

Choose to Change® (C2C®) Program Guide

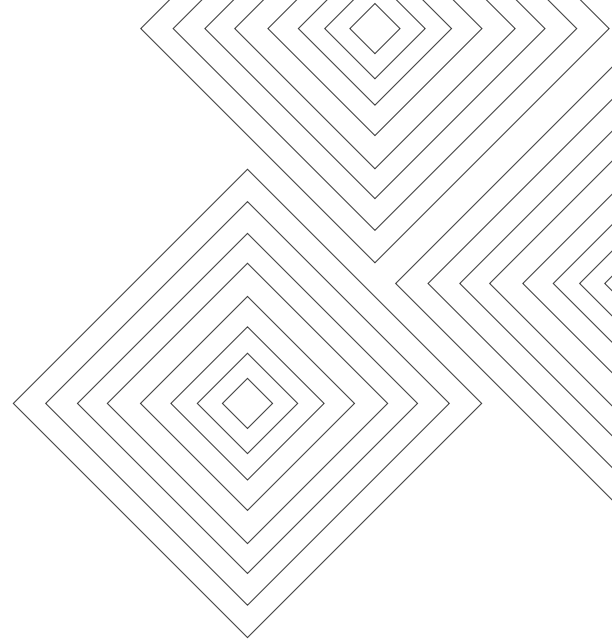


Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

This document was created in partnership with the University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab, Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)™ and Brightpoint

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Photo by Joshua Lott for The New York Times.

C2C[®] Program Guide Summary

Important Information:

This program guide is intended to be used as a model to replicate the Choose to Change[®] experience as a tool for violence reduction in different communities. Choose to Change[®] is a registered trademark of Brightpoint and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)[™]. Attendees/Recipients agree that any new programs developed from, or based on, this model will not be branded “Choose to Change” absent written consent of Brightpoint and YAP[™] so as to maintain the integrity of the mark and avoid confusion.



United States Senator Dick Durbin listens as C2C[®] participants share experiences.

This program guide is meant for community-based organizations working to fill gaps in services and reach an underserved population of youth impacted by violence and trauma.

It outlines Choose to Change[®]'s overarching principles, purpose, and philosophy as well as specifications for delivering programming informed by C2C[®]. In the sections that follow, you will find a comprehensive overview of the C2C[®] program's origin, its various components, and reference resources, including procedures and guidelines to enhance fidelity in the implementation of C2C[®] program's wraparound and trauma-informed services.

Section 1 explores the history and development of Choose to Change[®], including background on the program collaborators, Brightpoint (formerly Children's Home & Aid) and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)[™], the call to action that brought the two organizations together, a brief description of the C2C[®] program, and evidence of the program's success identified in an evaluation conducted by the University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab in their role as research partners. **Section 2** provides a comprehensive overview of C2C[®], including the model, timeline of services, key personnel, and school and partner relationships. In **Section 3**, the key components of the program model are described in their entirety alongside examples isolated from the program evaluation as well as the significance of each element. **Sections 4 - 6** chronicle the delivery of C2C[®] services from start to finish. These sections cover the recruitment process, engagement, and discharge at the end of services, including the core components of intensive wraparound support, advocacy, and trauma-informed therapy. **Section 7** presents a summary of administrative counting expectations for supervision, documentation, and communications. Lastly, **Section 8** concludes with a recounting of virtual service delivery, incorporating the requirements for delivering both remote wraparound mentorship and group telehealth services.

SECTION 1:

Why Choose to Change®?

Overview

PROGRAM HISTORY

In 2015 the University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab, in partnership with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Get IN Chicago, and a community advisory committee, held a citywide call to action to address violence and measure the impact of the most promising approaches to violence reduction. In response to this call, two local nonprofits came together to create an innovative program for adolescents that aimed to reduce violence and justice system involvement while simultaneously increasing school engagement. Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)™ and Brightpoint were interested in pairing the individualized wraparound services of YAP™ with the trauma-informed behavioral health work of Brightpoint. The result was Choose to Change (C2C®): Your Mind, Your Game.

From more than 200 applicants to this citywide call, a selection committee composed of representatives from the civic, philanthropic, and research communities in Chicago selected C2C® as the Design Competition winner, believing it to be the most promising program to help young people avoid justice system involvement and thrive in their communities.

Choose to Change® launched in 2015 in the greater Englewood Communities of Chicago. The program serves youth across a diverse spectrum of backgrounds, many of whom have faced complex challenges in their communities, including trauma exposure, justice system involvement, and school disengagement. Participants are typically between the ages of 13-18 and comprise all genders.

In 2018, the City of Chicago Mayor's Office and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) put funding towards a multi-year expansion of and sustainability effort for the C2C® program. The expanded program will be able to provide year-round services to more than 2,000 students and ensure that these youth have the support they need and are empowered to lead successful lives.

The program has now expanded to the South and West Sides of the city, including 15 priority communities identified by the Mayor's office. CPS has also put forth additional funding to support the program.

Brightpoint

Brightpoint is a leading child and family service organization in Illinois, serving over 30,000 children, youth and families each year in 67 counties. They partner with children, youth, and families whose potential is at risk to create hope, opportunity, and bright futures. Since 1883, Brightpoint has been a leader in responding to the changing needs of children and families in Illinois. They have paved the way by establishing best practices, developing innovative program approaches, and shaping public policies in child welfare, early childhood, and youth services. Brightpoint is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and was a winner of the 2017 Mutual of America Community Partnership Awards for the Power of Fathers program.



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase with Mayor Brandon Johnson. Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.™

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)™ is a nationally recognized, community-based nonprofit agency committed to providing alternatives to institutionalization through direct service, advocacy, and policy change. Since 1975, YAP™ has been a national leader in de-institutionalization. By 2024, YAP™ was serving almost 20,000 youth and families annually in over 150 programs across 36 states and the District of Columbia in rural and urban areas, including 40 major metro areas.

One hundred percent of YAP™'s programming takes place in the home communities of the individuals the organization serves. YAP™ is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and has received awards from Annie E. Casey Foundation, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and is included in the Federal inventory of evidence-based models at [crimesolutions.gov](https://www.crimesolutions.gov).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A homegrown collaboration between two local nonprofits developed a promising solution to reduce youth violence while improving educational outcomes outside of an institutional setting. C2C® is a six-month intervention that offers youth intensive wraparound and professional mentoring services that focus on addressing each young person's specific needs, with trauma-informed cognitive behavioral therapy that helps youth process their trauma and develop a new set of decision-making tools. Within the C2C® intervention, YAP™ advocates are the first point of contact for the program and are persistent in their outreach. Advocates are professionally trained mentors who come from backgrounds and communities similar to those of the youth. As such, they are able to develop the strong personal relationships needed to engage youth in all aspects of programming. They provide wraparound support for youth and their families/caregivers in the participants' homes and communities. This includes a broad spectrum of services, from helping youth obtain basic necessities to motivation and direction on larger goals, such as employment and college. On average, YAP™ advocates spend eight hours a week supporting a young person.

Over six months, clinically trained therapists from Brightpoint lead 12-16 trauma-informed CBT sessions, the foundation of which is based on an intervention called SPARCS (Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress). The therapy aims to help youth regulate their emotions and understand how past traumatic experiences or chronic stress can impact their thinking and behavior. Through exercises and conversation, youth learn to challenge unhelpful thinking, develop more resilient coping mechanisms to address stressors, and build problem-solving and communication skills.

A key part of the program is that advocates attend the group therapy sessions to learn the CBT skills and reinforce them in their interactions with youth.

This allows for "learning by doing," where advocates and clinicians create opportunities for youth to practice life skills taught by therapists and develop new positive habits long after the program ends. In addition, trained Brightpoint staff are available to provide support around restorative practices, basic needs, crisis response, community safety, and linkage. Clinicians also known as "coaches" provide youth with psychoeducation and normalize accessibility to mental health services. The term "coaches" is utilized to create a brave space for youth to be able to learn and process tools and experiences.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

To isolate the impact of the program on young people's outcomes, Choose to Change® partnered with the University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab to evaluate the overall outcomes of program participants. The University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab partner with community-based organizations to use data and research to test and scale programs and policies that enhance public safety, improve educational outcomes, and advance justice. Through this partnership, Crime Lab and Education Lab have evaluated C2C®'s impact on behavioral and academic outcomes utilizing a randomized controlled trial. The study found the program to be highly effective at reducing violence and the likelihood of any arrest. Please refer to the Crime Lab and Education Lab website for more detailed information about the study findings.



Scan the QR code to read more about the study findings.

SECTION 2:

Program Overview

Overview



Program Model

C2C® reduces criminal justice system involvement for youth through an intensive mentoring wraparound program, with trauma-informed group therapy at its core.



Program Timeline

Following a referral process (from a variety of partners), youth participate in programming for 16 total trauma-informed group therapy sessions over six months and receive on average 8 hours a week of intensive mentoring services.



Key Personnel

C2C® services are jointly provided by Brightpoint coaches who deliver trauma-informed group therapy (as well as individual therapy as needed) and the YAP™ advocates who deliver wraparound services and mentoring to youth and their families.



Relationships with Schools

Building strong relationships with schools benefits recruitment, enables becomes schools to become a source of future referrals, and provides opportunities for strengthening connections to schools for youth.



Relationships with Other Partners

The C2C® program partners closely with the City of Chicago, other CBOs, and the University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab as a research partner. These relationships are critical for high-quality implementation and growth of C2C® programming.



