

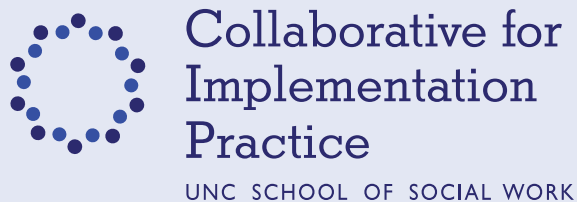


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UNC SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Youth and Young Adult Navigation Core Practice Brief

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To learn more about the Collaborative for Implementation Practice, visit implementationpractice.org.

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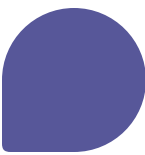
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Executive Summary

Youth and young adult navigation programs play a critical role in addressing the diverse and complex needs of young people by empowering them to thrive during pivotal transitions such as aging out of foster care, leaving the justice system, or pursuing independent living. These programs offer relationship-centered, culturally responsive, and youth-driven support. This support ensures access to resources, guidance, and advocacy that empower young people to achieve stability, self-sufficiency, and wellbeing. The Annie E. Casey Foundation partnered with the Collaborative for Implementation Practice (CIP) to explore core navigation practices, effective implementation strategies, and replicable approaches to enhance how navigation is provided in community-based settings. Our goal was to identify the navigation practices and approaches that help young people as they progress toward five goals: 1) effectively transitioning to adulthood; 2) building supportive and family-like relationships; 3) achieving economic and/or academic success; 4) connecting and contributing to their community; and 5) experiencing overall wellbeing. This practice brief describes how the core practices and contextual features of effective programs were identified, as well as the methodology, findings, and reflections for applying these learnings to future work in supporting effective navigation programs for youth and young adults.

This project employed a phased data collection approach to examine navigation approaches across various programs, leading to the identification of core practices and infrastructure to support navigation. The first phase involved interviews with staff from 11 programs to identify emerging themes around core practices and infrastructure. The second phase refined these insights through additional data collection, including document reviews and interviews with four selected programs that exemplify innovative navigation work. Central to this phase was hearing from young people served by each program.





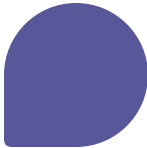
Results from both phases of data collection suggest that effective navigation involves both youth-facing and community-facing practices, with a strong emphasis on culturally responsive, youth-driven approaches. Seven core practices emerged; the first five are youth-facing, and the last two are community-facing.

- 1 Build trusting relationships with young people and encourage them to build permanent, healthy connections in their lives.
- 2 Learn together with youth and young adults to develop individualized navigation plans.
- 3 Provide resources to help meet basic needs.
- 4 Provide incremental support to help young people effectively move through and between systems.
- 5 Build and strengthen youth and young adult self-efficacy and capability.
- 6 Build a comprehensive understanding of local resources.
- 7 Advocate to build and strengthen systems, using feedback from youth and young adults about barriers they encounter.

We identified critical infrastructure elements for organizations delivering these services—such as skilled staff recruitment and development, use of data for improvement, supportive agency policies and procedures, flexible funding mechanisms, and external partnerships—that underpin successful navigation programs. Furthermore, addressing systemic barriers, such as access to housing, mental health supports, and education, is essential for long-term impact. Addressing these factors is essential for the effective implementation and sustainability of navigation programs.

Findings suggest that effective navigation involves both youth-facing practices (e.g., building trust and providing resources to meet basic needs) and community-facing practices (e.g., understanding local resources and advocating for strengthening systems).

Youth and young adult navigation programs serve as vital resources in guiding young people through critical life transitions while addressing systemic barriers. To maximize their impact, these programs must focus on fostering sustainability, innovation, and holistic care, while addressing gaps in access and service delivery so all young people receive the supports they need to thrive. With a commitment to addressing housing, education, and justice systems, these programs can advocate for systemic change while empowering young people to thrive.



Youth leadership and engagement can inform the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of navigation, providing local organizations a foundation for better serving their youth and young adult populations. As funders consider future investments, the core navigation practices documented in this brief might serve as a blueprint for organizations that seek to implement navigation as a new practice or integrate it into existing services for youth and young adults. Qualitative assessment of infrastructure can help support programs to determine which infrastructure elements they have in place and which might need to be further developed to successfully implement navigation. Acknowledging common enablers and barriers can facilitate robust conversations about the factors that will impact implementation success and achieve the best outcomes for youth and young adults. With sustained investment and strategic innovations, navigation programs can continue to provide holistic support, ensuring young people transition successfully into adulthood and achieve their fullest potential.






Background & Purpose


Youth and young adult navigation programs are evolving to meet the diverse and complex needs of the populations they serve. Focusing on innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability, these programs aim to provide holistic support that empowers young people to thrive. Navigation programs are positioned to create lasting impacts and improve outcomes for underserved communities with strategic enhancements in transitional services, mental health support, youth and young adult involvement, and a commitment to addressing the diverse needs of young people. Navigation programs can provide continuity and stability during

life's most critical junctures by enhancing support for young people during pivotal moments, such as aging out of foster care, leaving the justice system, or moving toward independent living.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation undertook this project to better understand how effective navigation practices are deployed, including the core elements of navigation; how these elements have been sequenced and integrated; and the factors that determine successful implementation. This information can help inform not only the Foundation's work but also investments from other funders and navigation programs in communities. Casey's foundation-wide workgroup defined navigation as young people having access to culturally responsive and youth-driven tools, resources, and relationships, as well as supportive systems, employers, and communities to realize their goals and dreams. These supports accomplish the following: 1) help them effectively move through and between systems, work, and communities; 2) build and strengthen their self-efficacy and capability; and 3) contribute to their wellbeing. The workgroup noted that navigation is often referred to as guidance, coaching, counseling, and mentoring, depending on the context. In the research literature, there is not a standard definition of navigation, although one common element is the provision of information about supports and services within and across complex

In the research literature, there is not a standard definition of navigation, although one common element is the provision of information about supports and services within and across complex and inaccessible systems.






and inaccessible systems that are not readily available.¹ The workgroup also identified four themes that contribute to successful navigation:

- **Caring and consistent adults** with expertise and experience working with youth and young adults
- **Upfront assessment, guidance, and coaching tools** leveraged to better understand each individual's needs and interests and the systems they are involved in
- **Program, system, and market knowledge** provided to help young people navigate multiple systems and the labor market so that they get on a pathway to build skills, relationships, and income as they transition to adulthood
- **Connections to peer and social networks** to reduce barriers to success and to access holistic, basic need supports such as housing and childcare

In the research literature, evidence on the effectiveness of navigation is limited because it is typically part of a larger set of services. Some studies of navigation, when bundled with other services, have shown positive findings, while others show limited effectiveness.¹ The Casey Foundation partnered with the Collaborative for Implementation Practice (CIP) to carry out a phased process to understand the core navigation practices of selected programs and factors that influence effective implementation.

This practice brief describes how the core practices and contextual features of effective programs were identified, as well as the methodology, findings, and reflections for applying these learnings to future work in supporting effective navigation programs for youth and young adults.





