizing and balancing strengths and resources in the context of those situations can be important. Imagine the following scenarios: a young person with EBD has not attended high school for three weeks; a young girl with EBD is pregnant; and another young person with EBD was just arrested for shoplifting. The people who will come into contact with the youth exhibiting challenging behavior need to not only identify the challenges and deficits but also need to focus on the strengths and resources of the youth.

In the past, the accepted and regularly utilized model was based on pathology, with processes that seek to identify, diagnose, and treat problems. This medical model traditionally focused on assessment of deficits and problems (Milne, Edwards, & Murchie, 2001). In addition to this model providing a foundation from which people often take a negative perspective, finding fault and failures in these young people, the young people themselves were often viewed as the problem. However, the person is not the problem, the behavior is the problem. In this light, the young individual can be seen to have strengths and resources.

Unfortunately, many individuals who work with young people with EBD often take the traditional approach to working with this population, focusing on their deficits and viewing the individual as the problem. This traditional approach keeps the focal point of the individuals working with these young people on “what is wrong, what is missing, and what is abnormal while the strengths and healthy patterns are passed over and ignored” (Clark, 1998, p. 46).

Fortunately, a different perspective has been working its way into the forefront. This perspective, under which many like-minded theorists are assembling, is a strengths perspective (Wieck, Rapp, Sullivan, & Kisthardt, 1989). As Clark (1998) explains, “This perspective is a mindset to approach clients with a greater concern for their strengths and competencies and to discover mutually how these personal resources can be applied to building solutions” (p. 46). The strength-based approach views the individual as a great resource, not a great problem, and values the individual’s input in the process of intervention, believing that he/she has strengths that should be tapped.

Strength-based approaches focus much more on action than on uncovering all of the problem areas and ensuring that the individual understands the problems. As Clark (1998) explains, “It considers the future to be far more important than the past” (p.51). The strength-based approach encourages the people working with individuals with EBD to identify areas of strength instead of blaming them and finding fault, “allowing us to see the possibilities rather than the problems, options rather than the constraints, and once seen, achievement can occur. As long as we stay in the muck and mire of deficits, we cannot achieve” (Rapp, 1998, p. 24). This approach shines a positive light into the area of working with adolescents, helping young people to realize their abilities and

encouraging those who work with these young people to build solutions from these areas of strength.

Individuals who work with young persons who have EBD are currently being taught a different approach to working with challenging behavior. These individuals are given two approaches to take: the strength-based approach, which focuses on the individual's strengths, or the traditional approach, which focuses primarily on the individual's deficits.

Clearly understanding the purposes of the Strength Discovery process will assist in remaining committed to it and will assist transition facilitators' ability to explain the process to others. The purpose of the Strength Discovery semi-structured assessment is three-fold. The first purpose is to learn as much as possible about the young person and his or her family members, identifying the individual's and the family member's strengths. This process of learning about the individual and identifying strengths and resources, instead of deficits, is important because it can facilitate collaboration and break down barriers to achieving goals. Strength Discovery is intended to set the stage for interventions to be built from the strengths and resources that have been identified through this process.

The second purpose of the Strength Discovery assessment is to demonstrate interest in the young person and the perspectives held by him/her and the other key players. When the facilitator is truly interested in the young person and the other key players, the opportunity for building rapport increases. The young person, his/her family, friends, and other key players need to feel they can trust the facilitator in order to rely on him/her. The Strength Discovery process provides an opportunity for the facilitator to show genuine interest in the individual and his/her environment, which can be the first step to developing a strong relationship with the individual and the other key players around the individual.

Finally, Strength Discovery assessment seeks to provide support for seeing the young person in a positive light, sharing areas of strength and ability. This process allows the young person and the key players in his/her environment to begin to see the strengths the young person has and the resources available in the young person's environment. The young person and his/her family begin to see themselves, often for the first time, as capable, with strengths and resources to pull from, which moves them

toward a positive and hopeful outlook on their future orientation, which is vital to the transition planning process. This is a good start to changing prevalent perspectives that see the young person's deficits and the lack of resources available to deal with the challenges presented to the family. The facilitator may have many opportunities to shine a new light on a challenging situation, which makes transition planning so much easier for all involved.

