

# HOPE FOR TOMORROW



**A Hope-Centered Tool  
for Youth Engagement**

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# Hope for Tomorrow User Guide

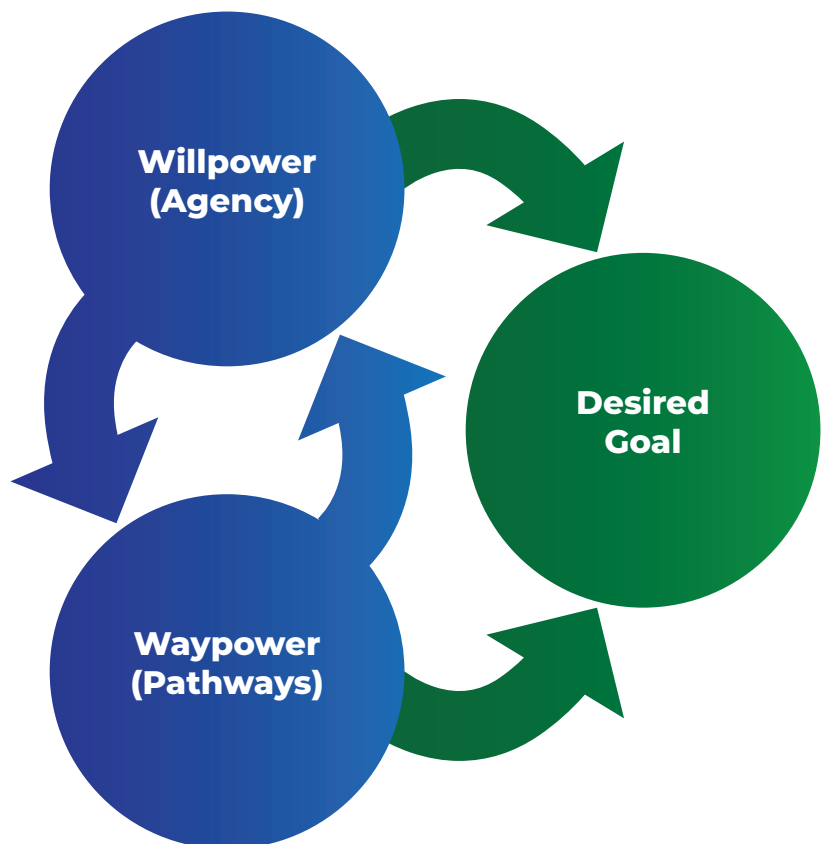
The Hope for Tomorrow assessment is a tool for young people ages 14-18 to use to think about their current life, consider how they imagine their future, and to develop specific pathways to achieve meaningful goals. This assessment and planning tool have been created using research on hope and well-being.

Hope is the belief that the future will be better than tomorrow, and that you have the power to make it so. Hope is a goal-directed way of thinking that has been found to be one of the best predictors of well-being in children and adults in thousands of studies. The aim of the program is to intentionally work to increase the hopeful thinking of youth who are in foster care. Hope is based three important components.

**#1: Identifying Goal(s):** The first step is to identify a valued goal. Often youth in foster care are given plans and goals that may not actually reflect their own interests and pursuits, but rather reflect the interests of the courts or the organization. Allow youth to identify and name their own goals, that are based completely from their own interests. These can be, and often will be, very short-term goals. But as hope increases youth will be able to use the momentum from early goal achievement and move to longer term planning. Goals can be set that help young people avoid something or achievement focused. To the extent possible, capture the goal in the youth's own words as they state and see it and avoid changing the goal or reframing the goal.

**#2 Identify Pathways to the Goals:** The second component of hope is to identify viable pathways. After a goal is selected, it is critical that youth can identify the actions steps that will lead to goal achievement and construct plans for overcoming barriers and obstacles. Youth often need help with identifying multiple pathways to their goal and need ongoing information and modeling (and celebrating) as they achieve key benchmarks on the journey.

**#3 Support Willpower and Mental Energy:** The third, and final component of hope is mental energy and willpower. Setting and achieving goals requires attention. We know that stress and trauma are attention robbers. Work with youth to make plans and actively and intentionally support and encourage youth as they work toward their goals. Help young people identify how they continue to work toward their goals and explore distractions and plans to help when they encounter barriers.



Each question in the assessment has been designed to help youth consider their goals, pathways, and their overall willpower to work towards the goals in each domain. Each question is created as a tool for young people to identify and visualize plans for short-term and long-term future. High satisfaction in your own life is not just something that happens, it is something that occurs as a result of setting goals, thinking about the pathways you need to take to achieve those goals, and developing strategies that will help you stay on track for those goals even when times get difficult. We believe that the future can be better, and that youth have the abilities that are necessary to make it so! We also believe that as the case manager or supportive adult in the young person's life, you have extraordinary influence on model and teach hope. Young people need you to believe in them and their future. Use this assessment and goal setting worksheet to communicate frequently your hope for their future.

After completing this assessment with youth, our desire is for the case manager to guide youth in a thoughtful discussion of setting goals and creating pathways to achieve each goal. This tool has been designed to help you use the documents to their fullest potential.

## Domain Areas

### Education

Education is important for all youth who are experiencing foster care. It is vital to their future and the building block to meeting other goals. Education is often disrupted during foster care from placement changes, but also from the ongoing stress of managing the day-to-day life within the foster care system. Changes in school are difficult, leave foster youth struggling to catch up, make new friends, build connections to mentors, coaches, and teachers. Case managers should check in on school, and school progress at each meeting. This questions for education are created to assess youth's pathways that are known to help youth succeed in school, and to assess their willpower (mental energy) to continue working toward those goals. For any area that youth indicate a lower level on the scale, use that to prompt a conversation to better understand struggles. For example, if youth indicate they cannot think of a lot of ways to meet the challenges of class suggests they have blocked pathways. If they score high, talk about what they are doing now that helps them feel hopeful. Help them think strategically about realistic steps they can take to help find new strategies to manage class.