The Casey Foundation engaged the CIP team to understand how navigation work is deployed, including core practices and how those are sequenced and integrated; the distinction between navigation as a direct service practice and navigation as a systems change effort; and the infrastructure elements that support successful implementation of navigation. Casey was also interested in understanding how and/or what navigation practices help young people do the following:

- 1 Effectively transition to adulthood
- 2 Build supportive and family-like relationships
- 3 Achieve economic and/or academic success
- 4 Connect to and contribute to their community
- 5 Experience overall wellbeing

This brief is organized as follows: We describe the **methodology** behind our approach and provide a brief **program profile** for the organizations from which we collected data. In our findings, we **provide a definition** for youth and young adult navigation, describe the **values and guiding principles** undergirding navigation, and identify the **core practices of navigation**. We also describe the **infrastructure**, or supports and resources, needed to successfully implement youth and young adult navigation. We close with **future considerations** for the field.

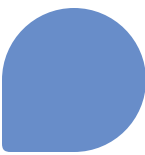


Methodology

Our team used a modified practice profile methodology^{2,3} to operationalize core practices for youth and young adult navigation over two waves of data collection. Wave 1 data collection, completed in the spring of 2024, was intended to give our team a broad understanding of navigation across an array of service contexts (e.g., child welfare and juvenile justice), and focus populations, including youth transitioning out of foster care, experiencing homelessness, and engaged in education settings, including apprenticeships and alternative schools. We interviewed staff from 11 programs* that provide navigation services to youth and young adults to better understand the practices that are part of their programs, as well as the supports and resources needed for successful navigation. Information from these interviews was coded and analyzed for themes.



* The 11 Wave 1 programs were A Place 4 Me, Communities in Schools, Covenant House Alaska, Educare Health Navigators, Homeboy Industries, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, Project for Pride in Living, SBSC, The Excel Center, The Spot, and YouthBuild Philly.



The findings from Wave 1 were used to draft a set of core practices that describe the work of navigation and the infrastructure needed to support those practices. We then conducted a second round of data collection with four of the Wave 1 programs in the fall of 2024, which included a review of internal documents and additional interviews. These programs were selected based on their ability to do the following: 1) clearly describe navigation as a distinct practice, 2) demonstrate the extent to which their navigation work included both youth and young adult-facing practices and community-facing practices, and 3) describe innovative approaches to navigation. Programs were further selected based on geography, diversity of their focus population, and capacity to participate in data collection activities. Profiles of each of the four Wave 2 programs are noted below. Each Wave 2 program shared internal documents (e.g., job descriptions for navigators, program manuals, marketing materials) that described their approach to youth and young adult navigation. After reviewing these documents, we developed semi-structured protocols to guide interviews with navigators, program staff who are designated to engage in advocacy work, and young people who have received navigation services. Protocols are included in the appendices for reference.

We qualitatively coded documents and interview transcripts to identify themes.^{4,5} The core practices and infrastructure elements drafted in Wave 1 served as a reference for coding. We also coded values that undergird navigation practices and barriers to delivering navigation from Wave 1 and 2 data. The table below summarizes the number of documents reviewed and interviews completed.

	A Place 4 Me	Covenant House Alaska	Nebraska Children & Families Foundation	Project for Pride in Living
Documents Reviewed	9	12	3	5
Interviews Completed	Navigators (3) Advocacy staff (2) Youth (3)	Navigators (2) Advocacy staff (1) Youth (2)	Navigators (1) Advocacy staff (2) Youth (3)	Navigators (2) Advocacy staff (1) Youth (1)



Program Profiles

A Place 4 Me

A Place 4 Me (AP4M) is dedicated to preventing and ending youth homelessness in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Navigation services are provided by peer Youth Navigators, who use their lived experience and knowledge of systems to support young people in accessing resources on their path to stability. Young people are eligible to receive services until age 25. AP4M also engages young people in advocacy through its youth leadership board.

Covenant House Alaska

Covenant House Alaska (CHA), an affiliate of Covenant House International, provides safe housing and holistic care to young people experiencing homelessness and to survivors of human trafficking. CHA Permanency Navigators provide mobile navigation services to young people up to age 24 and work as advocates, referral agents, and facilitators with landlords, other government agencies, and community partners' systems on their behalf.

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation's (NCFF) Connected Youth Initiative (CYI) is a statewide system change network that supports young adults through the Youth and Families Thrive framework. Central Navigation is delivered via community collaboratives across the state and is available to young people through age 26. NCFF values lived experience leadership: Young people ages 18–26 are eligible to serve on the Youth Advisory Board, and those 12 and older can engage in advocacy events, such as legislative days.

Project for Pride in Living

Project for Pride in Living (PPL) is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and focuses on housing stability and career readiness in the Twin Cities. Its PLUS Program serves young people enrolled in alternative schools in the greater Minneapolis area. Navigators are embedded at assigned schools and prioritize systems-involved youth and young adults up to the age of 24. PPL also coordinates a Leadership Advisory board to engage young people with lived experience in advocacy.

Findings

The following findings provide further grounding on how navigation is defined by interviewees; the values and guiding principles that undergird navigation; core practices, which include youth and young adult-facing practices and community-facing practices that are part of the larger, more holistic approach to navigation; and the infrastructure that is needed to successfully implement navigation.

Defining Navigation

For this brief, we developed a definition for navigation that was rooted in the practice experience of program staff who deliver navigation, as well as the lived experience of youth and young adults who have received navigation.

Navigators work within their organizations and with external partners as conveners to improve systems through smoother referral pathways, removal of obstacles, shared voice, and advocacy.

Our Definition of Navigation:
The process of helping young people access and coordinate the services they need to achieve stability, wellbeing, and long-term success in often fragmented and complex systems.

In the interviews we conducted, navigation was described by interviewees as a distinct approach for working with youth and young adults: Many staff explicitly named what navigation was not, namely that it was not case management or coaching, which includes a longer-term, more intensive set of supports. Instead, the majority of navigators provide youth and young adults with connections to short-term supports and interventions; these navigators were often described as **liaisons**, **connectors**, and **supportive guides**. As navigators observe barriers, they work within their organizations and with external partners as **conveners** to improve systems through

smoother referral pathways, removal of obstacles, shared voice, and advocacy. Therefore, navigation practices were described as both youth and young adult-facing, connecting young people to resources and services, and community-facing, including advocacy and systems change efforts to support young people.

Interviewees distinguished navigators from case managers because navigators were often connected to young people on a time-limited basis: Navigation, according to one interview participant, is “coordinated support in a community through a trusted access point and a ‘no wrong door’ approach.” The focus is on the assessment of up-front barriers and making appropriate referrals. Supports are staged, eventually decreasing over time as youth and young adults have increased skills and capacity. Staff described this process as “walking side-by-side” with youth and young adults and “connecting the dots” to help them access resources provided by complex systems that can be challenging for anyone, particularly young people, to move through. As one navigator noted, youth and young adults “have the answers but need guidance, which looks different for everyone—being a mentor, providing guidance, giving them space to walk those paths themselves.” In addition to these technical elements, navigation practices were also noted as highly relational. Program staff identified deep listening, the role of connecting through stories, and healing-centered practices as critical to navigation for youth and young adults. Staff also noted the need for navigation to be rooted in and responsive to the local context, not a “canned navigation model.” One young person described navigation as a “stand-in parent,” while another described navigation as “someone helping you on your journey to independence and stability.”



