



Moving From Theory of Change to Action

*DCYF's commitment to children placed outside of their homes
2026*



Meet your presenters

Nicole Anthony

Marcella Taylor

Shana Burres

Hannah Van Veen

Regina McDougall



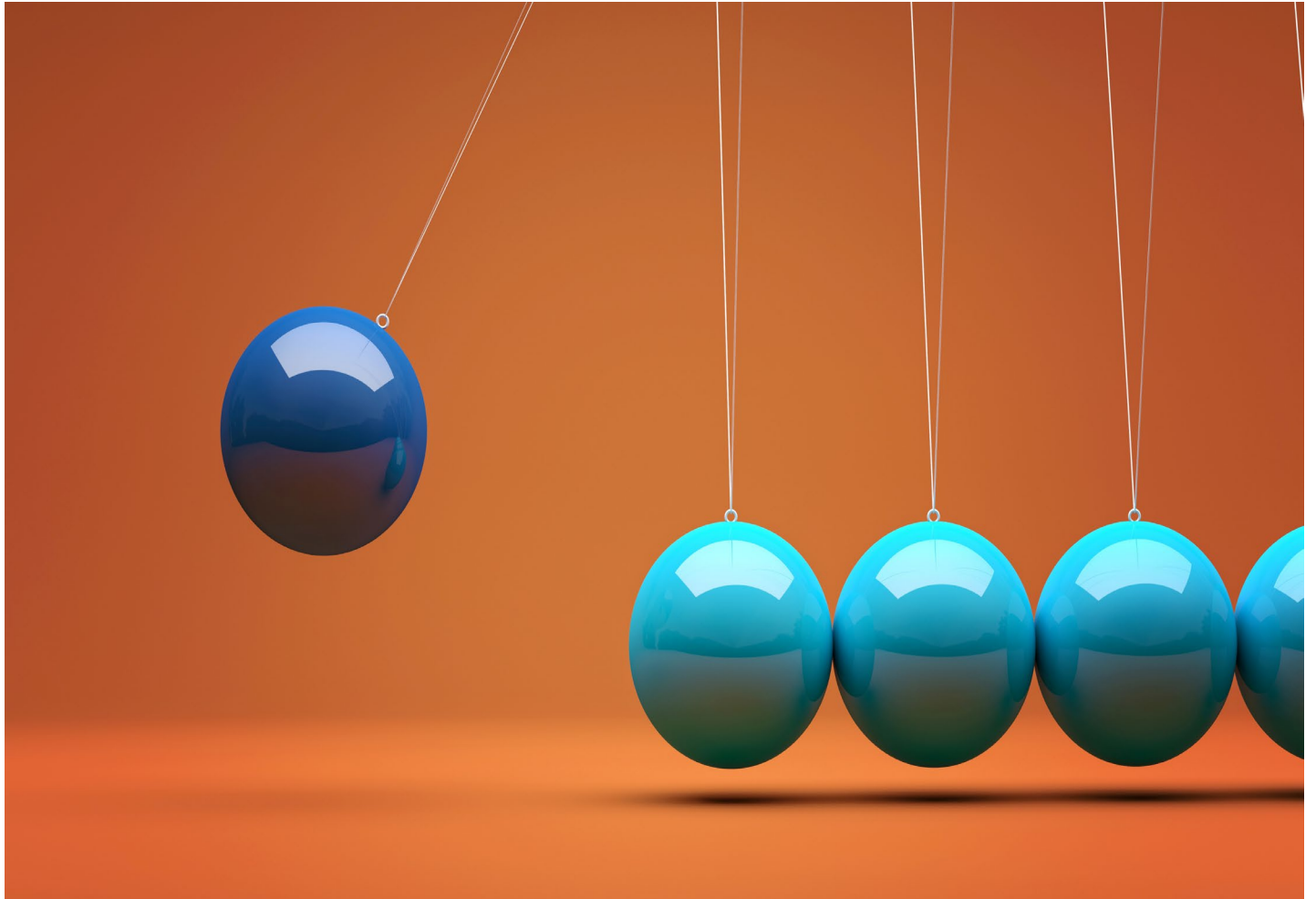
FLOW

Lead	Topic Activity	Time
Hannah	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions• Overview of session: Moving from Theory to Action	2:45
Panel	Theory of Change <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Values oriented• Connections focused• Culturally responsive and affirming care• Trauma informed• Continuum of placement options and supports• Individualized Assessment and Services• <i>Informed by Evidence</i>• <i>Outcomes Driven</i>	3:00
Regina	Breakout Tables <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action plans• Client lens	3:30
Hannah	How your input will be used <i>Gallery walk as exit</i>	4:00