Photo by Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.™

PROGRAM MODEL

The goal of the Choose to Change® program is to reduce criminal justice involvement and improve academic outcomes. To do this, Brightpoint and Youth Advocate Programs (YAP)™ jointly deliver a combination of community-based wraparound advocacy services along with trauma-informed group therapy to help youth process trauma and develop healthy decision-making tools. The key components of the program model include:

- **Relentless engagement:** Advocates do not give up on participants, especially those who are difficult to engage.
- **Applied Learning:** Advocates attend group therapy and help youth identify contexts where CBT skills can apply.
- **Decision-Making:** Participants learn tools to disrupt negative thoughts, resolve conflicts, and build self-efficacy.
- **Strong Relationships:** Staff bring lived experience and compassion in order to build life-long relationships.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

Before youth are enrolled in the C2C® program they are referred from a community-based partner, public agency partner, or individual CPS elementary or high school. YAP™ then makes first contact through the referral source to pitch the program to the youth and provide consent packets. When appropriate, therapists (coaches) from Brightpoint are able to join to provide information around trauma-informed group therapy services and mental health services and supports. After consent is obtained, youth are officially enrolled in the program, which occurs on a “rolling” basis. In the first month of service, the youth and an advocate are connected based on initial conversations and interests of the youth. Advocates then engage with their youth and the youth’s family members to determine the participant’s goals and needs as well as that of their family. Through this, an individualized service plan (ISP) is developed in order to incorporate services and programming accordingly.

Throughout months 2 through 4 youth begin to participate in 12-16 sessions of trauma-informed cognitive behavioral group therapy run by a clinically trained therapist, with the aim of returning a sense of control and hope to youth while increasing their social-emotional skill set.

Program Timeline Highlights

Months 2-4

12-16 sessions of **trauma-informed cognitive behavioral group therapy** run by a clinically trained therapist

Weekly Support

Youth and their families also continually receive a weekly average of **8 hours of individualized wraparound services and support** outside of school

Last Month of Program

YAP™ staff identifies how to discharge youth **sustainably** and may refer them to **auxiliary programming**

These group therapy sessions are based on a foundation of SPARCS (Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress). As youth are building relationships with their mentors, it is helpful to include the clinician/coach to build that relationship as well. Brightpoint staff and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.™ staff work together in between sessions to be able to integrate skills and tools within the community. Examples include meeting for collaborative work groups (YAP™ and Brightpoint) or meeting before and after group sessions. Youth and their families also continually receive a weekly average of 8 hours of individualized wraparound services and support outside of school, which provides basic necessities in addition to meaningful opportunities for growth. Youth begin participating in group activities and are encouraged to partake in new experiences both inside and outside of their communities. In the last month of the program, YAP™ staff identifies how to discharge youth sustainably and depending upon the additional needs of youth may refer them to auxiliary programming.

KEY PERSONNEL

As mentioned throughout the guide, C2C® services and programming are jointly provided by Brightpoint and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.™ Brightpoint is positioned to provide cognitive behavioral therapy through clinically trained therapists, referred to as coaches, while YAP™ is positioned to provide intensive wraparound and professional mentoring services through their assistant directors and advocates. To best support the implementation of the program's services the responsibilities of the essential C2C®'s key personnel include but are not limited to:

- **Coaches:** Coaches assess the behavioral health of clients and engage clients in therapeutic interventions including group, family, and individual therapy. Coaches also respond to crisis calls, provide clinical management of the crisis, and provide limited case management, which may include case coordination and linkages with community resources or ongoing services when necessary.
- **Program Directors:** Program directors are responsible for the overall administration of the program, including the provision of clinical services, personnel management, and budget management. Program directors regularly monitor outcomes, evaluate successes and failures for learning purposes, and utilize outcomes information to inform training and practices moving forward. Additionally, program directors assign clients to front-line staff, monitor service delivery provided by staff, and oversee the intake process, including interviewing referrals and their families to ensure that a service or treatment plan is developed and implemented to meet their needs.
- **Assistant Directors:** Assistant directors (ADs) are responsible for supporting the Program Director with hiring and training new employees, providing supervision of staff, and communicating weekly performance to the Director. ADs are also responsible for performing intakes as well as coordinating client staffing to ensure the delivery of appropriate levels of weekly services while managing compliance with all regulations. ADs ensure that activities for clients and their families involve education, employment, social engagement, and other activities to address other areas of need. They also develop plans for client discharge after the program ends, including planning community linkages that will support the client and their family after the termination of services. Additionally, ADs assist staff in creative problem solving, including securing needed professional resources for clients and their families.
- **Advocates:** The primary responsibility of the Advocate is to initiate, organize, plan, develop, and implement direct advocacy and mentorship services to clients and their families. All service plans are established on a strength-based approach using the wraparound model. Advocates ensure that individualized service plans are implemented through purposeful weekly activities with youth and families. This includes assisting with the design of the ISP through the assessment of the needs, strengths, and interests of youth and their families. Advocates also respond to emergency situations as they arise, attend court hearings and other meetings, plan group activities, ensure clients have access to homework assistance and tutoring, and much more.



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase. Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

Relationship with Schools

The C2C® program's success is in part due to the relationships the program providers have formed with partners throughout the city of Chicago. The relationship the providers form with schools is paramount. While the C2C® program is community-based, and the majority of wraparound mentoring should occur in the community, some service activities still occur at school. Throughout the program guide there will be key examples of the role that close relationships with staff and administrators at local schools play in facilitating service delivery.

These include, but are not limited to:

- **Participating in preliminary meetings** with schools to introduce the importance of trauma-informed care
- **Providing referrals of youth** in the program's target population
- **Providing information** that helps service providers locate referred youth
- **Facilitating recruitment efforts** by pulling youth to the side during the school day for providers to make the program pitch
- **Setting up a location for youth to return signed consent forms** in the main office so service providers can collect multiple signed forms at once
- **Allowing advocates to be present at school** to check in with youth and C2C® alumni
- **Allowing the program to run trauma-informed group therapy sessions** in the school building during lunch or after school (and allowing service providers to bring food from external vendors to these sessions to encourage youth attendance)
- **Inviting coaches to sit in on school behavioral health meetings**
- **Collaborating to ensure youth are attending and engaged at school**

Establishing positive relationships with school administrators can be challenging in some instances, and these relationships are certainly subject to change over time. However, when these relationships are fruitful, it can be mutually beneficial to the program and schools. Schools value services for their youth in general and will often collaborate on specific issues or school-wide initiatives with program staff. This relationship involves a range of school personnel that program staff often try to work closely with, including principals, assistant principals, deans, teachers, security guards, and main office staff. All of these individuals have a role to play in facilitating service delivery.

School administrators often show increased willingness to work with the program once they are able to observe its impact over time. Administrators who have referred youth to the program report seeing a school-level change happen over the years as more and more students participate in C2C®. School-level changes increase buy-in for future referrals and help to spread the word among schools that C2C® is making an impact, especially when they see a change among the kids who were at one time considered to be disruptive. In the past, schools have been incredibly supportive because of the school-level change they have been able to see due to C2C®.



Attendee of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase.
Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

SECTION 3:

Key Components

Overview

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE C2C® PROGRAM MODEL INCLUDE:

Around-the-Clock Support and Crisis Intervention • Advocacy and Self-Reliance
Relentless Engagement • Strength-Based Engagement • Individualized Support
Creating a Sense of Security • Staff-Youth Relatability • New Experiences & Group Activities
Trauma-Informed Therapy • Non-Clinical Frameworks • Applied Learning

○ AROUND-THE-CLOCK SUPPORT AND CRISIS INTERVENTION

Through YAP™, the C2C® program provides 24/7 immediate support when crises arise and helps youth learn new ways to respond to challenges. YAP™ advocates communicate with their clients that they are available 24/7 to support youth or their families at the start of the program. Through 24/7 support, advocates have ample opportunities to help youth identify ways to respond to challenges in their lives. YAP™ staff are present to help youth and their families in moments of crisis by helping to identify needs, create safety plans, and secure the necessary support to alleviate said crises. This support is primarily provided by advocates, but often requires a team effort with Brightpoint's coaches, as advocates may pull in other staff for additional assistance and resources. For example, coaches are often immediately called when a shooting has happened to provide trauma-informed supports to the young person and their family.

Why is this element important?

Youth in C2C® find that it is valuable and moving to have someone they know for such a short time be so committed and invested in their development and future. It also gives youth a sense of accountability—they do not want to let down this person whom they respect so greatly.

“

Example:

“[My advocate] was my support system. I was shot 5 times the day I graduated, he was at the hospital when I was there, and after I got to the hospital, he was there to help me. He was a good support system.”



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase.
Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

ADVOCACY AND SELF-RELIANCE

Program staff balance advocating on young people's behalf with teaching C2C® participants how to advocate for themselves and how to achieve their goals. Identifying how to strike this balance can often be challenging and is largely dependent on specific situations. In some instances, it is best to advocate for the young person to support them toward achieving their goals. In others, it is best to coach the young person into handling the situation themselves so they can learn how to support themselves in the future. During group sessions youth are given the opportunity to think through different ways to respond in various situations, and they practice these responses in real life with their advocates.

RELENTLESS ENGAGEMENT

C2C® participants may not want to participate in the program at the onset or may be hard to locate after they have been referred to the program for a myriad of reasons. Advocates are persistent in their recruitment and engagement of young people. They often ask youth and their families several times to join the program and pursue them in the community or at home when they are hard to locate. YAP™ staff often see themselves as detectives at the start of the program by locating youth through insight they've gained in the community.

“

Example:

When speaking about goals for the future, one youth stated, “Now I feel like I know better the way to make it happen.”

Why is this element important?

Youth in C2C® learn to be more confident and capable in making set plans for themselves, seeing them through, and attaining their goals.

“

Example:

One client stated, “My advocate would call my mom to check on me.”

Why is this element important?

The C2C® model is intended to be an intervention with the whole family, serving each client by focusing on family strengths and building natural support for each client within the family. As a result, advocates will attempt to involve family members in determining what assistance is most appropriate for serving their clients.