#### *Goal Setting Ideas for Education*

Get higher grades	Not get kicked out
Earn credits to move to the next grade	Stay out of trouble
Make new friends	Turn homework in on time
Pass classes (or just one class)	Not fail and not give up
Finish the semester	Be able to return to public school
Improve ACT scores	Ask for help when I need it
Enroll in college	Not miss school
Enroll in trade school	
Improve writing skills	

## Employment – Job or Career

How can youth begin now to imagine their adult lives? What do they dream of doing, to earn pay, when they become an adult? The questions have been designed help youth imagine their future selves and draw a meaningful connection to how their choices and plans today are strategic steps to that imagined and desired future. Work evolves over our lives, and for many adolescents' part-time jobs are the beginning point to learning good work habits and to learn and test out our talents and skills that may be useful for future employment. Having a great career comes at the end of many small, meaningful steps. Help youth identify some of the early steps they can begin now to build to a future they desire. Really understand what drives their goals. Stability and success can be very different goals, but both are very meaningful. Simply telling a youth who wants to become an accountant (or beautician, lawyer, mechanic, etc.) to “study hard” is not adequate attention to the steps to get to the goal. We want to help young people feel empowered and connect the steps of today are the building block for the future they want.

### *Goal Setting Ideas for Employment*

Complete Drivers Education	Go to school and not get in trouble
Get a part-time job now to build skills for future	Be able to help my family and provide or my children
Study in school and improve grades	Have a healthy environment and house
Explore college options	Learn to be on time and stay on task
Practice making a resume	
Look for shadowing opportunities in career I am interested in	
Practice and take the ACT	
Enroll in Vo-Tech	
Have more responsibilities and chance to earn money	
Open and bank account and start a savings	

## Relationships with Important People

Building and maintaining connections to important people is imperative for youth well-being. Their long-term relationships will support them into adulthood and ensure connections to their culture. Talk with youth about who those people are in their life and build intentional activities and strategies for them to sustain relationship with friends and other important adults. Does youth struggle to sustain relationships with friends and peers? Help the youth explore what they want in their family relationships, and friendships, and help them set a plan to achieve their goals. This is an area to ensure the goals are ones that youth set and that youth value (not the ones we want for them).

### *Goal Setting Ideas for Relationships*

I want to spend time with important people in my life I want to work toward establishing healthy boundaries I want support in keeping important relationships I want to be able to disagree and still have supportive relationships I want to learn how to communicate with others to keep strong relationships	I want to get along with people at school I want to make new friends and be able to keep the relationship
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## Health and Well-Being

This is a broad category, designed to help youth think about their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Health can include (but is not limited to), their ability to have good nutrition, participate in physical activity and build good sleep habits. It should also include mental and emotional well-being such as managing stress, learning how to relax and manage emotions, expressing oneself and getting emotional needs met in healthy ways. Helping youth recognize health and set goals to maintain or improve their well-being allow youth to set their own priorities for their long-term well-being.

### *Goal Setting Ideas for Employment*

I want to learn ways to maintain my health and fitness I want to have access to space that allows me to work out I want to have access to healthy foods I want to have tools to help me cope when my mental health feels unbalanced	I need access to professionals who can support me when I am having a hard time coping I need access to services and information for things like birth control and sexual health
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## Placement – Current Living Arrangement

The questions focus on the youth's sense of connection and attachment, belonging, to explore the goal-oriented outcome of permanency from a youth's view? Placement stability is often a priority for the child welfare agency, but how do youth feel about where they are currently living? Are youth able to see how placement stability will support the achievement of their other goals (education, friends, activities, etc.)? While placement is often out of the youth's control and the decision of the agency and courts, this section is designed to help youth think strategically about the impact of placement and current living circumstances in their lives. These questions can also give the worker a chance to discover the current well-being of youth in placement and help plan for distress that youth may experience in the placement.

### *Goal Setting Ideas for Placement*

Have a healthy home environment Live in a safe and supportive home Know what my options are if my placement is not healthy for me Having a consistent place to call home	I would like to have a good relationship with the adults who are providing my care I would like to have the ability to learn and practice basic life skills
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## Everyday Stuff – Things that are Important to Me

What are the things that teenagers typically do? And, what do youth want to be a part of? From prom, sports, clubs, hanging out with friends, going to the movies, teenagers are social and thrive on connections to their peers. The ability to participate in meaningful developmentally appropriate activities is important. Those “typical” experiences of youth are developmentally transformative life experiences. This also includes the ability to participate in cultural and traditional ceremonies, activities, and events that are meaningful to the youth. Youth need opportunities to talk about their desires and for the case manager, providers, and child welfare system to find ways to ensure youth have opportunities to participate in routine and special activities that are important to them. Out-of-home care has a long history of being a “culture of no” often preventing young people from part of routine life events and activities that they value out of a perceived fear of liability. For many young people, this pattern of no has conditioned them to no longer even ask for permission to participate in the things they really care about. Young people need opportunities to practice making decisions and learn from experiences gained from any of the activities (or others not listed) below. Use this section of the assessment and plan to encourage young people to identify their valued goals to having the type of “normal” teenage life they desire.

### *Goal Setting Ideas for Everyday Stuff*

Sports Sleepovers Access to phone and computer Dates and outings with friends, movies, real world activities Attending church Travel and vacations with friends Getting a driver’s license Participating in cultural and family activities Be with siblings and other important family members	I need access to professionals who can support me when I am having a hard time coping  I need access to services and information for things like birth control and sexual health
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