

Support Services

How might we use support services to increase life opportunity and equity for youth?



Why Communities Value Support Services

1. **ACCESS:** Communities see accessing support services as potential game-changers for basic needs (e.g. emergency shelter, ongoing housing, mental health care, child care, health education, schools legal system, and more).
2. **QUALITY** Communities need high quality support services that understand, are responsive, and respectful of who they are and what they need.

Building Internal Capacity: Encouraging a Support Services Mindshift

From	To
I don't know what is available.	I am knowledgeable about what support services are available to me.
I don't know how to approach an agency for support services.	I have the skill to navigate diverse support services to meet my needs.
I am a victim of poor support services.	I am an advocate and change maker to improve how support systems work for youth.
I am on my own when I have obstacles to accessing support services.	I have mentors that help me to navigate systems.

Knowledge & Skills Supporting the Mindshift

Building External Capacity: Addressing Access, Quality and Purpose

1. **ACCESS:** Do all youth have access to participate?
2. **QUALITY:** Do all youth participate in high quality programs?
3. **PURPOSE:** Do existing programs focus on the authentic needs of all youth?

ACCESS EQUITY: *What is needed for all youth to be able to access appropriate support services?*

Issue	What Limits Life Opportunities and Equity?
Parent Education	Ongoing need to educate parents to navigate and make full use of existing systems. Some existing parent programs that do exist can use improvements.
Match Inventory	Need some sort of in-depth match inventory (like a dating match) that links up youth to resources through technology.
Transportation System	Need more transportation options for youth to get around the city to reach support services (e.g. more circular and improved bus services, remove barriers to obtaining a driver’s license, expand bus and rail to suburban areas, bus cards, low-priced car rentals, etc.).
Affordable Housing	Provide for more affordable housing; more income-based housing program for youth that need a home (housing available but not affordable).
Housing Policies	Educate landlords so they will want to rent to youth; convince to waive fees that come with no rental history.
Forms of Communication	Need to build knowledge about support systems based on non-traditional approaches to reach everyone. (e.g. word of mouth may be only avenue for some people that need services the most; local neighborhood newspapers may be the only newspaper people receive).
Legal System	Need more people that can help with legal issues (including immigration status).
Space	Make available more space (e.g. community rooms) to do things such as cultural activities, storytelling or public health activities.
Shelter Options	More shelter options especially for 18 to 24 year olds; need shelters in more communities—not just downtown; change zoning and funding regulations so more shelters can open.
Housing Model	Replicate Housing First model including superior case management service. Strong model because of wraparound services and because target overlooked 18 to 24 year old category.
Child Care Systems	More child care options for teen parents; places for parents to drop off kids for short term. Difficulty in finding child care affects what they are able to accomplish in all parts of their life.
Mental Health	Free mental health counseling needed for substance abuse, alcohol abuse, and depression, and more.
Health Education	Need more information about safe sex, how to be STD/ HIV free, and more. Some populations at greater risk in these areas.

QUALITY EQUITY: *What is needed for all youth to access high-quality support services?*

Issue	What Limits Life Opportunities and Equity?
Transition to Adulthood	Strengthen and coordinate systems to focus on the youth transition to adulthood.
Youth Voice	Bring all youth (including homeless youth) to the decision-making table when talking about how to improve support services (i.e. to councils, boards, coalitions).
Case Workers	Increase the number and quality of case managers (include youth on hiring panels, hire from diverse backgrounds, provide travel to case workers for expanding learning and best practices).
Mobile Youth	Coordinate assessments across counties to eliminate some of the barriers to continued support for youth who move.
Libraries	Want to play an important role in providing help and support around English language learning. Be creative with how they do this.
School iPads	Have schools provide iPads that are bilingual to communicate with, train, and support families.
Police Relationships	Provide for regular meetings between youth and law enforcement to improve communication, understanding and ways they engage.
Innovation	Encourage innovation by funding pilot programs to test new ideas to improve existing support systems.
Systems Leadership	Improve the quality and level of leadership that run support system agencies.
Youth to Youth Mentors	Create opportunities for youth that are successful navigating support systems to mentor others that are struggling.
Mental Health System	Create or modify mental health services that are not attached to agencies. Allow mental health professionals to follow youth into different settings.
Educational Systems	More educational support for teen parents who face significant barriers to getting a degree.
Medical System	Find a way to have a primary doctor when you visit free clinics (doctors rotate so often see a different person).
Emancipation	Remove barriers for youth to not being able to emancipate themselves in state of Minnesota.

PURPOSE EQUITY: *Do existing support services address youth’s authentic needs and desires?*

Issue	What Limits Life Opportunities and Equity?
Community Resource Connector	Make people available to the community to inform about support services. Need a ‘go-to’ person that community can consult.
Community Navigator	Develop a community liaison (someone known and trusted) that can go between organizations, schools, family, and law enforcement.
Systems Change	Train youth and community to advocate for changing systems when they are not effectively serving others.
Youth Navigators	Teach youth to navigate the various systems themselves and then have them mentor others their age.
Cultural Community Access	Increase equity of all cultural communities to access available support services (conduct a study of what barriers different populations experience in trying to access services).
Youth-Driven Community Center	Youth-run and youth-driven not-for-profit center that would offer music, sports, health (physical, mental, and social), tutoring, LGBTQA-safe spaces; tech center, field trips, yelling room (room where you could yell when you need to).