Photo by Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.™

STRENGTH-BASED ENGAGEMENT

Program staff recognize and nurture a young person’s potential with strength-based engagement and support throughout the program. YAP™ utilizes a “No Reject, No Eject” policy that dictates no youth are denied or discontinued from services because of their specific circumstances or non-compliance. Rather, program staff (both advocates and coaches) work to meet youth where they are and adapt services to meet youths’ specific needs and situations. Additionally, staff implement a strength-based framework that focuses on youths’ assets during recruitment and programming. C2C® participants are often referred to the program because of behavioral challenges such as juvenile justice involvement, disruptive behavior, or low attendance. However, program staff never mention these challenges when recruiting or engaging youth. During group sessions, C2C® coaches also focus on highlighting the strengths in their approaches and are mindful of removing judgment of any current behaviors. They focus on reminding youth they are doing their best with the skills they have.

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT

Throughout the program, YAP™ staff formally identify youths’ strengths, needs, preferences, and goals across a spectrum of life domains (e.g., employment, education, justice-involvement, health, and hygiene, etc.) to develop individualized service plans (ISPs) that become the basis of support. ISPs are developed during Child Family Team (CFT) meetings, in which YAP™ assistant directors or advocates formally meet with youth participants and members of their families. The ISP is updated throughout the program with the understanding that service plans may need to shift. Brightpoint coaches also assist in identifying needs that may be revealed during group sessions. Coaches often seek to meet these needs if resources are available, in close communication with advocates.

Why is this element important?

Recognizing that many of their clients need assistance meeting basic needs, advocates and coaches work with their clients individually to provide them with the resources they need. C2C® fills gaps and break down barriers that impede youths’ success across different dimensions of life.



Example:

One youth said in the event of a setback or poor decision, their advocate, “spoke like he was my agent.”

Why is this element important?

Youth in C2C® emphasize that they value having a positive adult role models present in their lives who can be honest and hold them accountable but not in a way that puts them on edge by making them feel criticized or chastised; in some cases, this was the first experience interacting with an adult in this way.

Example:

Youth in C2C® highlight being able to rely on their mentor for transportation assistance for school or appointments.

Youth also mention receiving assistance with their court procedures and help with obtaining a driver’s license or copy of their birth certificate.



CREATING A SENSE OF SECURITY

Program staff work to ensure youths' basic needs are continuously met (e.g., food, clothing, shelter). This also includes providing consistent contact, care, wraparound services, and engagement with families to create a social safety net that youth can rely upon even after their program participation ends. This sense of security supports the young person's development and, importantly, helps them engage with other aspects of the program.

Why is this element important?

With advocates addressing the basic needs of their clients, youth are able to fully engage in other aspects of life, like C2C® therapy services and school.

STAFF-YOUTH RELATABILITY

YAP™ staff often share the same background as the youth they serve, including coming from the same community or sharing similar experiences. Advocates are often hired using a zip code recruiting method in which the advocate lives in the same zip code as youth in the program. Given coaches are Masters-level clinicians and systemic barriers to obtaining these credentials in the communities served, it can be harder to hire coaches who live in the same neighborhoods as participants. Still, the program makes a concrete effort to hire coaches who have lived in the same neighborhoods as youth or share similar lived experiences as much as possible. Staff relatability is critical to developing strong and trusting relationships quickly with participants.

Why is this element important?

Youth strongly resonate with advocates' deep and personal understanding of the types of issues they face, as informed by the advocates' own upbringing. It makes youth feel like they can be honest without being criticized or chastised. Research has highlighted that social support is one of the most powerful protections against becoming overwhelmed with stress and trauma¹.

ENDNOTES

¹Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma*. Penguin UK

Example:

Youth may find it difficult to engage in group therapy when they do not know where their next meal will come from, so it is important to help meet those basic needs.

Trauma-exposed youth are in need of both basic necessities and experiences that restore their sense of physical safety.

“

Example:

“He'd been there, done that, he'd been my age before. ... Actually, listening and taking advice from someone who knows[s] and not just trying to put off their opinion on you, someone who was actually in this situation and overcame it.”



Choose to Change® participants at their mentoring group session. Photo by Beking Media.

NEW EXPERIENCES & GROUP ACTIVITIES

New opportunities are important for helping youth realize that C2C® offers them a pathway toward a different future. Opportunities to engage in experiences outside of one's neighborhood of residence are especially important. Similarly, safe and fun peer group activities offer youth new experiences that contradict their trauma and related chronic stress. Advocates and assistant directors plan new experiences and group activities, and coaches are often invited to attend so youth can see them in non-clinical settings.

Why is this element important?

Exposure to new places and people created a foundation for students to explore these places in the future and build relationships with new individuals. These experiences are also key for trauma-exposed youth as they can promote healing from the bottom up.

TRAUMA-INFORMED THERAPY

Given the high degree of trauma experienced by the population of youth C2C® serves, trauma-informed group therapy is critical. The C2C® program utilizes the Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS) curriculum as the foundation of its trauma-informed group therapy services. SPARCS is based on key components of cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior therapy. Sessions offer youth a safe space to feel heard and utilize engaging activities to develop their decision-making skills. Therapeutic exercises encourage youth to recognize the link between their trauma, emotions, and somatic symptoms. Coaches often adapt the curriculum to fit the experiences of youth in the program by encouraging them to bring in their own examples during sessions.

Why is this element important?

The coach does a lot to spark curiosity and participation of youth by bringing content to their level, their dialogue, and their interests. Many youth appreciate that programming and examples are rooted in current events or personal stories shared by youth. C2C® helps youth address trauma through both the top-down approach (strengthening the capacity to monitor your body's sensations) and the bottom-up approach (through experiences and movement).

Coaches are a key element to creating a brave space for psychoeducation and dismantling mental health stigma.

Example:

Many youth discussed how activities with advocates allowed them to have atypical experiences and get to know individuals and neighborhoods they normally would not associate with.

People need to experience safety, relaxation, and true reciprocity to move out of survival mode. As research has shown, there is great need to engage the safety system of the brain before trying to promote new ways of thinking².

“

Example:

Some clients reveal that there are rarely other channels for them to comfortably express and process sources of emotional stress. Youth have said, “You know, usually I don't really have anyone to talk to about things like that or about what's going on.”



ENDNOTES

² Ibid.

NON-CLINICAL FRAMEWORKS

When presenting therapy to youth, program staff avoid utilizing clinical terms that may be stigmatized in the communities served. The non-clinical framework is intended to fully engage youth who may have false preconceptions about participating in therapy. For example, session leaders are referred to as “coaches” rather than therapists. Still, youth are told what to expect during group, including group rules, consent, and confidentiality.

Why is this element important?

Coaches take the time to assess group dynamics and become familiar with what would promote reception and participation.

APPLIED LEARNING

Advocates attend and participate in trauma-informed group therapy sessions with the youth they serve, allowing them to reinforce learned skills in daily interactions with youth. This helps youth to build new neural pathways and to respond in healthier ways when challenges arise. It is important that advocates have a deep understanding of the value of these sessions, as youth can easily see when their mentors are not fully engaged and will model that behavior.

Why is this element important?

Advocates reinforce techniques and skills built during trauma-informed group therapy sessions and also learn how to process certain issues raised by their clients through fully embracing and promoting the SPARCS curriculum. Advocates also often provided transportation and food for students attending the trauma-informed group therapy sessions. This “nudging” and positive encouragement allowed youth to be more receptive to accepting and absorbing the content discussed in group therapy. Research has highlighted that the more frequently someone performs a behavior or skill, the more habitual and automatic it becomes, which can help youth respond appropriately in new moments of stress³.

ENDNOTES

³ Wilson, T. D. (2004). *Strangers to ourselves*. Harvard University Press; Winfrey, O., & Perry, B. (2021). *What happened to you?: Conversations on trauma, resilience, and healing*. Boxtree.

Example:

SPARCS sessions were never explicitly referred to as traditional clinical therapy but rather skill building, with Brightpoint clinicians referred to as “coaches” instead of therapists. Youth appreciate that programming was structured as “real conversations.”

“

Example:

“My mentor, he was actually in the group with us too sometimes. Then he would ask us how we were feeling and what was going on with us. He would call and check up on us whenever we had group.”



Choose to Change® participants at their mentoring group session. Photo by Beking Media.

SECTION 4:

Service Delivery Part 1: Recruitment

Overview



Attendee of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase.
Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

The C2C® recruitment process occurs through three steps: **referrals**, **outreach**, and **intake**. The program recruits youth on a rolling basis, typically over the course of 2-3 months until all program slots have been filled. The program receives referrals and program directors and assistant directors lead all the conversations with referral sources as well as outreach efforts. The coach will occasionally join the director or assistant director during outreach, but the youth typically do not meet their coach until a warm handoff that occurs one month into programming. The warm handoff is critical to ensuring youth can fully engage during group therapy sessions.



Youth Referrals

The C2C® director or assistant director receives youth referrals from referral partners like schools, local public agencies, and community organizations. The program does not screen out youth, so it is important to stress the referral criteria when requesting referrals.



Relentless Engagement & Unconditional Acceptance

After receiving referrals, the director or assistant director locates and engages youth at school, at home, and in the community using a relentless and strength-based approach.



Individualized Service Plan

After youth are recruited, the director or assistant director develops an individualized service plan with the youth during a Child Family Team meeting. Youth are then assigned an advocate based on this process.



Warm Handoff

After about a month of services, youth are introduced to their group therapy coach through a warm handoff.

STEP 1: REFERRALS

The C2C® program receives referrals from a variety of referral partners to ensure the program is serving the target population. YAP™'s C2C® director or assistant director takes the lead on receiving referrals, although they can work with other staff to build relationships and make connections. Referral partners include academic agencies (i.e., individual neighborhood and Options schools and school district departments), juvenile justice agencies (i.e., district courts and juvenile probation agencies), and community-based organizations in the neighborhoods the program serves.