### **Assessment Procedure**

The following section of the module reviews the process for uncovering and identifying young people's strengths and resources. Strength Discovery is a strength-based assessment that is conducted through an informal semi-structured interview. The process is sometimes referred to as a "strengths chat" (see VanDeBerg & Grealish, 1996) because the process is less formal than most assessment processes.

Because Strength Discovery promotes rapport building and emphasizes the young person's strengths, it is a great way to begin working with the young person and getting to know his/her environment. The first Strength Discovery assessment should take place as soon as possible once a young person is linked with a facilitator. It is always a good idea for the facilitator to review the youth's records and get some background information about the individual and his/her family and supports so that the facilitator is knowledgeable of the documentation that has been created for this individual. The challenge for the facilitator is to remain open to the perspectives of the young person, his/her family, and other key players through the Strength Discovery process, rather than pursue the deficit trail that is often documented in the young person's records.

The Strength Discovery interview may cover the following aspects of a young person's life:

- Interests and preferences
- Values, traditions in one's life
- Skills, abilities, and competencies
- Personal attributes (e.g. sense of humor, resilient)
- Dreams/Aspirations

- Strategies in the past that have worked best at home, school, or in the community
- Settings that are most comfortable for the (e.g. 1:1, tutoring)
- Family members, relatives, friends, and other informal key players valued by and/or are in this young person's life
- Formal key players involved in his/her life
- Priority needs and goals across the transition domains

The facilitator usually conducts initial Strength Discovery assessments one-on-one with the young person. The process typically takes place over a series of interviews since it is important to have a "chat" rather than an "interrogation." These initial interviews with the young person help the facilitator to begin to build a relationship with the young person, building trust and starting to identify the young person's strengths and possible resources that may be available in his/her environment. After the initial Strength Discovery interviews are conducted with the young person, the facilitator will have the names of key players (e.g., parent, older brother, aunt, teacher) suggested by the young person as people from whom the facilitator could learn more.

The young person should always have the authority to decide who will be a part of the subsequent strength-based interviews. The facilitator follows up with individual Strength Discovery interviews of the people identified by the young person. Whenever possible, the transition facilitator assesses the additional possible areas of strength and resources surrounding the young person on an individual basis, rather than in a group type setting. Meeting individually, or in very small groups, with the identified key players has proven beneficial, increasing the probability of the transition facilitator's ability to bring about strength-based information. This strength-based information can help develop a strength-based foundation of the young person from which the young person is seen in a positive light.

Strength Discovery is conducted in an informal manner, with the facilitator having a conversation with the participant and discussing different areas of the young person's life. This strength-based, semi-structured interview is conducted in an open conversation. The facilitator does not sit down with a form to fill out but rather sits down with the

participant for a friendly and open conversation in which strengths will be identified as the participant shares throughout the conversation. The facilitator starts off the conversation and guides it in the direction it needs to go to assess areas of strength as the individual or group continues to communicate. Small group work around Strength Discovery is more likely to be successful following individual meetings. By initially meeting individually with key people, the facilitator builds relationships and can demonstrate and guide a Strength Discovery conversation. The conversation is not a straightforward conversation about areas of strength but more like a conversation that naturally flows, stopping at some areas of interest to discover more and naturally progressing onto other areas.