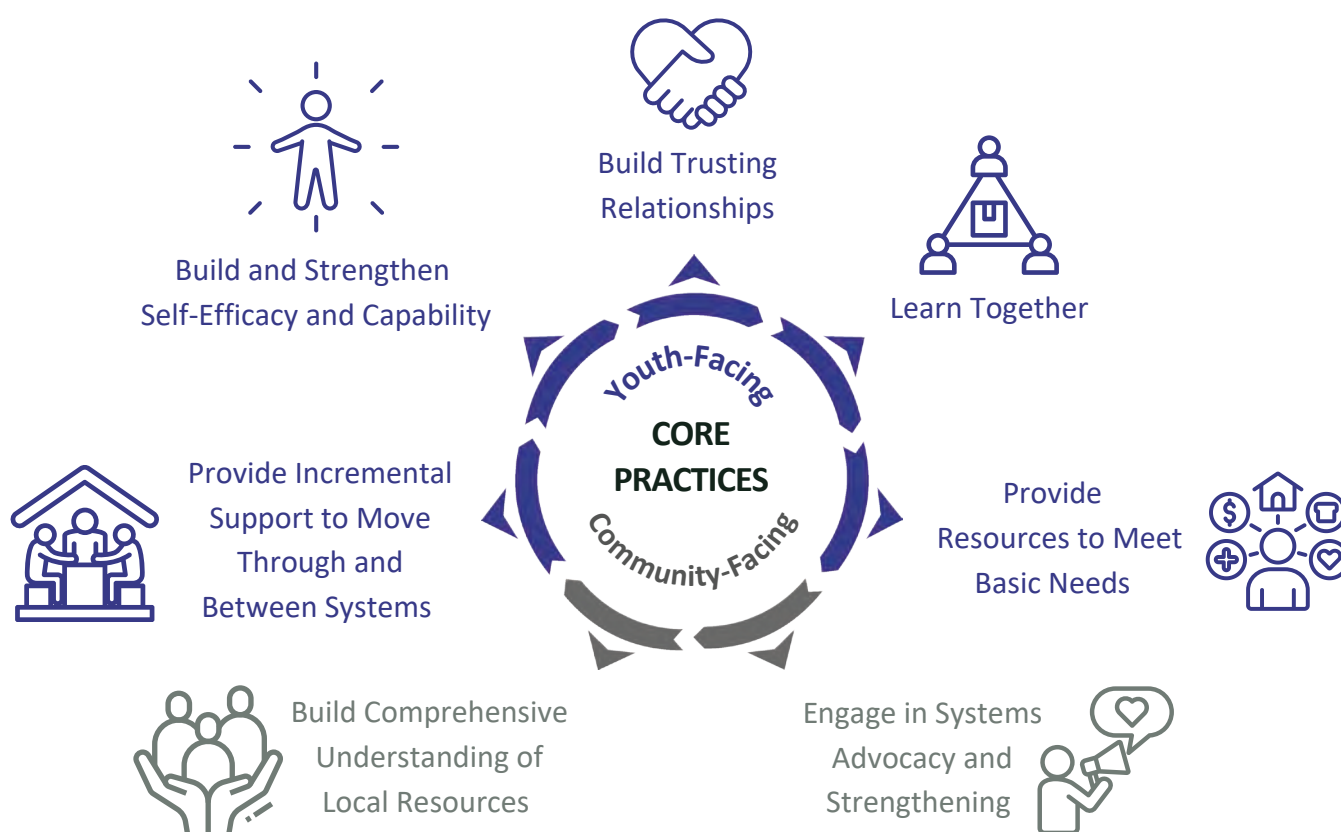
Values & Guiding Principles

The Wave 1 and 2 navigation interviews lifted up common values and guiding principles that undergird how navigators work with youth and young adults. Values are defined as the fundamental beliefs that shape all interactions with youth and young adults, and guiding principles are the action-oriented expressions of these beliefs.⁶ Essentially, they are what navigators do based on their common values. The table below outlines the common values and associated guiding principles gathered across interviews.

Values	Guiding Principles
Authentic Youth Engagement – Interviews suggested that programs that authentically involved young people in shaping internal programming and priorities and in working with systems partners were more likely to creatively shape policies and efforts that meet young people’s needs. One navigator shared, “On a large scale, [it’s] trying to say, ‘I see them, I recognize them, and support them.’”	The importance of trust and being trustworthy was noted as critical to authentic youth engagement. Navigators who were dependable, reliable, and “safe people” were seen as essential for the relational aspects of the work with youth and young adults. A navigator explained, “You have to have trust, with a capital T.”
Compassion – Interviews reinforced the importance of navigators showing compassion for the young adults’ life circumstances. Interviewees noted that navigation work can be challenging, and it requires individuals who want to work with this population and strive to understand and be attuned to the lives of youth and young adults. One young person explained, “without [the navigation program], I don’t know where I would be—[navigator] was that strength when I didn’t have it; it probably saved my life.”	To demonstrate compassion with young people, many interviewees emphasized the importance of navigators being curious and non-judgmental . This often meant that navigators were human-centered and trauma-informed and aimed to be curious and suspend judgment. As a navigator explained, “We’re just trying to help them pack their toolbox—trying to help them to pack for their 20s and leave behind what happened as a teenager.”
Strengths-Based Collaboration – Interviews revealed the importance of a commitment to all interactions with young adults being collaborative and guided by the youth’s potential, assets, and goals.	To collaboratively work with youth from a strengths-based approach, interviewees emphasized the importance of being flexible, respectful , and attentive to their journey. “Relationship is the secret sauce,” one navigator explained.

Navigation Core Practices

Seven core practices emerged over the waves of data collection and can be categorized into two categories: (1) youth and young adult-facing practices and (2) community-facing practices. The youth and young adult-facing practices happen between the navigator and young person, while the community-facing practices happen at the system level. These community-facing practices support effective navigation work by connecting partners, ensuring service delivery alignment, and braiding funding, which is the practice of combining funding sources to support a single initiative or program.



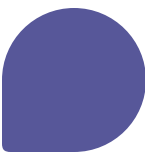
Youth and Young Adult-Facing Practices

Core Practice 1: Build trusting relationships with youth and young adults and encourage them to build permanent, healthy connections in their lives. Navigators develop relationships with young people, which takes time and requires the navigator to show up consistently, do what they say they will do, demonstrate patience, and when appropriate, share their own lived experiences to foster trust and a deepening connection. This in turn supports a young person's ability to apply healthy relationship development skills with others in their life. This practice is foundational for navigation—"this is the core of what we do," as one program interviewee shared. Another navigator noted that they "build relationships first and then everything falls into place. [These youth] have had people in their life that maybe haven't been consistent, so I have to gain their trust and build that relationship so they can trust me to help with the support they need." Both navigators and systems staff across programs mentioned the critical role that trust plays in building relationships with young people. Staff described the value of consistency and maintaining trust by showing up and doing "what you say you're going to do."

Establishing an appropriate level of relationship, including boundaries, enables the navigator to partner successfully with youth and young adults. Staff noted they use their initial relationship

with the young person to promote or develop other relationships that expand youth and young adult support networks. Another interviewee noted that if young people have two or more permanent connections, they are more likely to succeed. Through these relationships, navigators can engage and encourage youth and young adults to try new things. One navigator shared, "Sometimes I explain my role as an 'auntie' who is on their side to support them." Similarly, a young person said, "[my navigator] took interest in my specific issues and loved my family. If not for my navigator, I would be on the street or in the grave."