The referral for the target population of C2C® programming is officially defined as youth who are:

- ✓ **referred to CPS' School Outreach and Reengagement (SOAR) office** for being unenrolled or low attendance;
- ✓ **gang-affiliated** or at risk of gang engagement;
- ✓ **on juvenile probation** and likely to recidivate;
- ✓ **seriously disruptive in school** through chronic truancy, serious misconduct, and/or frequent suspensions;
- ✓ **direct victims of violence or witnesses to traumatic violence;**
- ✓ **at risk of involvement with violence** for other reasons.

It is important to note that the C2C® program does not screen youth based on the referral criteria above. The program aims to serve youth who meet these criteria in order to reach their target population. However, the program will take any youth who is referred to them even if they do not explicitly meet the criteria. Therefore, it is critical that the program providers communicate the referral criteria clearly to the referral partner, as the referral partner's discretion is key to reaching the target population.

In the past, the C2C® team has screened youth for age and geography. The program was intended to serve youth between the ages of 13 and 18, so the program decided to screen youth outside this age range. Early programming also screened out youth who lived too far from the neighborhoods served so staff would not need to spend a significant amount of time driving around the city to meet clients.

Now that the program has been expanded to serve youth throughout the city, the program providers no longer screen out youth based on their geography. However, agencies running programming informed by C2C® might find this helpful for serving youth in concentrated community areas.

The program director or assistant directors reach out to referral partners to request referrals to the program. Importantly, the program staff member will try to develop a close working relationship with the referral partner, especially if it is a local school. School buildings can become key sites for recruitment and service delivery. Program staff and referral partners can better collaborate on recruiting referred youth when close relationships are developed, benefiting the program and allowing for additional referrals in the future. Advocates spend time communicating directly with school staff, asking administrators and security guards about any disciplinary incidents involving their clients, checking in on grades, collecting homework if their clients are suspended, working with teachers and counselors to get past assignments so their clients can catch up, and providing coursework assistance and tutoring when possible.

When developing a new relationship with a referral partner, the program staff member (often the YAP™ C2C® program director) will pitch the program to the referral partner, describing the full scope of service activities and benefits to youth, and request referrals. This includes multiple emails, phone calls, and in-person visits until sufficient referrals have been secured to fill the cohort. Specifically, they will communicate the referral criteria listed above with the referral partner to reach the target population. Generally, they will request referrals of youth whom the referral partner is having difficulty reaching or whom the partner believes will benefit the most from services, as they understand the referral partner often knows youths' situations best.

When pitching to local schools, the program staff members would also broach the topic of providing group therapy sessions in the school building during lunch or after school depending on the availability of space. It is not a requirement that schools provide space for group therapy sessions, but it does help facilitate service delivery (see Section 5 for more information on where to host group therapy sessions).

The C2C® team aims to receive a minimum of five referrals from each school. This way there can be a cohort of youth from the same school to participate in the program together. It also helps future recruitment efforts if program staff can point to other kids in the school who are participating in the program currently or have participated in the past. Additionally, concentrated referrals help smooth the transition for youth at the end of the program, as mentors can establish a consistent presence in the school building and former participants can still see their mentors when advocates are serving future students. There is a risk that concentrating referrals leads to clusters of youth with opposing gang affiliations. However, C2C® team members report this does not cause frequent issues because the warm handoff eases youth into group interactions, as C2C® participants start identifying more strongly with their affiliation with the program and avoid conflict out of respect for program staff.

After the pitch, the referral partner produces a list of youth along with their contact information. At this point, it is helpful to ask the referral partner to provide as much contact information as they have on hand to help with locating youth in the community. Staff members typically receive youths' names and aliases, youths' phone numbers, youths' known addresses, their parents' or guardians' names and aliases, their parents' or guardians' phone numbers, and their parents' or guardians' addresses.

● STEP 2: OUTREACH

After receiving youth referrals, the program providers execute a relentless, strength-based approach to recruiting youth. The C2C® program recruits youth on a rolling basis, and youth may be recruited into the program at different points in time. The program director and assistant director lead all outreach efforts but are occasionally joined by coaches who sometimes accompany them during recruitment. Outreach efforts primarily consist of locating youth, pitching the program, and obtaining consent to participate in the program.

Directors and assistant directors are persistent in their attempts to locate referred youth. YAP™ staff make multiple attempts to contact referred youth and pursue them at school, in the community, or at home. The director or assistant director will first try to reach the youth in school by arranging a time with the school administration to present the program opportunity to referred youth. Once again, close relationships with school staff facilitate this aspect of service delivery.



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase. Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

Pitching the program at school also allows YAP™ staff to efficiently pitch to multiple youth at once and allows youth to see their peers will also be invited to participate in the program. Additionally, YAP™ staff can arrange with school administrators to send consent packets home with youth for their parents to sign and designate a location in the main office for youth to drop off signed forms. This allows staff to quickly come by the school to receive multiple signed consent packets at once.

If YAP™ staff cannot reach the youth in school after a few attempts, the staff member will work to locate the youth in their community, often visiting known addresses or calling known phone numbers multiple times. For particularly difficult-to-locate youth, YAP™ staff members may lean on youths' peers, asking other youth who attend the same school if they know where the referred youth lives or hangs out, or try to contact the referred youth on social media, like Facebook.

Referral partners can be helpful collaborators when performing outreach, and their intel can be key to locating youth or encouraging them to join the program. Attempts to locate youth can range in difficulty based on the youth's referral source. Referrals received from agencies such as the CPS district office or juvenile probation were more difficult to engage because youth were more disengaged from school and home addresses were often not accurate. This required more time to track down the referral. Schools also often know more about students than government agencies, which is helpful for providing background information that facilitates recruitment efforts.

Pitching the Program

Once youth are located, YAP™'s C2C® program director or assistant director pitches the program to the youth and their families. The program pitch, developed to empower youth to join the program, is a very specific program element and is key to the program's high take-up rates. The director or assistant director will tell youth what the program entails, trying to get youth excited about the opportunity to participate. Staff often highlight the potential for summer employment opportunities offered through the program, like "You Are Not Alone". "You Are Not Alone" is a six-week program where C2C® youth are connected to a partner employer to offer professional learning experiences and career development. To some youth and their families, an employment opportunity and income is a large incentive to participate.

C2C® recognizes and nurtures a young person's potential with strength-based engagement and support throughout the program. Staff focus on youth's assets during recruitment. During the pitch and throughout the program, C2C® participants should also be reminded that the program is not punitive in any way. While C2C® participants are often referred to the program because of behavioral challenges, it is communicated to youth that they were referred to the program because someone in their life identified them as a leader or identified their potential.

Staff will also mention the specific person who referred them to this opportunity, as it can show youth that someone cares enough to offer them this opportunity. Some youth or families might be wary about how staff got their information but telling them who referred the youth can help combat this anxiety. These strength-based approaches nurture the young person's potential, establish the trusting relationship between program providers and youth, and help encourage youth to take up services.

The program has a "No Reject, No Eject" policy that dictates no youth are denied or discontinued from services because of their specific circumstances or non-compliance. Rather, program staff work to meet youth where they are and continually adapt services to meet youth's specific needs and situations. Additionally, staff implement a strength-based framework that focuses on youth's assets during recruitment.

Similar to attempts to locate youth, directors and assistant directors are persistent in their engagement of referred youth and encouragement to join the program. Some referred youth or their families may not want to participate in the program at the onset for a myriad of reasons. They might even avoid staff performing outreach fearing they work with government agencies they distrust, such as their local police departments. The YAP™ C2C® team will typically revisit the youth several times to build trust with them and their families and encourage them to participate before taking no as an answer. Once referred youth agree to participate in the program, the YAP™ staff member presents them with a consent packet and goes through it with them or their family members directly.

Step 2: Outreach

"No Reject, No Eject" policy:

→ **No youth are denied or discontinued from services because of their specific circumstances or non-compliance.**

Program staff work to meet youth where they are and continually adapt services to meet youth's specific needs and situations.

STEP 3: INTAKE

After youth have returned their consent packets, program directors or assistant directors begin the intake process, which includes: an assessment, a family and team meeting, individualized service plan development, and matching youth to an advocate. The intake process is an opportunity to tailor services to each client, provide youth and their families with voice and choice, and develop a network of care for each C2C® participant. After this initial intake process, C2C® services formally begin.

During assessment, the YAP™ team introduces themselves and the C2C® program and learns more about the youth and their family through a discussion utilizing various assessment tools.

The assessment process empowers youth and families to express their needs, identify what resources and capacities they have that can assist them, and identify where there are gaps and how programming can help them to help themselves.

Staff also reach out to other important stakeholders in the family's life to learn their perspective on the family's needs and strengths.

Upon completion of the assessment process, the program builds a team that will help develop each youth's service plan and support them in achieving their goals. The team includes formal support, such as system and service representatives, as well as informal support, such as extended family, friends, coaches, pastors, and others. The director or assistant director schedules time for a Child Family Team (CFT) meeting where the team discusses the youth's goals, each team member's perspective on the family's strengths and needs, and how each team member can help youth realize their goals.

Everyone on the team has a role to play. Specifically, the director or assistant director will ask the youth to identify family members or informal supporters to join the CFT meeting at the start of the program. The CFT meeting is scheduled at a time and space where youth will feel safe and comfortable, like their home or the program provider's office.

During the CFT meeting, the director or assistant director will formally develop the youth's Individualized Service Plan (ISP), which will be shared with all team members and become the basis of C2C® services. By developing the ISP during the CFT meeting, the youth is given ownership over their service plan while receiving direct feedback on how to reach their goals from the Child Family Team. The client identifies an overarching desired goal or outcome for the program. This can be something more general such as doing better in school or helping out around the home more often.



Choose to Change® participants at their mentoring group session. Photo by Beking Media.