The facilitator communicates interest in the individual and his/her environment, encouraging the individual and the other participants to share and express themselves instead of going quickly and directly to a list of topics to be explored for strength and falling into the typical facilitator/participant role of facilitator asking a line of questions and the participants answering question after question. Instead, the facilitator should build the conversation from the content provided by the participants, being sure to validate and restate as he/she guides the conversation and assesses areas of strength. For example, if the grandmother of the young person shares that she is at home most of the time when the young person is home and she tries to be patient with the young person when he gets upset, the facilitator could say something like, "That is great that you are home a lot when Michael is there, and I am glad to hear you try to be patient with him when he gets upset. How do you stay patient with him?" The facilitator would listen as the grandmother answers, validate that he/she heard the grandmother's response, and then the facilitator could respond with a follow-up question like, "How does Michael respond when you stay patient with him?" After the grandmother responds, the facilitator could acknowledge that he/she heard the response by saying something like, "okay" and could then guide the conversation onward by continuing to focus on more of what was shared. The facilitator could say something like, "You said that you are home together a lot. What kind of things do you do when you are home together?" If the response is non-specific like, "I don't know", the facilitator could follow up with a more specific question that might focus in on the area a bit more, like, "Are there things you like to do together like play games, or cook, or anything else?" Perhaps grandmother responds by saying, "Well sometimes we

hang out together”. The facilitator could use a follow-up question to clarify what ‘hanging out’ means by asking, “What things do you do when you hang out with Michael?”.

This sample conversation exemplifies the facilitator staying focused on what participants share into the conversation instead of just moving ahead without them. The facilitator also uses the conversation content as a springboard into other areas by asking follow-up questions. Follow-up questions are an important part of Strength Discovery and can enhance the conversation in many ways. Follow-up questions can be used to focus in on possible areas of strengths and resources, as well as clarify ambiguous answers, as exemplified above. In addition to helping focus in and pinpoint areas of strength, follow-up questions can also help keep the conversation flowing.

Strength Discovery is not a one-time assessment but rather an on-going process that continues as opportunities for open and honest conversations arise throughout the relationship with the young person and his/her family and supports. These young people tend to reveal things over time, especially as trust is established. Therefore, there will be times when the young person shares information outside of the ‘interview session’. Sometimes these conversations may only last 5-10 minutes, but every conversation can be educational and all information that could help support the young person should be deemed important and recorded in the individual’s record so that it is not lost.

A comfortable setting should be provided to meet with the young person or when meeting with the other key players (e.g., home, park, while transporting the young person). This setting also should provide privacy and confidentiality for trust and protection of the young person. This could be accomplished in many settings (e.g., the park, a restaurant), but consideration must be used to make sure these elements are incorporated. In general, interviews should not last more than an hour and several shorter interviews may be more comfortable and productive for some youths. The length of the interview will depend on the young person’s interest level at the time and on the facilitator’s engagement skills.

### **Recording Method**

One difficulty with the Strength Discovery process is recording information as the conversation develops. The facilitator will want to record the information that is shared

but will need to keep the conversation flowing, as he/she is an active part of participating and listening. Typically, an assessment is done by filling in spaces on a form, as the facilitator asks questions and the participant answers, but with this type of assessment, the facilitator will need to operate a bit differently to successfully facilitate this type of conversation-based assessment.

Think of how a counselor conducts a session with a client. The counselor must take notes as the conversation unfolds but he/she must also guide the conversation as he/she listens and discusses relevant issues. The note-taking during this assessment should be conducted much the same way. The facilitator should take brief notes, only writing for very short periods of time, taking down just enough information to enable him/her to complete the Strength Discovery profile later. A good memory is especially necessary in settings where conversations take place and extensive note taking is impossible, e.g., in the car, when the facilitator is driving. As the facilitator writes, he/she must continue to listen and interact, either keeping eye contact or using body language, e.g., nodding his/her head, to show he/she is still involved and listening. Using statements like “okay”, “uh huh”, “I understand what you are saying”, and “tell me some more about that”, as the facilitator quickly jots down a few words, may be helpful to keep the momentum of the conversation going instead of allowing the conversation to cease while he/she writes.

### **Application of Strength Discovery to the Person-Centered Planning Process**

Strength Discovery is the initial assessment that identifies the strengths, interests, resources, challenges, and needs of the young person and his/her family. Person-centered planning develops a Transition Facilitation Plan or intervention based on the individual’s strengths, interests, goals, and dreams that were obtained through Strength Discovery.

