



Iowa Department of Human Services Youth Transition Decision-Making Standards

Youth Transition Decision-Making (YTDM) meeting model is utilized for youth transitioning into adulthood. This model has two key components: Engagement/Stabilization and the Dream Path process to promote self-sufficiency. YTDM meetings provide a positive and action-oriented response by caring adults and professionals to address the needs and desires of the youth.

YTDM can be used to enhance core casework functions of:

- ◆ Youth engagement,
- ◆ Assessment,
- ◆ Service planning,
- ◆ Monitoring, and
- ◆ Coordination.

When properly facilitated, the YTDM planning process:

- ◆ Supports a trust-based relationship,
- ◆ Facilitates youth engagement, and
- ◆ Sustains the youth's interest and involvement in a successful transition process.

The following set of standards and practice guidance was developed in collaboration with DHS and external stakeholders to ensure that every youth is offered the opportunity to participate in the YTDM process.

Standard 1: Team members keep personal and private details of the youth confidential to ensure privacy and demonstrate respect for the youth.

Creating a safe environment in which personal information may be shared without fear of redissemination is a critical element in building trust and openness in the YTDM process. The facilitator discusses privacy and confidentiality with the youth and participants during the preparatory phase. All team members must sign a confidentiality agreement before participating in the meeting. The facilitator explains the importance of privacy and confidentiality at the start of the meeting, and stresses this again at its conclusion. All team members are informed of the following exceptions to maintaining confidentiality that would be reported as mandated by law:

- ◆ New allegations of suspected child abuse or neglect;
- ◆ A belief that the individual intends to harm self; or
- ◆ A belief that a person intends to bring harm to others.

The facilitator will inform the youth that their YTDM plan may become a part of their Case Permanency Plan.

Standard 2: A thorough preparation process and youth engagement is required for a successful youth transition decision-making meeting.

The preparation phase of the YTDM process is separate from actual facilitation of the youth transition decision-making meeting. The time necessary to complete preparation will depend on the individualized youth needs, focusing on their transition to adulthood. The facilitator preferably begins the preparation process through a face-to-face visit, whenever feasible or appropriate, and at a minimum through, phone calls.

The youth partners with the facilitator in a leadership role. The preparation interview is used to:

- ◆ Explain the mission and principles of the YTDM planning process,
- ◆ Explain the various planning tools used, and

- ◆ Establish a list of individuals that the youth feels close to and may want to invite as part of the youth's team while including the Department worker, juvenile court officer, and guardian ad litem. Youth should be encouraged to invite a peer who is able to advocate for the youth. Facilitators should recognize that the desire of a youth may be to reconnect with their birth family regardless of the permanency goal and the team should be prepared to address and support this in their transition.

This preparation process also supports the youth as they begin to prepare an "All About Me" or youth story that highlights the youth's strengths and interests.

The facilitator shall discuss with the youth:

- ◆ Which tools they wish to use and the parts of the gathering they wish to lead,
- ◆ How the team should be assembled to provide support during youth transition, and
- ◆ How the action plan will be developed with identified roles and responsibilities.

YTDM meetings may also require determination of what the youth needs to fully participate in the meeting, such as:

- ◆ Additional face-to-face preparation,
- ◆ Transportation,
- ◆ Child care,
- ◆ A reminder call,
- ◆ An interpreter,
- ◆ A peer support, and
- ◆ Other related supports.

YTDM meetings will engage the youth and team around a shared desire for supports and services to be in place when formal services are no longer provided. This provides an opportunity for a successful transition into adulthood, including the safety, well-being, and happiness of the youth. Discuss the critical issues that the youth wishes to address. Help the youth and team achieve a clear understanding of the steps that need to be taken to assure a safe and successful transition and stability in health, housing, employment, education, and supportive relationships through establishing team member's responsibilities and timelines.

Critical junctures as to when YTDM meetings are appropriate include:

- ◆ On or after the youth's 16th birthday
- ◆ Within 90 days prior to youth's 18th birthday

Standard 3: The cultural dynamics of the youth will be recognized and supported through the strategies, services, and supports for the youth in the youth transition decision-making process.

Cultural competence means the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

Successful cultural competence includes:

- ◆ A basic understanding of the values and beliefs within the culture coupled with eliciting information from the youth about traditions, cultural beliefs, behaviors, and functioning;
- ◆ Demonstration of values and attitudes that promote mutual respect;
- ◆ Communication styles that reflect sensitivity and competence to the values and beliefs of youth
Accommodations in the physical environment including settings, materials, and resources that are culturally and linguistically responsive; Acknowledgement of the role of race, ethnicity, economic status, spirituality, and culture play in the youth's life; and

- ◆ Demonstration of a genuine interest in the family's culture and an understanding of how that culture has been historically treated by the dominant culture.

Standard 4: Youth transition decision-making meetings are facilitated by a person who has the training, knowledge, skills, and abilities to guide the process.

Facilitators will observe one YTDM meeting facilitated by a trained YTDM meeting facilitator prior to training. Facilitators are required to complete DHS approved YTDM facilitator training and will receive a certificate of completion. Facilitators must maintain a copy of the certificate for verification, as needed. Facilitators will:

- ◆ Understand principles and purpose of the YTDM process.
- ◆ Demonstrate the skills to prepare for and facilitate youth team decision-making meetings.
- ◆ Set and maintain the environment.
- ◆ Facilitate in a manner that:
 - Supports a trust-based environment,
 - Assures and monitors conditions of safety;
 - Encourages openness,
 - Enhances a nonjudgmental environment;
 - Assists team members to be respectful, attentive, friendly, and culturally competent.

Standard 5: A quality assurance and improvement process is used to assess and improve the quality of the youth transition decision-making meeting and each facilitator.

It is part of ongoing practice development and improvement to assess the effectiveness of family team decision-making meetings. The measurable indicators of youth transition decision-making meeting effectiveness include the following for each YTDM standard:

- ◆ **Confidentiality and privacy:** The youth's privacy and confidentiality is maintained by team members based on the youth's report of such.
- ◆ **Preparation/Engagement:** Specified preparation is completed with participants in advance of the meeting. Youth engagement is reflected in their active participation in the preparation and meeting process.
- ◆ **Cultural Competence:** Appropriate integration of cultural accommodation in the meeting process is acknowledged by the youth.
- ◆ **Training and skills:** The facilitator demonstrates knowledge and skills sufficient to professionally facilitate the meeting and ensure the meeting's goals are achieved.
- ◆ **Quality assurance and improvement:** One standardized measurement process is used statewide to assess and maintain quality of all youth transition decision-making meetings and facilitation. When issues are identified, adjustments and adaptations are made to improve the process and results. The inability by a facilitator to adhere to the YTDM standards after adjustments or adaptations have been attempted will ultimately result in loss of facilitator status.