Afterwards, the director or assistant director works with youth to identify their interests, strengths, goals, and interventions (e.g., steps to reach their goal) across multiple domains. The domains on the ISP include living situation, family, education, socialization, employment, emotional health, physical/mental health, legal situation, safety, and others, including spirituality. The ISP form provides an example of how to identify strengths, interests, goals, and interventions across each domain.

By tracking the youth's goals across multiple life domains, the C2C® program develops service plans that are truly holistic and adapted to meet youth's specific circumstances, a key tenet of wraparound support.

No two youth in the program have service plans that look exactly the same.

For example, one youth may not identify any significant goals around legal situations because they have no legal issues but may want support moving into a better, more affordable living situation. Another youth may not identify any significant goals regarding their living situation because they have no issues with housing but may have been recently arrested and need support navigating the legal system. For each of these circumstances, youth ISPs will develop differently because the youths' goals, needs, and values differ. While both will receive similar services throughout the program, such as the same group therapy curriculum or group outings, the individual support they get from the mentor will vary.

Within a few weeks after the CFT meeting and ISP development, the director or assistant director will assign each youth an advocate based on a matching process.

Generally, the director or assistant director aims to match youth with an advocate who shares their specific interests and can uniquely help them reach their goals; advocates can also sometimes be matched based on gender.

The matching process can be simple or complex depending on the youth's circumstances. For example, a youth may have identified a goal of becoming a successful musician during their CFT meeting, so they may be matched with an advocate who is well-connected to the local arts scene. Alternatively, a youth may have had trouble opening up during their CFT meeting but mentioned they like video games. They may be matched with an advocate who also likes to play video games. After youth are matched, the director or assistant director will introduce the youth to their new advocate, who then begins formal engagement.

In some instances, a youth may be difficult to match because they exhibited intensive need for support during the CFT meeting or because they came onto the program at a time when no advocates had room in their workload. In these situations, it is normal for assistant directors to serve as these youths' advocates. These youth may end up being assigned another advocate later in the program, but the AD can also serve as the youth's mentor throughout the program if deemed appropriate.

THE WARM HANDOFF

As mentioned throughout this section, the C2C® recruitment process is primarily led by the director and assistant director of the wraparound mentorship component of the program delivered by YAP™. The coaches from Brightpoint will occasionally accompany directors and assistant directors during recruitment outreach, but this is not key to the program model. This split in responsibilities is key to the program design, as youth are not typically introduced to their coaches until a month after the start of the program. After about one month of programming, the advocate will bring youth to their first group therapy session, where they formally meet their new coach in what is referred to as a warm handoff.

The warm handoff provides a month for advocates to build their relationships with youth before they start group therapy.

Youth are more likely to want to attend and pay attention during group therapy when this relationship has already formed, facilitating their ability to pick up core concepts. When advocates encourage youth to engage with the trauma-informed group sessions or practice the new skills they learned, youth are more likely to listen when they have already built a trusting bond with their mentor.

Additionally, the warm handoff is key to reducing any safety concerns during the program. The program never brings a youth into a group setting with other youth until the advocate has had a chance to begin building a trusting relationship. Bringing youth into group settings too early can create safety challenges, but, once a trusting relationship has been formed, advocates are more easily able to de-escalate conflicts because youth trust them.

Youth are also less likely to escalate conflicts to begin with out of respect for their advocate because of the trusting relationship. Further, the month before the warm handoff provides time for advocates to gather information key to reducing safety concerns. Advocates learn which youth are more likely to escalate conflict and need extra attention or which youth in the program have rival gang affiliations and need to be kept separated in group settings.

The warm handoff is not always immediately understood by partners. In the past, key partners such as referral agencies, local schools, or the school district have come to the C2C® program providers with complaints about how youth have not begun group therapy or even mentioned meeting their coaches yet. It is important to remind external partners that the warm handoff is purposeful and there are benefits to preserving it.

MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

While clinicians do not conduct program consent, they do remind youth about the parameters of consent and confidentiality. They also administer three clinical assessments: the OHIO Scales-Youth, Trauma Symptoms Checklist, and Trauma History Checklist. These assessments are administered in a “pre” (weeks 1 -2 of group services) and “post” (week 16 following completion of the group services). The clinicians also work to obtain demographic information for data tracking. The C2C® program has a two-part consent process due to program services being delivered by two separate agencies with their own legal requirements. However, agencies running programming informed by C2C® may find it easier to have one joint consent packet at the start of the program.

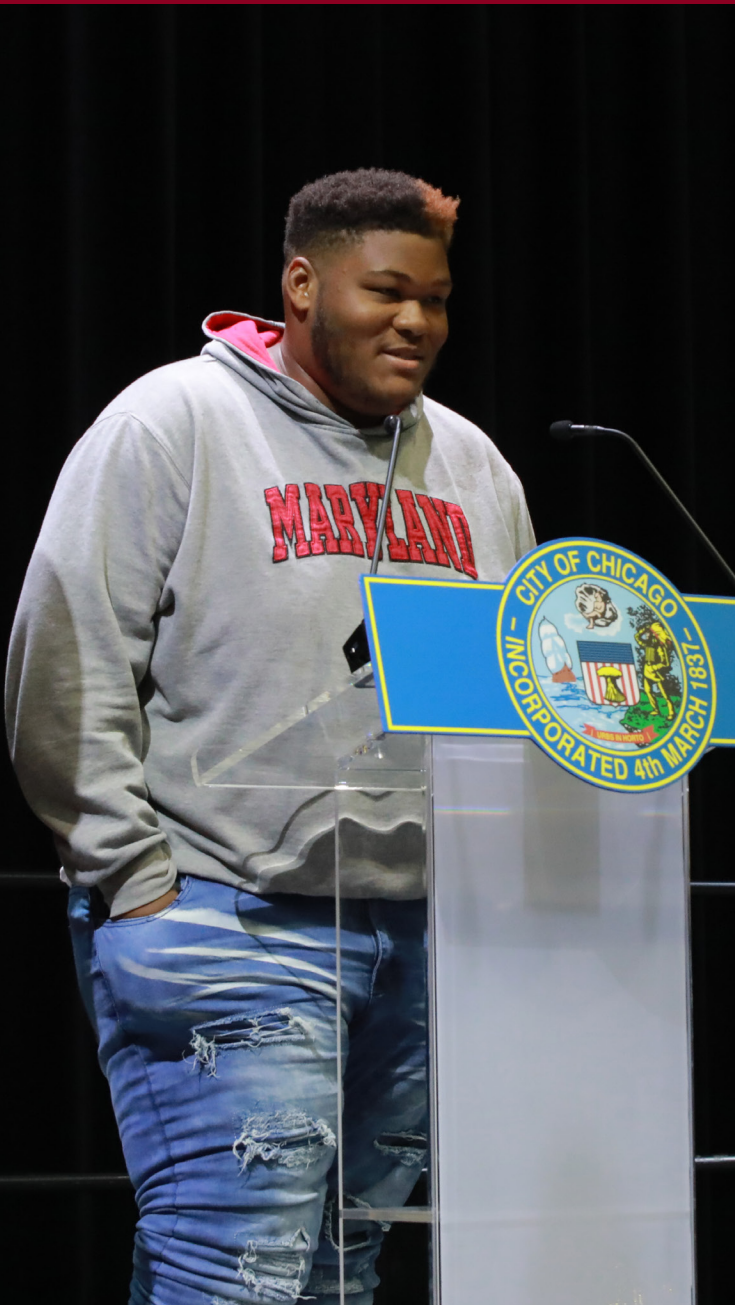


Choose to Change® participants at their mentoring group session. Photo by Beking Media.

SECTION 5:

Service Delivery Part 2: Engagement

Overview



Attendee of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase.
Photo by Chicago Public Schools.



Wraparound Services

YAP™ advocates are the first point of contact for youth and provide wraparound services: mentoring, coaching, case management, and modeling through purposeful individual, family, and group activities.



Voice and Choice

Families are empowered as equal partners, and services for youth are tailored to their (and their families') unique needs, strengths, and preferences.



Group Therapy

Trauma-informed group therapy run by Brightpoint is at the core of C2C® programming; sessions help youth develop tools for coping with current or future stress and deal with painful events in the past; individual therapy is provided to youth when necessary.



Meeting Basic Needs

Advocates and coaches collaborate to ensure youths' basic needs are being met, including, but not limited to, the provision of food, clothing, emergency relief, and other kinds of support.



Attendance and Engagement

Advocates relentlessly re-engage youth who disengage from programming and work to address barriers to participation.

◎ MENTORSHIP & WRAPAROUND SERVICES

Once youth are recruited into the program, C2C® provides young people with intensive support in their home, school, and community through the YAP™ Wrap model, which blends best practices from research in wraparound services, mentoring, and positive youth development. Wraparound is an intensive, individualized, holistic approach to working with high- and complex-need youth and families from within their homes and communities.

YAP™ advocates are the first point of contact in the program and offer a combination of mentorship and wraparound services to help youth meet their goals. Advocates help implement the individual service plan that is developed with each family. Available 24/7, advocates provide services at times and locations when they are most needed, allowing for highly individualized and effective intervention. During their assigned hours, advocates provide mentoring, coaching, case management, and modeling through purposeful individual, family, and group activities. Services balance involuntary service demands with activities driven by the participant's prioritized wants and needs. Advocates are available 24/7 and meet with youth participants for an average of 8 hours per week in individual and group settings to provide services.

Advocates meet youth in the community to partake in a variety of activities driven by youth's goals and interests. These activities range from simple to complex interactions. They can focus on fun activities based on youth's interests or moving youth towards their goals as outlined in their individualized service plans. Since youths' goals and interests differ, these activities will as well.