Theory of Change | Starting Point

Road map for change that starts with where we are at and ends with where we want to be.

- Review data
- Feedback from those impacted by both the current and future state
- Review similar changes in other areas



The background features a dark grey/black field with two large, overlapping triangles. The top-left and bottom-left triangles are filled with a repeating geometric pattern of grey and black squares and triangles. The central triangle, pointing to the right, is filled with a textured yellow-green color. The text "From Theory to Action" is centered within this yellow-green triangle.

From Theory to Action



Foundational Commitment

Values Oriented

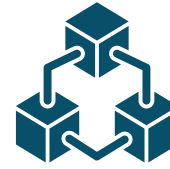
Connections focused



Care and Engagement

Culturally Responsive and Affirming Care

Trauma Informed



Responsive Resources

Continuum of placement options and supports

Individualized Assessment and Services



Measure and Inform

Informed by Evidence

Outcomes Driven

Problem Statement | System struggles to match children with housing to meet their unique needs

Input | enhanced process, guidance, resources to match and support

Outcome | Continuum of placement resources that support kin-first culture and family & community connection



Foundational Commitment Values Oriented

The care of young people, their caregivers, as well as the parents and relatives are guided by the core values of inclusion, respect, integrity, compassion, and transparency.

Actions

- Use inclusive and affirming language in all interactions
- Invite and prepare children, young people and families to participate in planning (Meetings, Service Planning and Treatment Planning)
- Explain decisions and answer questions about next steps, including transitions, clearly and consistently
- Respond with empathy and follow-through
- Document decisions in a way children, young people, families and caregivers can understand

Lived Expert Impact Statement

Youth | I wish my worker would have acknowledged my anxiety, grief, anger, and frustration of not being with my mother. That kind of validation would have made a difference in how I felt.

Parent | The worker and caregiver influence the way the child thinks about their parent, who is often a reflection of their own identity. This can lead to their own feelings of shame or confusion.

Caregiver | It would make a big difference if workers start with an affirmation like “we chose you for placement and will do what we need to support you”.



Healthy relationships lay the foundation for successful development and increased well-being. Significant relationships are promoted and supported, and community prioritized and nurtured.

Foundational Commitment Connections Focused

Actions

- Identify and document significant relationships
- Listen to young people about who they feel is significant to them
- Facilitate regular, meaningful contact with family, important people, community, and supports
- Encourage peer and community engagement
- Include relationship and connection goals into treatment and transition plans
- Support caregivers and families in relationship building strategies

Lived Expert Impact Statement | Youth

Youth | I had a caregiver that made special effort to include my dad, and it changed my life. He was included in family events, holidays and celebrations. They even celebrated his birthday. It made me realize how many people were there to take care of me.

Youth | My foster parent went out of her way to transport me to visits so she could connect with my parent and that meant a lot to me and my mother.

Youth | When I was a teenager, I was in a placement that I loved. My foster parent talked to my mother and reminded her that she wasn't being replaced. My mother felt seen and recognized in her position in my life.



Lived Expert Impact Statement | Parent and Caregiver

Parent | Truly supporting my child means seeing where I'm at and asking for insight about what they needed to make them as comfortable as they can be while in care. Things that might seem insignificant to you can make a big difference to them.

Caregiver | As a caregiver, I tried to have an open mind about people the child was familiar with, even if I thought those connections were inconsequential. Consider what those connections mean to the child – for example, a person who drove their bus or worked in a store they went to regularly.