Navigators use the following approaches to build relationships:

- Provide clarity about their role so there is no miscommunication about the importance of boundaries.
- Meet regularly with young people (at least once a month).
- Make young people feel comfortable: “First interaction might just be to get coffee or [something to eat] or take a drive. Make them comfortable, side by side, so they don’t have to look at you. That’s the focus, not pushing any particular goals.”
- Apologize when there are missteps.

“[The navigators] sat in on our classes, did circle practice ... for young people who are closed off, it gave them a chance to open up and connect and feel safe.”

Young people also lifted up trusting relationships as foundational for navigation. One young person noted that they “won’t feel comfortable asking [the navigator] for help if I don’t trust [them].” For many young people, their navigator felt like a surrogate family member, or a “supplemental parent.” The role of peer relationships was also central for young people: “Part of building trusting relationships is about community [and] peer relationships. Not just between navigator and youth, but between youth. Activities like arts and crafts, having incentives, using restoration as a strategy for engagement.”

Core Practice 2. Learn together with youth and young adults to develop individualized navigation plans. Navigators partner with youth and young adults to understand their strengths

“Our job is to understand the language the youth are speaking and what they’re holding ... once you know what they’re holding in their heart, some of their behaviors make so much sense.”

and aspirations, as well as the barriers they have experienced. They learn about their goals and desired outcomes, needs, and assets, and develop an understanding of where a youth or young adult wants to go instead of simply solving a problem. The navigators we interviewed also share their own lived experiences—including being unhoused or struggling with substance use—with young people, respecting appropriate boundaries. This contributes to the navigator’s credibility and gives young people the confidence to see a different future for themselves, which may be particularly valuable for youth of color

and LGBTQ+ youth. As they move through this process, youth and young adults also learn about themselves as they explore goal setting in partnership with their navigators.

Navigators empower young people to set their own goals and to anticipate what comes next. Navigators shared that this process is led by young people and that the focus should be

on the young person identifying what is important to them and where they want to go, with a focus on learning and problem-solving: “We’re not experts or gatekeepers. We’ll figure it out together—that makes it more reciprocal and less hierarchical.” Navigators seek to understand and acknowledge each young person’s journey, situation, barriers, previous experiences, and traumas. Another interviewee described navigators as “tak[ing] down the temperature” of anxiety and another noted a focus on “developing an understanding of where a young person wants to go, as opposed to solving a problem. It’s an art form to build the appropriate level of relationship that brings out some of those truths.”



“[I was] on academic probation. [My navigator] helped me build the confidence to write an appeal, and she looked it over for me. I got that appeal approved. I was really nervous about doing it—was worried that it wouldn’t go through. She encouraged me, said it would go through.”

In addition to asking about barriers, navigators focus on strengths in the young person’s life. One navigator described making a “mental asset map” of the young person’s family, community, friends, and extra-curricular activities or jobs.

Navigators describe using relentless engagement as they document progress, follow up, revisit and refine plans, and normalize revisions based on young people's evolving goals, letting them know "it's okay to set a plan and then adjust or switch."

Navigators take these steps to learn more about young people they are partnering with:

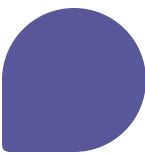
- Use intake forms to help match young people with a navigator with relevant expertise or life experience.
- Ask questions with an open mind before making assumptions.
- Use assessments and practices such as Motivational Interviewing to determine capacity, desire, and readiness.
- Involve young people in every step of the process and ask how they want to do things.
- Use brainstorming techniques.

Young people's experiences with their navigators reflect these practices. The youth and young adults we interviewed shared that their navigators asked them about their goals and what needs were at the top of their lists: "They asked me what my goals were and what they could

do to help." Their navigators asked how they could help them achieve their goals, as opposed to having a specific agenda. One young person said their navigator helped them prioritize their goals in order of importance—"getting signed up for classes, getting on track with college, furnishing my apartment." One young person said they "felt supported in my goals and really elevated."

"If I called asking for help, they always had an answer—who to call, where to go, how I could get help."





Core Practice 3. Provide resources to help meet basic needs. Programs provide their navigators with the resources to support young people with short-term financial assistance for rent, utilities, and other needs, such as gas, food, prescriptions, car seats, furniture, and other household goods. Navigators acknowledged that crisis management was necessary to help stabilize young people so that they could focus on goals and next steps and needed to be tailored to their circumstances. One young person explained, “They gave me moving funds, furniture, dishes, cleaning supplies.” These resources cannot be overstated in importance for stabilizing young people’s situations so that they can meet their basic needs. From a stable position, young people are better able to access long-term supports, such as public benefits, and focus on other goals related to school or work. Young people universally named these supports as a crucial part of their navigation experience.

“Moving through systems ... that literal aspect of navigation that can feel almost impossible. Learning how to do stuff at an adult level, like doing taxes, finding a job, needing healthcare ... we just get paralyzed and give up.”

Core Practice 4. Provide incremental support to help youth and young adults effectively move through and between systems. Many young people in navigation programs often have child welfare and juvenile justice systems involvement. Acknowledging the complexity of these systems and the associated burdens,

navigators provide warm handoff referrals, walking hand-in-hand with youth and young adults throughout the process of connecting with and accessing public and private systems partners. A staff member at CHA remembered one young person who was struggling with newborn care at the hospital. They shared, “Once [child welfare] was involved, [she] was afraid she would lose her child. [We helped] her understand how the systems come together and what they’re there for. This helped her avoid giving up or running [and] helped her to see that the system isn’t the end—[it] doesn’t automatically mean you’re going to lose your child.” Navigators “help [young people] access resources but won’t do it for them.” Many of the systems that young people are involved in or must navigate can be traumatic, so navigators help them feel supported along the way. As one navigator explained, “We can break down what a housing lease is and how to look for housing or provide connections for legal issues.” Navigators leverage their connections with other providers to provide a warm handoff. They also help youth and young adults build awareness of

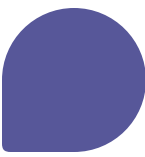
the available programs and services, answer questions to bridge the divide, and provide logistical support and access, such as transportation. Navigators and program staff focused on advocacy used the term “flexible” across programs to describe this practice: “If the youth make a mistake, we don’t discharge them—maybe just take a breath and help them focus on something else.” One navigator noted that it was also important to include parents when possible so that they understand the goals and navigation process.



The work of a navigator may include the following activities:

- Make warm hand-off referrals to specific resources, such as housing, education, employment, food assistance, and mental health support, and public benefits programs like food assistance.
- Make phone calls with young people who need services.
- Help young people fill out applications for programs and services, such as those related to housing and secondary education.

Young people shared numerous resources that their navigators connected them with. They described how navigators walked them through the process, as it is “very confusing to move through nonprofit organizations and government programs.” In many cases, navigators helped them print documents, fill out eligibility assessments, and complete applications. Young people also shared that their navigators presented them with multiple options for resources, when available, letting them choose what felt like the best fit. Young people said the support from their navigator was individualized and instrumental in achieving their goals. Navigators were there to identify the best path forward and were open to revisiting needs and updating plans. One young person shared, “When something traumatic happens, my first instinct is to talk to [navigator] because I need someone supportive and level-headed.”



