

FSM Community Collaborative: The Life Skills Domain

Wayne County Community College District, November 9th, 2016

Theme for the Year: Success in All Life Domains. FSM Community Collaboratives grew from this idea.

Life Skills: Small things we may take for granted where someone taught us something, we had a chance to try something, fail safely, try again.

Ericka Warren, WCCCD, Welcome to WCCCD. SMART program through YIT grant. Just launched this semester so currently developing but serving students. Wayne County has largest youth with experience in foster care population in Michigan, great need in community. Thank you to Park West Foundation, Trio, who have offered past and current support to students. 5 Campuses and a University Center. Service over 70,000 students.

5 campus support programs in 2012, now 16 programs. WC3 and Lake Michigan College

Welcome from **Ann Jefferson**, Annie E. Casey. Michigan is largest MYOI site. Michigan has over 400 Opportunity Passport sites. Michigan is one of the “stars” of MYOI.

Life Skills Domain Overview: (see ppt).

Abilities we need to effectively navigate through every day living. Proactive problem solving, time management, organization of self and others, healthy eating/living. Things that will be helpful for students in activating their success.

Exposure Gaps for youth with experience in foster care due to lack of consistent adult support. Opportunity to learn and make mistakes safely through mastery of skills.

Commonalities for youth with experience in foster care:

- Limited help-seeking skills
- Limited self-advocacy skills
- Less opportunity for “healthy” risk taking.

Tips for increasing success in the life skills domain:

- Engage students as partners and experts
- Create reciprocal relationships
- Practice problem solving skills
- Help prioritize when multiple programs occur at once.
- Utilize the life domains framework to identify areas of struggle and thriving.

Panel Discussion

MD: Periscope welcome

Question 1: When you think of this life domain, how do you define it?

Andre: Life skills are what you need to survive

Ann: I have been interested in Life Skills since the 80's, before I worked for Casey I was director of child welfare in Indiana, it really bothered me that they didn't have more resources for youth turning 18 and aging out of foster care.

Ericka: It's really life navigation, it's not just designed for those who have experienced foster care. It's key to me that not only do I use life skills in my life, but I help others use life skills to achieve their goals. It's very important to be a support system for others, it's know-how, it's not always an innate thing, and sometimes we have to guide.

Rayshawn: I'm 21 years old, part of MYOI. Some of the foster care programs has really helped me with life skills. MYOI and YIT, vouchers. Some of the people through DHS really helped me out.

Jessica: How I define life skills, is pretty much everything you need in life.

MD: For the students, I would love for each of you to share one success story of life skills.

Andre: Advocating for myself and my needs.

Rayshawn: The opportunity I had to start college, I'm getting ready to graduate and I'm going into engineering at Wayne State or Western Michigan

Jessica: One of my life skills is actually public speaking. I actually won a business pitch.

MD: I want to highlight the variety of successes. Life skills are so critical in working towards your career and education goals, and succeeding as an entrepreneur / So our next question is, what are some challenges related to this d

Jessica: I keep coming up with the challenge of keeping a house. For me, I've moved every year for the past 5 years. It's really hard for me to keep a job and an education. I have finally settled down and I'm looking for employment now.

Rayshawn: Balancing school and work. I go to the tutors, and I don't sleep sometimes.

Andre: One challenge that I encountered would be mobility. I've had on and off challenges with getting back and forth, cars. I use public transportation.

MD: Problem-solving skills on the fly!

Ann: I was thinking about this from a policy standpoint. The challenge I was thinking about was young people in care often do not have the chance to practice life skills. I think the new normalcy and policies and legislations are going to go a long way with that. The work of the household, every day experiences, to make sure young people are learning.

Ericka: One of the challenges, basically informing service providers on the needs of our youth. Of course we have campus champions that support us, but trying to get the message across that information does not necessarily mean skill. One of the things that often comes up in conversation, just because the student has the information, does not mean they have the skills to activate it. Using the coaching model and trying to empower the youth, those are some of the challenges they face. They are not met with a warm invitation when they are seeking information.

MD: I love that line, information does not mean skill. Making information accessible and in ways that our students are naturally going towards, social media. Just because something is on a website does

not mean that it's accessible to young people. A couple of other things I heard just to underscore, Ann you talked about the opportunities or lack thereof of practicing these things in real time. Making sure you're not doing for, but doing with. This is something we see all the time, the challenge of balancing work, life, school, these very real spaces you're trying to navigate and activating sets of skills in each of these places. For us, it's actually working with you to problem solve.

MD: The next question we have is about resources. What are some of the resources that you have found to be helpful in learning life skills or teaching life skills?

Jessica: Honestly, MYOI has been a big help with this. Without MYOI I wouldn't be sitting here today, I wouldn't have had the chance to become who I am today.