The relationship that develops between the facilitator, the young person, and the other key players during Strength Discovery supports and enhances the collaboration necessary to the person-centered planning process. The person-centered planning process demands open, honest communication toward realistic planning and ultimately goal achievement. Strength Discovery lends itself well to the building of a trusting

relationship with open, honest communication amongst the young person and his/her key players. Once the relationship between the facilitator and the young person and his/her family is developed, discussions related to the identification of obstacles (i.e., drug abuse, abusive relationships, poor study skills) that need to be overcome in order to reach dreams and goals can ensue in a collaborative fashion with a future, solution-focused planning focus rather than a past history, deficit focus.

Strength Discovery also provides the foundation of an understanding of youth and family interests, strengths, and resources that feeds into the person-centered planning process. It is much easier to set goals from a strength-base than from the traditional deficit-base. Even the obstacles and needs that were collaboratively identified by the young person and his/her key players can now be put into strength-based, present and future oriented goals and action steps.

The Strength Discovery and person-centered planning approaches set the occasion for a young person and his/her family to begin to see the power and potential they have to achieve their goals. They are likely to take ownership of their goals when they are developed through this strength-focused framework.

When youth are guided to view their life from a deficit perspective, they will naturally not pursue their goals due to obvious fear of failure, believing they do not have what it takes to reach their goals. When youth are guided to see their life from a strengths perspective, they will begin to see their potentials and will be more likely to take the risks necessary in the pursuit of their goals.

The mental health and social work fields continue to turn the corner, moving toward the utilization of strength-based approaches, instead of traditional approaches based on pathology. As we make this transition, approaches such as the Strength Discovery process can help identify strengths and resources for developing strength-based interventions, building rapport, and seeing the young person with challenging behavior in a positive light. Pursuing a strength-based perspective and planning process broadens the range of interventions, supports and approaches that are accessible to the youth and the individuals in the youth's life. Transition can be focused on strengths and supports rather than pathology and deficits.

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## **Appendix**

### **Strength Discovery Assessment Protocols for Transition-Age Youth and Young Adults**

This appendix presents Strength Discovery Assessment Protocols for assessing areas of strength and resources for the young person, his/her family, and his/her other informal and formal key players. The protocols should be helpful to you as you practice the Strength Discovery process. The protocols also can be helpful as a guide during interviews. However, many people find that over time they do not need the protocol in hand to conduct the interviews, although they may still use it to record brief notes that they elaborate upon more fully after the discovery conversation.

The order of the questions is not necessarily important. You should try to start the conversation based on a relevant or proximate situation. For example, if Michael's grandmother drops him off for the initial interview, the facilitator might ask who brought him to the interview. This information could naturally lead the conversation into questions about his family. Depending on the amount of time available for Strength Discovery assessment, consideration should be given to prioritizing questions by including the most pertinent questions into the initial conversation. Be sure to keep the Strength Discovery assessment conversational in nature.

**Strength Discovery Assessment Protocol  
for Transition-Age Youth and Young Adults**

**Possible Questions for Young Person**

Young Person's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interviews: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of interviews: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Important relatives, friends, and other informal and formal key players for you and/or your family**

Who would you define as your family?

Who in your family do you admire the most and why?

Who in your family do you turn to the most and why?

Who would you define as your friends/social network?

Which are closest to you?

What do you admire about them?

What are some of your happiest times with your friends?

What are some ways that your friends have helped you?

Are there other people you are close to?

Who else is an important part of your life?

Is there anyone else that ever helps you or your family?

Are there services that you receive that you or your family feel help you?

Are there services/resources you received in the past that helped you?

Are there any obstacles you are facing that you want to overcome in the area of family, friends, or formal supports? (i.e., With whom would you like to have a better relationship?)

**Young person's/family's strengths and interests**

What are some of the things you think you are best at?

What do you like to do in your free time?

What groups/activities are you involved in or would you like to be involved in?

What are your dreams/goals?

What does your family think you are best at?