Core Practice 5. Build and strengthen youth and young adult self-efficacy and capability to move through systems. Navigators engage in intentional, phased skill-building and tailor their support depending on readiness, needs, and challenges. Navigators also take the time to explain the reasoning and rationales behind certain decisions, expose young people to a variety of new learning opportunities, and connect young people with hands-on activities to have applied experiences with an emerging skill. For example, staff might build skills by calling a referral with the young person, helping to build their confidence, voice, and agency with high-barrier resources. One young person shared, “instead of saying ‘no,’ the answer was ‘well, how do we ...’ —[navigator] asks a lot of questions.”

Navigators also promote leadership opportunities, community connections, and larger networks. A navigator shared that it is “amazing to see youth and young adults learn from the process, choices, and mistakes that empower them to do something different...” AP4M, NCFF, and PPL all convene young leaders to engage in advocacy work, which provides professional and personal development opportunities for young people. Helping young people to build larger social networks also helps to ensure they have supports and resources in place once they age out of navigation services.

Navigators engage in these types of activities to help build the capacity of young people:

- Use scaffolding to support capacity-development: “This time we’ll make the appointment together, next time you can do it—enabling folks and breaking down little barriers until they feel comfortable doing it on their own.”
- Explain the “why.” Many young people—for example, those in the foster care system—have typically had adults make decisions for them. Helping young people understand the reasons behind certain processes may help them feel more confident.
- Expose young people to a variety of new opportunities to build confidence and self-efficacy.
- Use hands-on activities with young people to build their skills. For example, bring in external partners with a box from the food pantry and show young people what to do with the food.

Young people said their navigators helped to set them up for “independence, accountability, and stability.” They felt encouraged to be confident in their abilities but also supported in making mistakes, knowing that their navigator was there to offer help and support. In addition to these individual interactions, young people described life skills classes and community events that helped them prepare for job interviews and build financial skills. This support “encouraged me to want to do more and continue to be active.” Many young people we interviewed were involved in their organization’s youth and young adult leadership groups. These included activities such as legislative days, for which young people were supported in how to share their stories: “They prepared us on how to present our case using logic, credibility, and balanced emotions and something that legislators can digest.”

Community-Facing Practices

Core Practice 6. Build a comprehensive understanding of local resources through research and vetting. Navigators and other program staff must have a deep knowledge of the community and an ability to “connect the dots.” Navigators source, screen, and vet resources regarding eligibility, cultural responsiveness, and other key factors.

Relationships with partners—such as mental health providers, local food banks, and

shelters—are the most important part of understanding local resources. Navigators identify barriers so they can prepare youth and young adults for issues such as how long it may take to get a response, what they need to do to be prepared, and the referral’s level of inclusivity and quality of services. Ideally, navigators are embedded in the community where they provide services. Staff noted that understanding the population was a key component and that young and young adults know this “right away.” Navigators explained that resources are always changing, so building an understanding of local resources is a collaborative effort. Staff use shared tools, such as electronic folders that all staff can access, to organize and update resources.

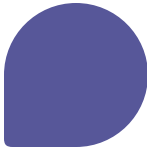
For staff focused on advocacy, relationships with partners are critical for understanding local resources: Knowing about and understanding available resources was important, but

“I learn from navigators about what’s happening in [our] communities, [then I can] take that to the people who can do something about it (e.g., translation services, landlord issues). To be able to do my work, I need the wisdom of navigators to advocate on behalf of youth and elevate issues.”

“Beyond knowing about resources, [we] must really have communication and understanding of barriers and gaps at multiple levels (local, state, federal).”

program staff also need to make personal connections. “Get everyone in the same room. The more [we] work together, the more [we] can support everybody that needs assistance in [our] community.”

Young people were also important sources for gaining a better understanding of community resources. One young person said that when looking at community



resources, “my navigator learned from me too, and we learned some things together.” Some navigation programs deployed youth and young adults to serve as secret shoppers to determine if resources were responsive to young people’s unique needs and affirmed their identities, particularly for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults.

Core Practice 7. Advocate to build and strengthen systems, using feedback from youth and young adults about barriers they encounter. Organizational leaders use learnings from navigators and feedback from young people to influence systems. Some programs engage in formal advocacy and/or encourage partners to do so, engaging in collective efforts either locally or at the state level to change the larger system.

While each program had staff who were directly responsible for community advocacy work, navigators often engaged in this work as well. For example, one navigator described attending “SAR (semiannual administrative review) meetings with case managers [and] DCFS workers to find placement and put together a plan for foster care youth transitioning out.” Navigators are often in the position of informing advocacy staff about challenges or barriers so that they can then advocate on behalf of young people. Staff focused on advocacy shared examples of working with Legal Aid, student loan companies, landlords, and utilities. One staff member developed a relationship with a local utility company and got additional information from them about cutting off services— “[they] wouldn’t put this on the bill, but they’ll tell me because I’m with an agency.” The goal for advocacy staff was to “avoid band-aid fixes” and “move from crisis-response mode to prevention, moving further upstream.” Advocacy staff also look to braid funding to help provide the most comprehensive set of services.



Young people serve a critical role in identifying gaps in services and sharing their lived experiences with lawmakers and other systems leaders. The members of the programs’ youth boards have lived experience, are compensated for time, and are drivers of systems change. “We fill any space that young people need to speak on their experience—our role is connection, connection, connection.” Adult leaders share potential opportunities and engage young people in the meetings. In some cases, navigators themselves are young people with lived experience and may also serve on these boards.

Priority Areas

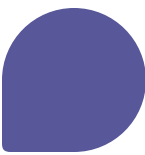
The navigation practices described above help young people progress toward five goals:

- 1) effectively transition to adulthood; 2) build supportive and family-like relationships;
- 3) achieve economic and/or academic success; 4) connect and contribute to their community;
- and 5) experience overall wellbeing.

In the table that follows, we have mapped the navigation core practices that are most strongly associated with these goals. Examples of how programs carry out these practices are highlighted to demonstrate how these practices are implemented across various navigation settings.

Examples of Core Practices Associated with the Goals of Youth and Young Adult Navigation

Goals for Young People	Navigation Practices Identified	Program Examples
Effectively transition to adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build trusting relationships• Learn together• Provide resources to meet basic needs• Provide incremental support to move through and between systems• Build and strengthen self-efficacy and capability• Build a comprehensive understanding of local resources• Advocate to build and strengthen systems	<p>CHA connects intentionally with young people in informal ways such as during a car ride to an appointment or when picking up a meal together.</p> <p>NCFF creates individualized plans with young people that are revisited and updated incrementally.</p>
Build supportive and family-like relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build trusting relationships• Learn together• Build and strengthen self-efficacy and capability	<p>PPL uses circle practice to facilitate community and connection among young people.</p> <p>AP4M empowers mobile navigators with lived experience to connect with homeless youth and young adults.</p>