Andre: Resource-wise, we do a lot of asset trainings and outings. I was able to introduce a supervisor in front of several hundred people. We have a financial training we do with MYOI with our educational planner. We do budgeting. Financial literacy. (MD: we talked a little bit about how that helped you, are there any specific resources you can talk about?) Yeah, as far as the budgeting goes, I am a frugal spender. Having someone be able to teach you to write it down. I need to work a little harder

Rayshawn: At the Wayne County MYOI, we do asset trainings and youth boards twice a month. Budgeting, credit, housing, living skills, scholarships. At the youth board we plan events, go over the budget, do fundraisers. **(MD: the opportunity to have leadership roles in MYOI)** yes.

Andre: We did a program called game called life, I was thinking the board game but it was interactive. They had different opportunities like entrepreneur, veteran, doctor, we got to choose our career. You have a packet that tells you all about your life and your budget and family. You have to choose a home and a car. It kind of gives you a visual on how life is. If you're not prepared you have to sell your assets. **(MD: there are things we don't think about, car payments, mortgage, you have to pay them. It might seem like you can afford luxuries...)**

Rayshawn: when the DHS office took us to Frankenmuth for a conference. I enjoyed the experience of going up there, and the speakers.

Jessica: This past September, my MYOI went to Kansas City for a memorial. It was my first time out of state, on a plane, in a hotel, at a conference. I never thought there was going to be so many people I got to introduce myself to, so many people from all over the world. Some of them didn't seem like they were going to be interesting but I went, and I actually got connected to all these people.

MD: Asset trainings have a lot of creativity, and provide a lot of opportunities. Ann and Ericka, what are some of these solutions?

Ericka: We know that exposure gaps are really common, developing soft skills...as far as external resources, we collaborate with Wayne State University. Working and collaborating with other organizations, being able to have our students get access to their resources. We have dual enrollment programs that also support housing. Other collaborations that provide resources. We support the student in helping them engage in going through whatever their situation is. We have a smart thinking program that is like online tutoring, we talk about time management, being able to work, go to school, have children.

Ann: Life Skills assessment, individualizing the approach to life skills can be so important. Independent living skills are developed gradually. What is the most useful way to teach these skills to

young people. The assessment is really meant to be a beginning to a conversation with the youth in developing these life skills. Sometimes you'll have someone rate themselves low in and their adult supporters actually rate them quite high. The Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, Your Money Your Goals.

MD: There are resources, trainings, toolkits, tangible skill building resources out there. Keys to financial Future Toolkit on the Jim Casey Youth.Org website. Free curriculum. Coaching model of how to work with youth with experience in foster care on Annie E. Casey website. Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment. People resources: often we forget how important it is to build social capacity. Skills that can be taught just through increasing number of supportive adults and professionals who are accessible.

Question from Audience--Bethany: We have talked a lot about amazing resources, is there something you wish you had gotten? For the professionals, are there areas you wish where there would be more opportunities in skill building?

Andre: More exposure of those skills. Not every kid gets to experience MYOI. So earlier exposure. **(MD: having other types of opportunities where they can learn those life skills)**

Rayshawn: Opportunities I would have liked to have had, I wasn't really thinking about them until someone told me about it. **(MD: great point, sometimes you don't know what you don't know. You have opportunities and you've taken advantage of them because they've been presented to you.)**

Ann: Indiana recently had a forum of young people, they used a survey to ask about what they liked, what they missed, what they would want to see. They listed a lot of activities, and then, it was NA, didn't get to do this, did get to do this...and then they published the data. The things you learn by participating in a music group or a sports team.

Ericka: Addressing the issue of transience, often times they have very diverse schedules, taking classes, working...as soon as they leave school they have other obligations. Having a variety of resources available to them. What I've found is a number of students who haven't self-identified, aren't using Pell grants...we reach out to those students, thinking about how to really have that information. Finding other ways students can have access. What are resources beyond that? One of the things I have encountered, youth who have aged out are the most engaged. I'm still going to help them because there is a need. It's finding that balance. We have limited resources, but those students still need supports too, the 18-21 population, and those beyond 21. Trying to find that balance of getting the information to them sooner, but also how do we assist those that are beyond that age.

MD: There's a lot of skill development that we as professionals have the opportunity to build, around effective communication. We have these resources but they're only as good as our ability to connect them to the students. We can send out e-mails with all sorts of information, but maybe students won't always read that. So what else can we do? Thinking about social media and technology. Improving those skills can be really important. We did have a question about asset training. What asset trainings would you like to see developed?

Andre: I would like to see one developed post-college, beyond college. Someone with a long career as a mentor. Push them beyond college.

MD: The need for coaching does not stop after you graduate from college.

Rayshawn: Credit scores, different ways to help build your credit scores, credit unions, getting a certain credit card that can help.

MD: That is an ongoing challenge with children in child welfare, their names being used for other people. Houses, jobs, look at credit. Education around credit is a great idea.