

# Indiana Youth Connections Program

**W**HEN FOSTER YOUTH LEAVE THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM AS YOUNG ADULTS, they continue to need supportive adults in their lives. Support is especially important when making the transition into the real world—going to college, finding housing, getting a job. Taking these steps is not easy, especially when there is no one there to guide a young person. Youth who have a permanent family can count on their parents to help them navigate their way into productive adulthood. Young people who do not have a permanent family still need close connections with caring committed adults who will be there for them when they need it.

The **Youth Connections Program** (YCP) is a youth driven, youth lead program dedicated to working with youth who would like to have permanent connections with caring adults. The program best serves foster youth 16 years and older, who have no identified supports and express that they no longer desire to be adopted. Exceptions to these criteria will be considered on a case by case basis.

The YCP specialist partners with the youth and his/her family case manager to find appropriate supportive adults. Once a supportive adult has been identified, the YCP specialist facilitates connections between the youth and the adult to help them build a strong relationship. The adult may be a relative with whom the youth has lost contact, or a teacher, coach or minister. For example—someone with whom the youth would like a closer relationship and who has the resources to help the youth. Some foster youth may not have anyone in mind—they may have lost contact with relatives or been in a group home for an extended period of time. The YCP specialist will review the case file and interview the youth to identify potential connections.

There are many ways a caring, committed adult can help a youth, including:

- Offer a place to stay in emergencies
- Assistance with managing money
- Someone to talk to about problems
- Help with health issues
- Help finding housing, schooling, work
- A place to do laundry
- Advocacy, motivation, mentoring
- Occasional transportation
- A link to community resources
- Help managing a household
- Emergency cash
- Help with clothing, meals
- A home for the holidays
- Spiritual support
- Safety and personal security
- Use of the computer or phone
- Help with paperwork, complex forms, legal documents
- Recreational activities
- Help with relationships



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