Caregiver | Caregivers (kin or foster) can promote a parenting-team approach by proactively including the parents. Examples are to ask the school counselor to schedule a separate conference for the parent or prepare a pediatrician that both the caregiver and parent will be at the child's appointment.





Care and
Engagement
Culturally
Responsive and
Affirming Care

Placement resources work hard to recognize, affirm and respond respectfully to people of every race, ethnic background, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and faith.

Actions

- Use chosen names and pronouns
- Include cultural, affirming, and faith practices into daily care
- Provide interpretation or language access when needed
- Engage children, young people and families as key players in decision making
- Address discriminatory behavior immediately and appropriately

Lived Expert Impact Statement | Youth

Youth | Cultural differences are very confusing when you enter a new home. Small things can make a big difference in making a child comfortable. My first placement was with a white family. What made a difference for me was that my mother was allowed to come over and do my hair.

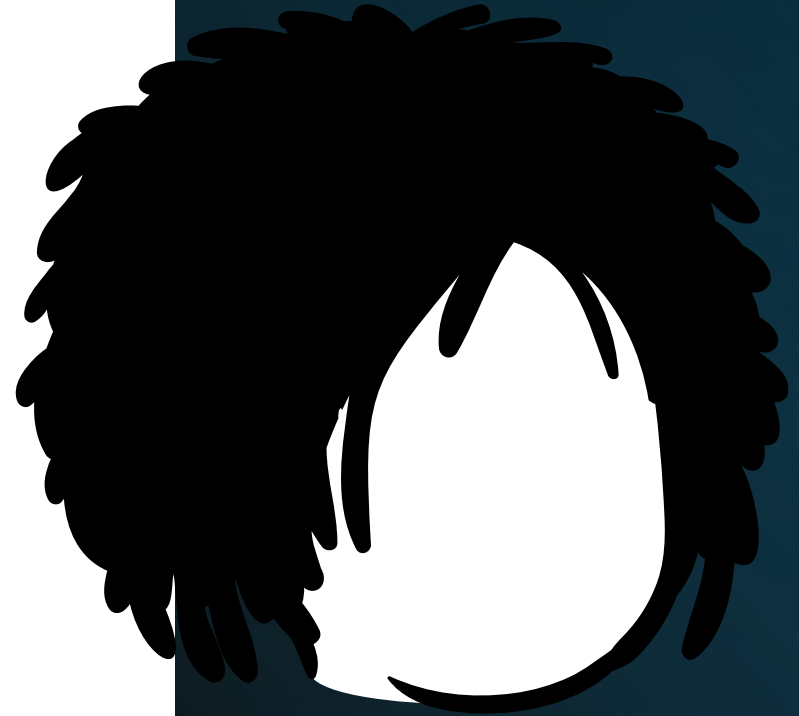
Youth | I'm still exploring my faith and what that looks like in my life. Questioning, or not agreeing, with the spiritual customs of the adults around me has made me subject to ridicule and harm. It feels difficult and unsafe to develop my own sense of faith when adults don't support my choice and how I treat my own spirit.



Lived Expert Impact Statement | Parent and Caregiver

Parent | You might be missing things about my kids and their needs and challenges and cultural and religious fit if you aren't taking my input and my family's input into consideration when deciding where my kids will go. My voice should be heard.

Caregiver | Asking me about my culture and values is a personal question and hard to respond to if we don't have rapport. Talk about this regularly as our connection becomes more familiar.





Care and Engagement Trauma Informed

Provide trauma informed environments and interventions to support ongoing recovery from traumatic experiences including the harm of removal and build on strengths.