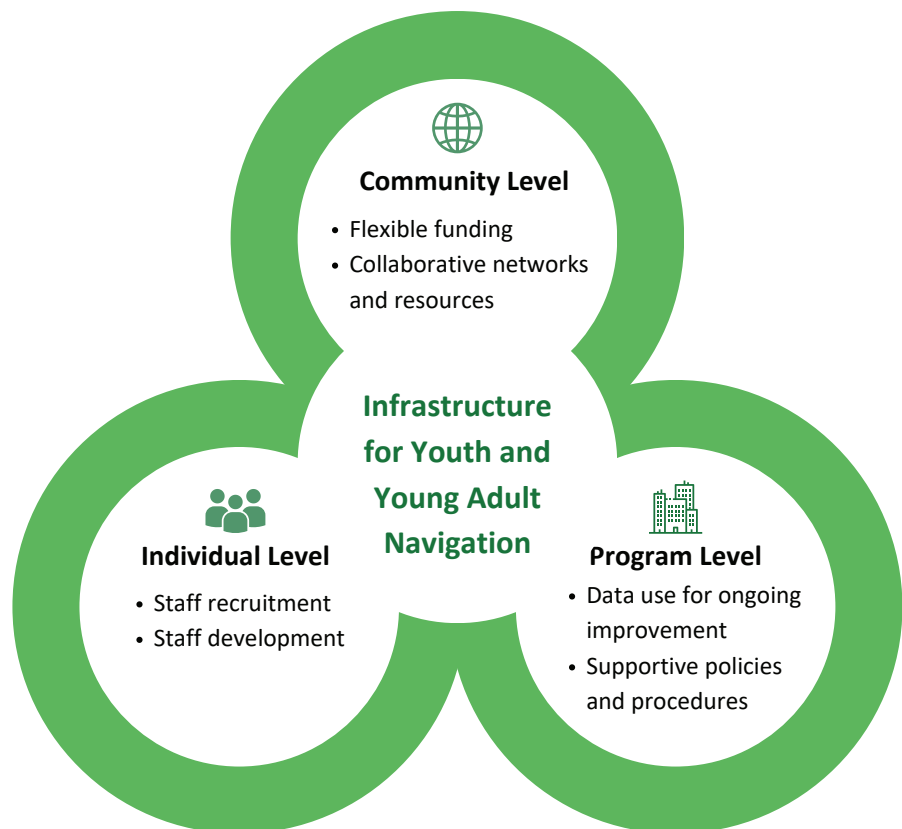
Goals for Young People	Navigation Practices Identified	Program Examples
Achieve economic and/or academic success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn together• Provide resources to meet basic needs• Provide incremental support to move through and between systems• Build and strengthen self-efficacy and capability• Build a comprehensive understanding of local resources	<p>PPL provides apprenticeship opportunities through LEAP to develop job skills and forge connections.</p> <p>CHA connects young people with job readiness and interview skills courses to prepare youth for job opportunities.</p>
Connect and contribute to their community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide incremental support to move through and between systems• Build and strengthen self-efficacy and capability• Build a comprehensive understanding of local resources	<p>NCFF creates peer connections through organized interest groups and networking activities.</p> <p>AP4M is a resource hub and connects with community partners frequently.</p>
Experience overall wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build trusting relationships• Learn together• Provide resources to meet basic needs• Build and strengthen self-efficacy and capability• Build a comprehensive understanding of local resources• Advocate to build and strengthen systems	<p>Young people at AP4M led the development of drop-in and housing centers in response to current needs of youth and young adults.</p> <p>PPL engages young people to advocate for needs at their site (e.g., voter engagement, drivers ed) and get hands-on learning on subjects like accessibility.</p>

Infrastructure

To support the implementation of navigation practices for youth and young adults, robust and supportive infrastructure must be in place to ensure successful implementation and sustainability. Infrastructure can be developed at three levels:

- 1 Individual Level**—Resources must be available support the development of competencies for staff members who deliver navigation services.
- 2 Program Level**—Organizations delivering navigation programs must establish operational policies aligned with navigation practices.
- 3 Community Level**—Organizations must secure external resources, including funding, and build collaborative networks that enable the work of navigation.

When present, these infrastructure elements enable successful navigation implementation; when absent, they present barriers to implementation. In each infrastructure section below, we have detailed examples of key infrastructure elements that are either enablers of, or barriers to, navigation implementation. Some of the most prevalent enablers across the infrastructure elements are related to individuals, including navigators and program staff. Navigation service delivery is strengthened by hiring individuals with relevant lived experience, fostering leadership, and ensuring commitment to program goals. Within organizations, supportive policies and a collaborative culture are critical, while external factors such as community partnerships and access to resources further enhance program success. Addressing these infrastructure elements holistically is essential for the long-term sustainability of navigation programs. The following infrastructure elements were named by navigation program staff and are commonly found in successful programs.⁷



Individual Infrastructure

Infrastructure Element 1: Recruit staff with the requisite competencies and values to successfully engage with youth and young adults, prioritizing individuals with lived experience. A key focus during recruitment is identifying candidates with a genuine passion for supporting young people, which is an essential and non-teachable quality. Navigators should possess transferable skills such as empathy and self-regulation, enabling them to build authentic connections regardless of prior professional experience. Targeted outreach strategies leverage established networks and alumni connections to attract candidates aligned with the program’s mission.

Some programs adopt inclusive hiring practices by involving young people in the interview process to evaluate candidates’ alignment with a strengths-based approach. Additionally, candidates should have experience in community- and partnership-building and be trusted and respected by their community and partners, embodying the qualities of “movers and shakers.” Trust between the navigator and young people is also required because “if you’re not someone who is trustworthy, they’re not going to come back to you,” as one navigator explained. Strategic recruitment and retention efforts ensure the program maintains adequate staffing levels to effectively meet the needs of youth and young adults.

Infrastructure Element 2. Holistically support staff who engage in youth and young adult navigation through a supportive culture and professional development activities. Programs implementing navigation practices prioritize comprehensive training, continuous professional growth, and wellbeing support to ensure navigators are effective and fulfilled in their roles. Best practices across programs suggest staff undergo extensive onboarding, including a month of shadowing and training on relationship-building, trauma-informed





care, and youth and young adult engagement. Professional development is reinforced through regular supervision, peer support meetings, and participation in learning cohorts. These supports provide a “landing place” for navigators with staff who understand their role.

Some programs have more extensive onboarding and training processes designed to equip navigators with the necessary skills and tools for their roles. Orientation and onboarding, along with ongoing peer and supervisor support, helps new staff

learn from their network and develop essential competencies. When available, training also emphasizes boundaries, trauma-informed care, and working with systems like mental health and juvenile justice, which are crucial for helping staff navigate complex youth needs. Additionally, in programs with larger networks of navigators, peer support fosters a sense of community, reinforcing consistency and skill development. Other navigators described a lack of formalized guidelines or written manuals for their roles, which made it difficult for them to fully understand the expectations and responsibilities of the role. This lack of structure meant that they often had to rely on trial and error or on-the-job learning, with limited formal training to prepare them for the complex and varied tasks they would encounter. As a result, the onboarding process was often described as a “learn as you go” experience, where new navigators had to figure out key aspects of their role in real-time without sufficient guidance or a clear framework.