Here are some examples of service activities:

- **Helping youth meet their obligations** to judges, probation officers, case managers, and other referring entities
- **Assistance with obtaining part-time employment** or solving problems at work
- **Transportation**
- **Community service**
- **Going to the park, arcades, sporting events, or to get food**
- **Attending school or community events**
- **Going to get haircuts or shopping for clothes**
- **Going back to school shopping**
- **Obtaining identity documents** like IDs, driver's licenses, and social security cards
- **Getting youth banked** in order to receive direct deposit from employers
- **Helping expectant mothers and fathers** gather supplies for their child
- **Helping young parents find childcare** in order to allow the student to return to school
- **Helping youth find extracurricular activities** within the school like sports, school government, and arts and educational clubs



Choose to Change® participants at their mentoring group session. Photo by Beking Media.

The list of activities includes a mix of fun, interest-based and serious, goals-based interactions. Even during the more fun, interest-based activities, the advocates will check in on youths' goals, identify ways to help them reach those goals, and provide general guidance. Sometimes, these meetings do not involve super heroic efforts to push youth towards their goals or solve their problems, and that is okay. Being a mentor requires being there for youth in big and little ways. Even basic activities, like going to get food, are key moments for building trusting relationships with youth.

One of the most memorable aspects of C2C® services is group outings like going to arcades, amusement parks, or the movies. Advocates will frequently plan outings for youth, in individual or group settings, that expose them to new experiences within and outside their neighborhood. Advocates will try to plan activities within youths' neighborhoods that help connect them to their community. For example, advocates might lean on relationships they have in the neighborhood at cultural centers or service-based organizations and plan outings or volunteer events for youth there. Group outings can be planned by an advocate for their entire case load (these are often smaller events, like going downtown to get food at a new restaurant) or by assistant directors for entire cohorts of youth (these are often larger, like going to a sporting event). Coaches from Brightpoint are invited and encouraged to attend these outings.

These outings should be **unforgettable experiences for youth**, as they provide opportunities for building trusting relationships, act as an incentive to continue engagement in the program, show that their mentors care about them, and allow youth to develop new orientations to think about their future.

The program puts youth in the driver's seat when planning activities, asking youth on a rotating basis what they would like to do with them. Since group activities are also planned this way, this can sometimes mean that youth partake in an activity chosen by one of their C2C® peers. This enables youth to experience one of their peers' interests. Even if it ends up being an activity they do not enjoy, it allows advocates to spark conversations about what does or does not interest certain youth.

During group outings, the advocate will try to find time to check in with every youth present to provide mentorship and support as needed. The car ride alone exposes them to new parts of their city and can be a friendly moment to break down apprehension, build a trusting relationship, and strengthen the bond between the advocate and the youth. It is important to remember the basis of the warm handoff discussed above and not plan group outings too early in the program. Provide some time for youth to get to know their advocate before going on large group outings. Once C2C® participants have met their coach, invite them to the outings as well so they get an opportunity to be with youth in a non-clinical setting.

From the moment program providers first meet a family through their completion of the programs, families are given "voice and choice" – empowered as equal partners – and services are tailored to their unique needs, strengths, interests, and preferences. In Section 4, we already saw how C2C® participants and their families are given voice and choice during the intake process, when youth and families play a central role in co-designing a plan that recognizes their strengths, addresses their challenges, and is based on their interests, talents, and goals. During service provision, YAP™ staff plan activities around the needs, interests, and goals of each individual youth by empowering them to suggest what they would like to do with their advocate or during group outings. When working with youth who have become involved with juvenile justice, child welfare, or behavioral health systems, it is important to balance youth and their families' voice and choice with meeting mandates and other system requirements by empowering them to have a say in their plan and giving them meaningful choices in how services are provided.

Throughout the program, the C2C® team revisits the CFT and ISP developed at the start of the program to update youths' service plans based on their progress. For example, YAP™ Advocates will schedule meetings with the Child Family Team several times before the program ends to discuss youths' participation in the program and how they are moving towards their goals. The CFT will identify any ways the ISP should change, and the ISP form will be formally updated through the conversation. The advocate should see the ISP as an evolving document that develops over the course of the program.

GROUP THERAPY SESSIONS

The C2C® program utilizes the Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS) curriculum as its foundation for the trauma-informed group therapy services run by clinically trained Brightpoint staff. Typically, groups of 8-10 students will attend 12-16 sessions over the course of three to four months, for 45-60 minutes each. These trauma-informed group sessions help young people develop tools for coping with current or future stress, as well as helping them deal with painful past events. Brightpoint staff are culturally trained to address grief and loss, community safety, relationships, crises, basic needs, and so much more.

In trauma-informed groupwork, participants will learn how to recognize stress in the body and utilize coping skills in the moment of stress. For example, it is typical that a person who has been in a car accident may experience distress when driving or riding in a vehicle for quite a while after that accident. The person may grip the steering wheel or side door handle; they may hold their breath; some may press on the imaginary brake on the passenger side. Veering onto the shoulder or into the oncoming lane can make these feelings more intense. The bottom line is our body is responding to our previous experiences. Coaches help youth identify and understand how they are feeling and at the same time, find healthier ways to cope with these situations. Not only will these skills help in this type of situation, but the participant will also learn how to manage in any type of stressful event, such as an upcoming test, an upcoming dance, or having a difficult conversation with a friend or family member.

Participants report benefits such as:

- decreases in levels of distress,
- learning to “manage emotions so they do not manage you,”
- better relationships and communication skills,
- and improved coping strategies.

Running Trauma-Informed Group Sessions

This manual will not go into too much detail on how to run SPARCS group sessions, as this should be covered by the certification and external intervention manual. However, it is important to touch on how the C2C® team specifically implements and adapts the SPARCS curriculum. Given the program’s target population, many of the examples and activities provided in the curriculum may not be completely applicable to all C2C® youth. Coaches overcome this challenge by putting youth in the driver’s seat and allowing them to bring in their own examples that apply to the situations being discussed. Once youth bring these examples into sessions, the coach will revisit them over time to show how they apply across sessions. While coaches do run sessions based on the curriculum, our check-ins at the beginning of group sessions are an indicator of where the session needs to go. For example, addressing grief and loss, COVID-19, or anything else that the youth brings up. Meeting the youth where they are is crucial to the work that we do.

One important adaptation of the curriculum concerns the trauma exposure of the C2C® population. The majority of C2C® youth have experienced several traumatic events prior to entering the C2C® program. Coaches are taught to identify responses to trauma that C2C® youth may exhibit so they can focus on addressing them during sessions. The brief overview below reviews topics covered in 16 sessions with flags for ways the C2C® team works to meet the needs of the target population.

Session Topics and Adaptations on next page. →



Choose to Change® participants at their mentoring group session. Photo by Beking Media.

SESSION 1: Welcome and Introduction

- In the opening session of the SPARCS group, participants are oriented to the purpose and expectations of the group. Groups discuss norms and rules for SPARCS sessions.
- Youth are also introduced to feelings identification activities and coping skills that will be referenced throughout the 16-week intervention. Clinicians work to support youth and youth advocates when they practice these foundational skills in session.

SESSION 2: Stress Trauma and the Body

- Discussion of Stress, Trauma, and the Body
- This session builds the foundation for future discussions on the impact of stress and trauma on the body.
- Safety planning is introduced here for two reasons: 1) to help the participants begin to think about the importance of their own safety, and 2) to help them mindfully (rather than automatically or impulsively) prepare to protect themselves in a number of ways should the need arise.
- Participants may be exposed to material that may stir cognitive, affective, or somatic distress.

SESSION 3: Mindfulness

- Discussion of Emotion Mind, Reasonable Mind, and Wise Mind
- This session introduces the concept of mindfulness. This session builds on earlier skills to help group members be better able to respond when struggling with emotional and behavioral dysregulation. Emotion Mind, Reasonable Mind, and Wise Mind are the three States of Mind that drive our behavior. Emotion Mind represents times during which our actions are driven entirely by our emotions, as opposed to Reasonable Mind, in which behavior is driven solely by reasoned thought. While at times there is a tendency to view emotions as “bad” and reason as “good,” Wise Mind represents the combination of the two and requires an integration of emotions, reason, and one’s intuition. Wise Mind = Emotion Mind + Reasonable Mind + intuition.

SESSION 4: Mindfulness – Continued

- This session builds on the previous session and contains the core content on mindfulness. It is critical that during each group meeting, clinicians describe reasons mindfulness is important and the ways it can be helpful to group members’ daily lives. Leaders should be able to highlight core concepts when conducting mindfulness activities throughout treatment. Clinicians will review skills that explain exactly what to do to be mindful (observe, describe, and fully participate) as well as skills that explain how to do it (don’t judge, stay focused, and do what works).

SESSION 5: Distress Tolerance – Distract

- In this session and the next, group members will learn strategies to help them cope in the moment when they are overwhelmed and/or unable to solve the problem right away. Distress tolerance skills are tools for coping with upsetting situations and feelings that cannot be immediately changed.
- Review of the first distress tolerance skill: “distract.” Clinician will work with youth to identify examples of this skill and talk about the risks and benefits in these real-life examples.
- Keep in mind that while some traumatized adolescents are adept at distracting, many do so automatically and not mindfully.



Choose to Change® participants at their mentoring group session. Photo by Beking Media.

SESSION 6: Distress Tolerance – Self Soothe

- “Self-soothe” is the second distress tolerance skill. It helps group members soothe themselves when they are upset by focusing on their senses in a pleasant way to get through the moment. The clinician will work with youth to identify examples of this skill and talk about the risks and benefits in these real-life examples.
- Often traumatized adolescents, while able to distract (even if it isn't mindful), are less experienced with self-soothing. It is a complement to the previous session in which the “distract” skill was practiced. Like distraction, self-soothing is a short-term solution for managing the moment when there is nothing that can be done to change it, or when doing something (particularly something maladaptive) will only make things worse.