What are the interests/dreams/goals of your informal key players? (e.g., mom/dad/sister/brother/grandmother/uncle/aunt)

What activities/interests do you share with your family?

What keeps you from engaging in the activities/interests that you enjoy?

**Values, culture, and natural resources of the family**

What traditions do you have with your family? (if spiritual underpinnings are shared, discuss areas of strength around these)

What would you say your family's values are?

What areas do you wish you could strengthen as it relates to your values/culture?

**Vision and needs of the young person across life domains**

Employment/career

What types of jobs/volunteer opportunities have you had?

What types of jobs/volunteer opportunities would you like to have?

What could get in the way of you reaching your employment/career goals?

Educational opportunities

When do you do your best educationally?

What educational goals do you have?

What could get in the way of you reaching your educational goals?

Living situation

What types of living situations do you do your best in?

What is your ideal living situation?

What skills do you still need to learn to obtain/maintain your living situation?

Community life functioning

What community skills do you have?

What skills do you still need to learn?

**What has worked for the young person and family in the past?**

When do you feel the closest to your family?

What are your happiest memories with your family?

What do you like most about your mom/dad/sister/brother/aunt/grandmother etc.

What do you think they like most about you?

When does the problem behavior *not* occur?

**Strength Discovery Assessment Protocol  
for Transition-Age Youth and Young Adults**

**Possible Questions for Family or Other Informal Key Players**

Young Person's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Young Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of interviews: \_\_\_\_\_

Locations of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**Young person's/family's strengths and interests**

What are your goals/dreams for your young person?

When is your young person most successful/at his/her best?

What are some of the things you think the (young person's name) is best at?

What are (young person's name) interests?

What do you think you are good at as a family?

Who do you admire or respect among your family? Why?

What are your interests?

Do you have the time/supports to pursue your interests?

**Values, culture, and natural resources of the family**

What traditions do you have as a family? (if spiritual underpinnings are shared, discuss areas of strength around these)

What would you say your family's values are?

**Vision and needs of the family across life domains**

Employment/career

Educational opportunities

Living situation

Community life functioning

**Important relatives, friends, and formal and informal key players for you and/or your family?**

Who would you define as your family?

Who are (the young person's) friends? Which are closest to you...to him/her?

Are there other people he/she is close to?

What do you like or respect about his/her friends?

Is there anyone else that ever helps you or your family?

Are there services that you receive that help your family or the young person?

Are there past services that you received that helped your family or your young person?

**What has worked for the young person and family in the past?**

When do you feel the closest to the young person?

What do you like most about the young person?

What do you think they like most about you?

When does the problem behavior *not* occur?

**Strength Discovery Assessment Protocol  
for Transition-Age Youth and Young Adults**

**Possible Questions for Formal Support Personnel**

Young Person's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Formal Support: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Support Provided: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of interviews: \_\_\_\_\_

Locations of interviews: \_\_\_\_\_

**Young person's/family's strengths and interests**

What are some of the positive things you see in the young person and the family?

What do you think they are interested in?

What do you think the young person is best at?

What do you think the family is best at?

**Values, culture, and natural resources of the family**

What traditions does the young person share with his/her family? (if spiritual underpinnings are shared, discuss areas of strength around these)

What would you say the family's values are?

**Vision and needs of the family across life domains**

Employment/career

Educational opportunities

Living situation

Community life functioning

**Important relatives, friends, and formal and informal support providers for the young person and/or his/her family?**

Who would you define as the family?

Who are the young person's friends? Which are closest to him/her?

What do you respect or admire about particular friends?

Are there other people he/she is close to?

What support do you/your agency provide?

How does the young person/family respond to this support?

Are there other supports that help the young person or his/her family? Are these supports coordinated?

Are there other services that would be beneficial to the young person and his/her family that he/she is not currently receiving?

**What has worked for the young person and family in the past?**

When does the family seem to pull together?

What do you think the young person likes best about his/her grandmother, mom, dad, brother, sister, etc.,

What do you think they like most about you?

When does the problem behavior *not* occur?