Many program staff acknowledged the emotional labor required for the navigation role and the importance of supporting navigators in processing and attending to potential emotional triggers and challenges. Some programs include specialized staff roles, such as care coordinators and therapists, to mitigate burnout and maintain quality care. One training program known as “Holistic Heroes” equips staff to manage emotional challenges by addressing vicarious



trauma and promoting resilience. Tools such as laptops, flexible schedules, and simplified data systems enable navigators to focus on young people rather than administrative tasks. Programs also emphasize self-care by offering wellness resources, promoting a supportive workplace culture, and providing guidance on stress management. Supervisors play a vital role, offering mentorship, accessible leadership, and consistent oversight, which “makes this job easier and as straightforward as possible so we can work with young people,” as one navigator explained. Retention strategies address turnover by fostering a supportive work environment and equipping navigators with flexible funding to meet young people’s needs. The integration of trauma-informed practices further aligns staff support with the challenges faced by youth and young adults, ensuring a sustainable, high-impact program.

The success of implementation is influenced by the capability, opportunity, and motivation of individuals to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Navigators, in particular, face significant challenges due to systemic barriers, resource limitations, and the complexity of their responsibilities. These difficulties are further compounded by low pay, high caseloads, staffing shortages, and transportation barriers. Additionally, navigators often experience high levels of emotional labor as a result of these systemic and contextual challenges. The demands of the role, along with high turnover and increased caseloads, contribute to the emotional strain on navigators.

Program Infrastructure

Infrastructure Element 3. Ensure data systems are in place to support decision-making, streamline operations, and improve outcomes related to youth and young adult navigation.

Navigators use data systems to track youth and young adult navigation plans, such as processing intake and assessment forms, to provide personalized, responsive client support. Some programs described having a variety of data sources and referral partners, which resulted in challenges with standardization and closed-loop referrals to align program quality and navigation implementation.

The time it takes for navigators to enter data was routinely mentioned as a barrier. Some programs were transitioning to data entry systems such as Apricot to simplify data entry, automate reminders, and provide intuitive tracking of case assignments and young people’s progress. These tailored configurations reduce administrative burdens, allowing navigators to focus on direct engagement with young people. By better integrating data into daily workflows, these systems ensure that metrics directly inform goals and contribute to continuous improvement. Additionally, technology integration has the potential to expand with the use of digital platforms, mobile apps, and virtual support tools, enhancing accessibility and responsiveness for both navigators and young people.

A key challenge in evaluating navigation practices is the difficulty of isolating their impact, as navigation is often interwoven with other programs and services provided to young people, such as case management or therapeutic interventions. Many programs primarily collect process data, such as the number of young people served, rather than measuring long-term outcomes. Additionally,

outcome data tend to focus on short-term progress, as maintaining long-term follow-up with young people is particularly challenging, especially for those still working to establish safe and stable housing.



Infrastructure Element 4. Ensure that internal agency policies and procedures enable effective navigation operations, staff satisfaction, and quality service delivery for youth and young adults. Programs that shared how policies are aligned with navigation goals—providing clear role definitions, resources, and guidance—help to empower navigators in their roles. An additional best practice is equitable compensation, including living wages and reimbursement for mileage and work expenses, which alleviates financial strain and motivates staff. Some navigators noted that they themselves relied on public assistance or other financial supports due to their low salaries.

A supportive workplace culture fosters collaboration, open communication, and staff wellbeing, helping to retain skilled team members. Comprehensive handbooks that standardize practices ensure consistency and clarity across the agency. Dedicated funding secures the resources needed to sustain operations and maintain long-term impact. These policies create a foundation for cohesive, efficient, and supportive programming. Some barriers that were noted include the lack of centralized systems for maintaining resources and notes, cumbersome expectations related to data and reporting requirements, inconsistent policies, and funding restrictions, which hinder the navigator’s ability to provide timely support.

Community Infrastructure

Infrastructure Element 5. Ensure that strategic, braided, and flexible funding is in place to support advocacy efforts. The availability and importance of flexible funding mechanisms was reiterated as an essential support for both navigators and young people. Private funding enables navigators to respond more directly to young people's unique needs and to support systems-building activities such as advocacy led by youth and young adults, which public funding cannot support. For example, NCCF's Connected Youth Initiative⁸ (CYI) is a public-private partnership that supports localized Youth Advisory Boards. This cross-sector collaboration leverages the engagement of public agencies, community-based organizations, funders, and young leaders to improve the quality of life for transition-aged young people. These Youth Advisory Boards provide an opportunity for youth and young adults to be involved in advocacy and systems change with state and local agencies. Flexible funding sources also allowed navigators to provide resources to meet basic needs, which are critical in supporting wellbeing and goal attainment.





Infrastructure Element 6. Ensure collaborative networks and resources are in place and functioning optimally to support youth and young adult navigation, including referral partners and system leaders.

Commonly named partners included those who refer young people for navigation services, such as the child welfare or juvenile justice system, and partners to whom navigators make warm handoff referrals, such as public benefits, mental health supports, housing and homelessness supports, and health care providers. By involving external partners in planning meetings and resource coordination, navigation programs ensure youth and young adults have real-time access to essential community resources. Regular community case management conferences further enhance coordinated care by fostering collaboration among service providers. One program described using its “social capital to open doors.” Local business partners were mentioned as playing a key role on one program’s advisory team as both a provider of work-based learning opportunities and an advocacy partner.

Long-term sustainability is supported through relationships with organizations such as the United Way, which serves as a fiscal partner, and specialized groups, such as Central Plains Center for Services in Nebraska, which provides targeted coaching for young people. Dedicated advocacy staff play a pivotal role in developing and sustaining trust-based partnerships, ensuring mutual benefit and consistent support. Initiatives such as Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP), Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG), and Casey Family Programs’ Opportunity Map are leveraged to build broader networks under frameworks such as Thriving Children, Safer Families, and fostering a community-centered approach. Ongoing partner engagement through meetings, training, and resource sharing ensures the program remains adaptable to community needs. These partnerships enrich the program’s capacity to deliver high-quality, holistic care while maintaining a shared mission of empowering young people and strengthening support systems.

Interviews revealed several system-level barriers affecting youth navigation programs, particularly regarding limited resources for transportation, housing, basic needs, and employment. One navigator emphasized the challenge of maintaining trust with young people when they cannot provide access to essential resources. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these difficulties, as many youth and young adults transitioned to virtual education, leading to increased isolation. Navigators who are embedded in schools have struggled to engage with young people due to the challenges posed by virtual and hybrid learning formats. Furthermore, many navigators observed a rise in mental health issues among youth, attributing the increase to prolonged isolation and collective stress during the pandemic.




Future Considerations

The programs we profiled deliver tailor-made navigation services that address the unique needs of each young person they work with, including LGBTQ+ young people, youth and young adults of color, and those aging out of foster care. Many programs have embraced a youth and young adult-centered design model, actively involving young people in shaping services to make them more relevant, empowering, and reflective of their lived experiences. This approach highlights the value of young people's voices in creating impactful programs.

The navigation practices identified in this brief are adaptable based on the implementation setting and are not intended to be replicated without contextual adaptations. This presents an opportunity for other programs to adopt these practices, further expanding the positive impact of navigation and ensuring that even more young people benefit from services tailored to their unique needs. While a one-size-fits-all approach fails to address the unique needs of


each individual, tailored services ensure that youth receive relevant resources, such as housing assistance, career guidance, mental health care, and life skills training, which empower them to build self-sufficiency. By adapting their services to the specific needs of each individual, navigation programs can create opportunities and better equip youth for a successful transition into adulthood.