SESSION 7: Trauma & Trust

- Discussion of trauma and how it impacts relationships with others.
- Isolation and alienation are common side effects of chronic trauma and the activities in this session aim to increase the likelihood that group members will get the support they need. This session provides psychoeducation regarding the definition of abuse and trauma and types of social support. Issues regarding trust in relationships will also be explored.

SESSION 8: Coping Skills and Insight

- Discussion of coping with stressful situations in the present that can be triggered by problems regulating because of earlier traumas.
- This session provides in-depth discussion and practice with problem-solving activities as well as discussion about how to develop increased insight into the youths' traumatic experiences. These steps are designed to help group members cope with stressful situations in the present that may be triggered by chronic dysregulation of affect and impulses or reminders of earlier traumas.

SESSION 9: Coping Skills and Insight Part 2

- This session provides in-depth discussion and practice with skills learned in Session 8. These steps are designed to help group members cope with stressful situations in the present that may be exacerbated by group members' struggles with dysregulation of affect and impulses and/or triggered by reminders of earlier trauma.
- Often clinicians take time to process with the group as a whole, with youth individually, and also with their youth mentor to help the youth integrate the skills and ensure they have support to cope with any overwhelming emotions or distress that may be triggered throughout the activities.

SESSION 10: Communication Part One

- Discussion on enhancing relationships and communication.
- This session presents a set of skills to enhance group members' communication. Relationships and communication styles can be heavily impacted by trauma. The coping strategies that some survivors of trauma utilize to protect themselves often prevent them from getting, or giving, effective support. Therefore, two sessions are exclusively dedicated to enhancing relationships and communication.
- This session includes concrete, verbal, and nonverbal steps that group members can use to increase the likelihood that their needs will be met. Remind group members that these skills may be useful both with people they are close to, like their friends, as well as people they may be less close, to like their principal or a cashier at the store.
- By communicating effectively, members' sense of control over themselves, their environment, and their relationships are greatly enhanced. These skills are also a useful option for managing stressful situations. By this point in the treatment, members have a number of options for coping with stress.

SESSION 11: Communication Part 2

- Continued work on clear and effective communication skills that further allow the youth to safely communicate with others how they are feeling and what they need in the moment.
- This session reviews communication skills that help group participants navigate their relationships more successfully. This session begins by revisiting the rationale behind communication and outlines the specific steps in detail. It also includes an opportunity to practice the skills in session through the use of role-play, as well as a discussion of when it is best to apply the skills.

SESSION 12: Labeling Triggers & Managing Emotions

- This session helps participants learn about two key concepts, triggers and regulation of emotions (anger in particular). Reminders, or “triggers,” can evoke affective, cognitive, or somatic memories of traumatic events. These may occur at varying levels of intensity, from a feeling of uneasiness to a full-blown flashback. In this session youth will obtain more practice identifying their own triggers and coping with the intense emotions that can result.
- Clinicians facilitating these discussions offer support, narrate the group members use of skills, invite youth mentors to implement the skills, and identify and praise the use of skills.

SESSION 13: Mind and Body Connection

- Discussion on mind/body connection, public self, and private self.
- Clinicians provide information about internal and external experience integration as well as how these experiences may be identified by the youth.
- The clinician again facilitates the discussion by pulling from real world examples from the youth and mentors and supports the group members efforts to implement these skills.
- Clinicians are mindful of cultural considerations as well as the demands on youth to “be” a certain way as these play a role in the versions of “self.”

SESSION 14: Expectations and Beliefs

- This session asks participants to examine their beliefs about themselves, others, and the world around them. Belief systems and self-perceptions operate both inside and outside of one’s awareness. While expectations born from extreme stress serve as protection in the face of danger, emotional leftovers coupled with maladaptive beliefs and expectations can significantly alter or limit adolescents’ hopes and aspirations for the future.
- Clinicians work to integrate social norms and expectations that are unique to the youth in the room. The clinicians invite discussion and examination of what these norms and expectations are as well as their impact.

SESSION 15: Review of Key Concepts and Skills

- This session provides additional discussion and practice with key concepts and skills in order to further address group members’ current problems and concerns.
- Make a plan for termination of the group services and review and reflect on skills gained.

SESSION 16: Termination & Goals

- This session should reflect plans made in Session 15 and should provide group members with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the group, say goodbye, and celebrate their successes.
- Clinicians highlight specific growth and areas of achievement for group members collectively as well as individually and invite youth and youth mentors to highlight growth that they have also observed themselves.

Scheduling Group Therapy on next page. →

Scheduling Group Therapy

After about a month of services, the assistant director will connect with the coach to start group therapy sessions. Once YAP™ provides contact information for participating youth, the coach reaches out to the family to say hello and answer any questions. They will suggest meeting with the student individually to build engagement and introduce themselves in a non-clinical format. Once this has been done, the coach should coordinate with the director or advocates to schedule group services.

It's crucial to **maintain communication via texts and video/phone calls** with youth in order to have better results with regard to attendance in group sessions.

LEARNING BY DOING

Assistant directors and advocates attend the weekly trauma-informed group therapy sessions with their youth, allowing them to play a key role in reinforcing the tools and skills youth learn in these sessions. In most group therapy programs, participants learn key concepts in a classroom but don't necessarily have the support to practice these skills out in the world. In the C2C® program, assistant directors and advocates can give youth opportunities to reinforce skills by discussing them outside of the classroom.

INDIVIDUAL THERAPY

The C2C® coach will provide individual services for participants when necessary, making themselves available to meet with youth in more personal, one-on-one formats. Individual services are not a core component of the C2C® program model, but coaches tend to make themselves available for these limited one-on-one services when youths' needs are especially intensive. Coaches determine when youth may require individual services based on their interactions with them in group therapy, the youth's response to mental health assessments, or information from advocates or school staff. When a coach determines that youth may need individual services, they will reach out to the youth to ask if they would like to check-in during a one-on-one session.

It is also important to **have conversations with the advocates about joining groups** in order to participate and reinforce youth attendance.

The composition of trauma-informed groups should remain consistent throughout the program because topics are not repeated. Since C2C® uses a rolling admission process, this means youth are sometimes brought into the program after groups have started, but they cannot join existing groups. Instead, youth who have just started the program would join a new group.

For example, with support from coaches, assistant directors or advocates might practice mindfulness techniques with youth when out in the world with them during individual or group activities. Additionally, when youth are facing conflicts, ADs or advocates can ask youth to walk through conflict resolution techniques they learned together in the trauma-informed group therapy.



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase. Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the program, staff work to keep youth engaged, modeling the lessons learned during the recruitment process by executing a relentless, strength-based approach to reaching youth in every aspect of service. Given the population of youth the program serves, it is not surprising that, even once youth consent to partake in C2C® services, it may be difficult to keep them fully engaged or attending services.

YAP™ advocates exhibit a “never give up” approach when serving youth.

When youth disengage from the program, their advocate will relentlessly try to re-engage them in services and work to address any barriers to participation.

They follow the same approach to locating youth as described in the recruitment section (Section 4) when disengaged youth are hard to contact. For particularly hard-to-engage youth, engagement often requires multiple contacts and can take time. The key to engaging these youth is building a trusting relationship that youth feel they can rely on. However, many of the youth who are hardest to reach are those who find it difficult to form these trusting relationships, and it cannot be expected that they will engage with the program overnight. Once a relationship is formed with coaches, coaches are also able to partake in brainstorming ways to retain youth in the program.

The C2C® team is proud of its ability to engage even the hardest-to-reach youth in services, as demonstrated by the program’s high take-up rates. Despite this success, it is important to recognize that **not all youth are going to take up the program**. It can be difficult to accept that some of the youth who need intensive services the most do not want to engage in the program.

Advocates should respect the youth’s decision and maintain an **open line of communication** so youth know that the program is there for them should they choose to participate in the future.

Assistant directors and advocates play a critical role in maintaining youth attendance and engagement in the trauma-informed group therapy sessions.

They will often check in with youth to ensure they are attending sessions and encourage youth to attend by stressing the importance of group sessions. When therapy sessions occur during the school day, this often includes finding youth skipping sessions and encouraging them to attend. When the therapy sessions occur outside of school, this often means coordinating times for sessions with the coaches and driving each youth to the weekly group session. The most important tool for increasing youth attendance is providing food.

The director, assistant director, or advocate will bring food to the group therapy sessions, which draws youth to attend. When therapy sessions occur at school, remember to ask the school point of contact for permission to bring food into the building first. The advocate will also stress the importance of accountability to the group of youth they work with in the program. They work to create an atmosphere where, if someone misses group therapy, another youth will say, “Why did you miss? We needed you there.” This teaches youth about the value of accountability and creates a peer support system for youth.

The assistant director and advocates play a critical role in ensuring youth are fully engaging with the activities and materials. They do this by simply being active participants in the group sessions, responding to activities, and contributing to discussions. Since assistant directors and advocates share similar lived experiences to their clients and youth often look up to their role models, youth often feel safer and more encouraged to participate when they see their mentors doing so. When youth do not actively participate in the trauma-informed group therapy sessions, the assistant director or advocate will ask the youth outside of the group if there are any barriers or apprehensions to participation they can jointly address.

It is important that all staff understand the importance of these group therapy sessions. Youth see their advocates as role models and will model their behavior in group therapy sessions. If they see their mentor actively participating, they will be encouraged to do the same. But if they see their mentor unengaged in group therapy or think they think it is pointless, they will often do and think the same. If these situations arise, the director should intervene and ensure all staff are actively engaged during group therapy sessions.

COMING TOGETHER

The C2C® program uniquely combines YAP™'s wraparound advocacy model, known as YAP™ Wrap, and group cognitive behavioral therapy from Brightpoint. It is important that any agency running services informed by C2C® models the ways that the C2C® program blends wraparound mentorship and group therapy together in joint services. We have already highlighted a number of ways that these two aspects of the program come together, including:



Learning by doing, where advocates (wraparound mentors) attend the trauma-informed group therapy sessions and reinforce the lessons learned in their interactions with youth.