Youth and young adult navigation programs serve as vital resources in guiding young people through critical life transitions while addressing systemic barriers. To maximize their impact, these programs must focus on



To maximize their impact, these programs must focus on fostering sustainability, innovation, and holistic care.

Many programs have embraced a youth and young adult-centered design model, actively involving young people in shaping services to make them more relevant, empowering, and reflective of their lived experiences.





Effective feedback loops in navigation programs require structured communication channels, data-informed decision-making, and youth-centered engagement.

fostering sustainability, innovation, and holistic care to ensure that all young people have access to opportunities and services they need to be successful. Navigation programs can evolve by strengthening partnerships, embedding mental health support, enhancing feedback systems, and expanding models that can be successfully replicated in other contexts to meet the diverse and emerging needs of youth and young adults. With a commitment to addressing gaps in housing, education, and justice systems, these programs can advocate for systemic change while empowering young

people to thrive. Through innovative solutions, navigation services can become more sustainable and impactful, equipping youth with the tools and opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Strengthening feedback loops among young people, navigators, advocacy staff, and decision-makers will allow programs to adapt and improve continuously. Navigators are a hub in feedback loops and play a central role in elevating common barriers named by young people to advocacy staff and connecting young people to advocacy efforts and decision-makers. Effective feedback loops in navigation programs require structured communication channels, data-informed decision-making, and youth-centered engagement. Establishing formal check-ins with young people and collecting feedback via digital platforms allows navigators to track data while ensuring advocacy staff and decision-makers receive real-time insights. By capturing and acting on feedback from staff and youth and young adults, programs can remain responsive to emerging needs and ensure services evolve in meaningful ways. With strategic investments and innovative approaches, youth and young adult navigation programs will be well-positioned to offer consistent, accessible, and inclusive support, empowering young people to thrive and achieve their full potential. While direct navigation activities provide crucial support for youth, they alone are not sufficient to address the systemic barriers young people face. Many challenges, such as housing instability, limited educational opportunities, and involvement in the justice system, require broader policy changes and structural reforms. Without efforts to influence systemic issues, navigation services risk addressing only the symptoms rather than the root causes of these barriers. As such, navigation programs play a critical role in policy advocacy and systemic change. Some navigation programs may have the capacity to work with policymakers, program staff, and young people to address barriers in housing, education, and justice systems,



expanding support for youth and young adults. Certain programs may also advocate for systems integration, striving to make navigation services a more standardized offering nationwide. By addressing gaps and embracing innovative solutions, youth and young adult navigation programs can become more inclusive, sustainable, and impactful.

The core navigation practices documented here might serve as a blueprint for others who seek to implement navigation as a new practice or integrate it into existing services for youth and young adults. Sustainability and replicability can be achieved by programs that are able to

successfully adapt and implement the core practices for youth and young adult navigation, while grounding these practices in the values and guiding principles identified here. Program staff must also be aware of the enablers of and barriers to implementing youth and young adult navigation, and must plan for addressing these in advance.

Qualitative assessment of infrastructure can help support others to determine which infrastructure elements they have in place, and which might need to be further developed to successfully implement navigation. Addressing common enablers and barriers as documented here will allow programs and their funders to have robust conversations about the factors that will impact implementation success and achieve the best outcomes for youth and young adults. Leveraging the findings in this brief and engaging young people in their communities to inform the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of navigation will provide a foundation for local organizations to better serve their youth and young adult populations.





Appendix A

Interview Guide for Navigators

1. Tell us about your role with [Name of Program]. How long have you been providing navigation services?
2. How do you define or describe navigation to youth and young adults?
3. What do you think is unique about how [Name of Program] provides navigation?
4. Can you describe what navigation looks like at [Name of Program]? What are the things you say and do when providing navigation?
5. After reviewing the [Name of Program] documents, we identified some of the activities navigators lead.
 - Do these practices capture what navigators do? What you do?
 - Is there anything you would add? Take away?
 - Does these practices and related activities make sense?
 - Which of these practices feels most important in your work and why?
6. Could you tell a story that describes how you engaged in one or more these activities with youth?
7. What supports and resources does [Name of Program] provide or make available to staff to learn how to implement the navigation practices?
8. The following supports and resources emerged during our document review and conversations with others at [Name of Program]. Which supports and resources are mostly helpful to you in your work as a navigator? Is there anything you would add? Take away?



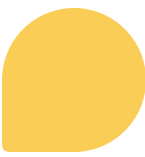
9. Which external partners are most critical in your work? How would you describe these partnerships?
10. What other supports or resources for implementation might be helpful that are not currently in place?
11. What systems-level activities do you think are important for your program to be successful? Who does this work?
12. During your time with [Name of Program] what have been your successes? What were your challenges?
13. If you had the ability to change something about the way [Name of Program] provides navigation, what would you like to be different?
14. Is there anything else about [Name of Program] that you want to share?



Appendix B

Interview Guide for Advocacy Staff

1. Tell us about your role with [Name of Program]. How long have you been with [Name of Program] and how do you engage with navigation?
2. How do you define or describe navigation to youth and young adults?
3. What do you think is unique about how [name of program] provides navigation?
4. Can you describe what navigation looks like at [Name of Program]? What do you say and do in your role?
5. After reviewing the [Name of Program] documents, we identified some of the activities navigators lead:
 - Do these practices capture what navigators do? What you do?
 - Is there anything you would add? Take away?
 - Does these practices and related activities make sense?
 - Which of these practices feels most important in your work and why?
6. Could you tell a story that describes how you engaged in one or more these activities with youth?
7. What supports and resources does [Name of Program] provide or make available to staff to learn how to implement the navigation practices?
8. The following supports and resources emerged during our document review and conversations with others at [Name of Program]. Which supports and resources are mostly helpful to you in your work? Is there anything you would add? Take away?



9. Which external partners are most critical in your work? How would you describe these partnerships?
10. What other supports or resources for implementation might be helpful that are not currently in place?
11. What systems-level activities (e.g., working with other community-based organizations to address barriers lifted up by youth) do you think are important for your program to be successful? Who does this work?
12. During your time with [Name of Program] what have been your successes with navigation? What were your challenges?
13. If you had the ability to change something about the way [Name of Program] provides navigation, what would you like to be different?
14. Is there anything else about [Name of Program] that you want to share?



Appendix C

Interview Guide for Youth and Young Adults Who Have Received Navigation Services

1. How did you learn about [Name of Program] and what supports or services did you need? How long did you receive (or have you been receiving) navigation services?
2. In your own words, can you tell us what navigation is?
3. What was it (or what has it been like) for you when you received navigation services?
4. Can you describe what navigation looks like at [Name of Program]? What did [or does] your navigator do?
5. After reviewing the [Name of Program] documents, we identified some of the activities navigators do.
 - Do these practices capture what your navigator did [or does]?
 - Is there anything you would add? Take away?
 - Does these practices and related activities make sense?
 - Which of these practices feels most important and why?
6. Could you tell a story that describes how your navigator engaged in one or more these activities with you?
7. During your time with [Name of Program] what were your successes? What were your challenges?
8. Did navigation services support your goals or aspirations? If so, how?
9. If you had the ability to change something about [Name of Program], what would you like to be different?



10. What would you share with another youth or young adult about the [Name of Program] navigation services?

11. Is there anything else about [Name of Program] that you want to share?

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