Advocates supporting youth attendance and engagement in group therapy sessions.



Coaches attending group outings planned by assistant directors or advocates so youth can talk with them in non-clinical settings.



Advocates and coaches collaborating to ensure youths' basic needs are being met.



Coaches inviting advocates to sit in on individual check-ins with youth when appropriate.

Remember that, as with the creators of C2C®, programming informed by C2C® is a team effort. Advocates and coaches should look towards each other as equal partners in serving youth. This includes strategizing on planning group sessions at times and places to facilitate attendance, resolving barriers to youth engagement, and identifying places where youth can reinforce the skills they learn in group therapy out in the world. In extreme circumstances, advocates and coaches will also come together to strategize on crisis resolution for youth in the program.



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase with Mayor Brandon Johnson and CPS CEO Pedro Martinez. Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

SECTION 6:

Service Delivery Part 3: Discharge

Overview

After youth receive six months of services, they formally begin the discharge process. Since recruitment is a rolling process, discharge is also rolling, and youth may be discharged at different times. The C2C® team will identify youth who are coming up on five months of services to start preparing them for discharge.



Discharge Plans

When youth approach five months of services, advocates begin scheduling CFT meetings to review the ISP; this can be a challenging time for youth.



Ongoing Support

Youth are encouraged to keep in contact with their advocate after the program and may receive referrals to other community services or programs.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR DISCHARGE

The team will identify youth approaching five months of services to begin preparing them for discharge. At this point, if youth have not reached 12 trauma-informed group therapy sessions, then their advocate and coach will collaborate on how to ensure they finalize group therapy over the course of the next month. This can involve make-up sessions for youth who have missed sessions. The advocate will also start communicating discharge plans with youth, explaining to them up front what is going to happen.

The advocate will work on forming discharge plans with youth, scheduling additional CFT meetings, and reviewing ISPs. The goals of this process are to review how youth have moved forward on reaching the goals they outlined at the start of the program, how their goals or needs may have changed, and what additional support they may need post-discharge.

It is important to involve the Child Family Team at this point because they can be key resources to helping youth remain successful or reach success post-program. Discharge can be one of the most difficult aspects of any youth-based program. Youth participants often report they feel the program is too short and grow upset once it starts to end. C2C® team members report youth often begin to act out at the end of the program, expressing their anger over the program ending or attempting to receive additional services. For staff, it is important to remember that the program length is by design and, despite the short length of services, the program still achieves remarkable impact on youth; moreover, more youth can benefit from their services given the six-month timeframe of the program. Staff should be open about discharge with youth and discuss how it makes youth feel, but still remind them that just because the program is ending does not mean they can no longer contact program staff for support.

Coaches are often pulled in for additional support once youth are discharged, such as helping identify additional basic needs, community resources, and external mental health support.



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase. Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

◎ POST-DISCHARGE

The C2C® team continues to support discharged youth in limited ways. They will often refer them to other community services or programs based on their discussion of discharge plans and needs before the program ends. Youth are encouraged to keep up contact with their advocate whether or not they need continued guidance. Advocates have to balance taking on new caseloads with this continued contact. While they never stop being youths' advocates, they only have so much time to keep in contact with discharged youth and should communicate that clearly before discharge.

It helps when advocates bring on new caseloads at existing schools, as their presence in the school building allows them to check in on discharged youth. Advocates should keep in mind this can be challenging for discharged youth, who have to see their advocates reaching out to new youth.

Discharged youth in these situations may grow jealous and act out, which advocates should formally address with discharged youth as necessary.



Attendees of Project Unloaded Choose to Change® Showcase. Photo by Chicago Public Schools.

SECTION 7:

Supervision, Documentation, and Communication

Overview

Now that we have gone over the services provided by the C2C® program, we will discuss administrative components of the program: how the program offers support to staff, how staff document service delivery, and expectations for staff communication. For organizations running programming informed by C2C®, the norms for supervision, documentation, and communication may differ, as these are largely determined by the agencies running services. Agencies hoping to model every component of the C2C® program will want to review these administrative guidelines to determine what works best for their organization.



Supervision

Supervision and management of programming staff helps ensure quality services are delivered.



Documentation

C2C® team members use documentation to adapt services and note any gaps in services that require immediate troubleshooting or shifts. Documentation is also critical for keeping track of program progress.

SUPERVISION

The agencies who joined together to create C2C® each have their own version of supervision where the staff coordinate, troubleshoot, and problem solve with their supervisor. Supervision will largely differ based on what is occurring at that stage of programming. Generally, supervision provides a check-in that makes program leadership aware of current service delivery efforts.

At Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)™, the director, assistant director, and advocates have weekly supervision meetings, where they meet with their respective supervisors. Advocates check in with their assistant director, assistant directors check in with their director, and directors check in with agency leadership. This hierarchical supervision structure ensures that leadership are up-to-date on services being offered and any issues that arise. This supervision occurs at the agency office and, usually, all supervision occurs on the same day. By scheduling supervision all at once, staff are able to meet together and troubleshoot issues in the moment. During supervision, staff formally discuss progress by going through progress notes – documentation of advocates’ services – with their supervisor.

Brightpoint provides weekly individual clinical supervision to all coaches and supervisors. Supervisors work to provide reflective clinical supervision as well as administrative supervision. Additionally, Brightpoint staff meet weekly in team meetings and then additionally with YAP™ staff (advocates, assistant directors, and directors) in order to ensure open and continuous communication. These cross-agency meetings also ensures clear and accurate information is shared with community partners.



*Choose to Change® mentors at a group session.
Photo by Beking Media.*

DOCUMENTATION

The C2C® team uses various means of documenting services, as these are largely subject to agency norms and change over time. Documentation ensures the entire C2C® team is aware of the program's progress over time. C2C® team members use documentation to adapt services, noting any gaps in services that require immediate troubleshooting or shifts in strategy.

Advocates

Advocates document program activities in the following ways:

- ✔ **Advocates record CFT meeting notes and ISPs formally during intake.** The advocate will host several CFT meetings throughout the course of services to edit youths' ISPs based on their progress through the program. Advocates should also be documenting notes from these follow-up CFT meetings and changes to the ISP throughout the program.
- ✔ **Advocates record progress notes and client service interactions on an ongoing basis in YAP™'s case management system (Evolv).** Progress notes formally capture youths' progress through the program and client service interactions formally capture how advocates are spending their time with youth. Advocates will record a progress note for each interaction they have with youth. Specifically, advocates will record:
 - Observations and interactions from the activity
 - Whether any type of work was performed
 - Whether the advocate met with the school
- ✔ **Supervisors review with advocates the participating youth assigned to them each week,** including reviewing progress notes to discuss adjustments that may need to be made for the individual service plan of each youth on their case load.



*Choose to Change® mentor leading a mentoring group session.
Photo by Beking Media.*

Coaches

Coaches document program activities in the following ways:

- ✔ **Coaches schedule individual and group sessions** in their work calendars and give their supervisors access to this calendar.
- ✔ Following each group session, **the coach records attendance for the session** and any barriers to attendance that occurred. For example, they may note, "Five out of eight youth attended, and the advocates reported two youth could not attend because they had family conflicts."
- ✔ On a weekly basis, **coaches complete group notes** reflecting on that week's group sessions.
- ✔ **Coaches also fill out a productivity log** where they document activities for the week. Specifically, they will document the date, activity, time spent on each activity, and notes. Coaches should document activities such as group sessions, individual check-ins with youth, and non-therapeutic service activities (i.e. attending school behavioral health meetings or meetings with advocates to discuss youth progress).

SECTION 8:

Virtual Service Delivery

Overview

◎ REMOTE WRAPAROUND MENTORSHIP

During the COVID-19 pandemic, C2C® provided services through a variety of remote and limited in-person services. The C2C® team attempted to conduct services virtually whenever possible, checking-in with youth through phone and video calls. In some instances, remote work was not possible, and services were provided in person. For example, crisis response often required in-person meetings and some youth met with their advocates when they needed more intensive mentorship. In-person services were only provided when youth, their families, and individual C2C® team members felt comfortable meeting in person.

The C2C® team also prioritized ensuring youth and families' basic needs were met throughout the pandemic. They would purchase groceries, personal protective equipment, and other household goods for families (or gift cards to local grocery stores) and drop them off on youths' porches. They also helped ensure youth were connected to the internet and that the virtual world was accessible for C2C® participants. Specifically, staff assisted youth in getting technology from schools, setting up homes with Wi-Fi from network providers, or purchasing technology for youth themselves through program budgets.

◎ TELEHEALTH AND HYBRID SERVICES

Telehealth services are delivered in the platform of our CPS funder (Google Meet). At this time, we are listening to the school needs and delivering services according to their preference (in-person or virtual). If virtual services are preferred, coaches send a reoccurring invite to everyone who is currently participating. If in person services are preferred, we create plans with the schools to adhere to COVID-19 protocols for social distancing, masking, and other procedures.

Forming relationships with the schools was crucial during the 2020-2021 school year due to online learning. Staff engaged with school contacts virtually within the first two weeks of school.

Although the pandemic has subsided and services have mainly returned to being delivered in person, should future telehealth services be needed this document describes the best practices employed by program staff.



*Choose to Change® mentor at a group session.
Photo by Beking Media.*

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Should you wish to model a program informed by the Choose to Change® model, please email David Williams at drwilliams@YAPinc.org or dev@YAPinc.org.

This document was created in partnership with the University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab, Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)™, and Brightpoint.

If you are interested in receiving training and curriculum materials in YAP™’s model, please email dev@YAPinc.org.

If you are interested in receiving training and the curriculum for the SPARCS model, please contact: Mandy Habib, Psy.D at drmshahib@gmail.com.

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