Actions

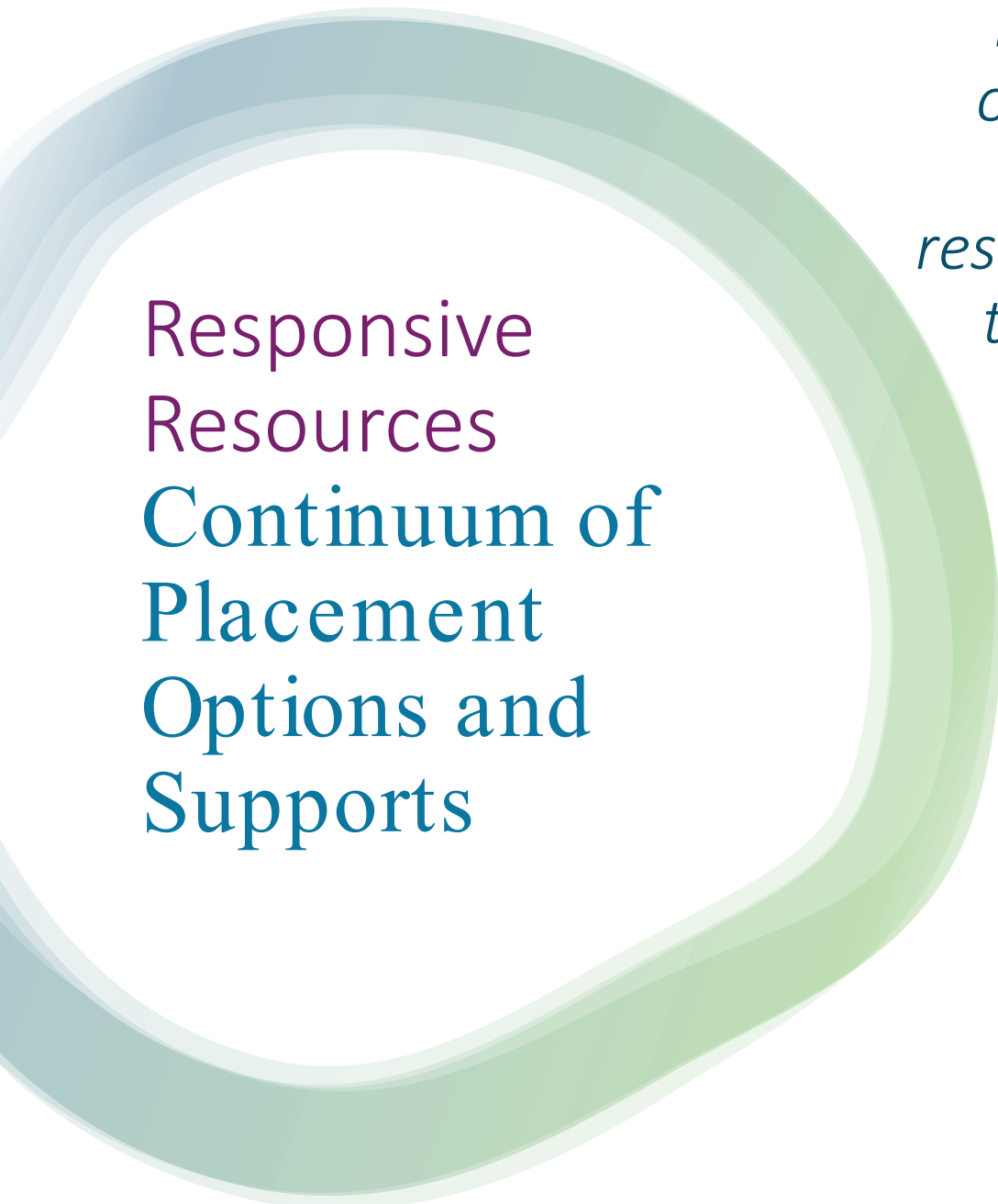
- Predictable routines, and clear expectations, developed with child and young person input, are outlined and shared
- De-escalation and non-punitive responses are used by caregivers and professionals
- Child and young person voice and choice is asked for and included in care decisions
- Strength-based documentation and language
- Provide individually informed accommodations for different needs and abilities.
- Initial and ongoing staff and caregiver training in trauma informed practices

Lived Expert Impact Statement

Youth | I was terrified in foster care and thought if I did something wrong, I'd get in trouble and/or have to move. Nothing made me feel safe.

Caregiver | I was afraid to make a mistake. I knew that the child in my care could be removed at any time. There are no higher stakes. I am doing my best to care for them, and you have the power to remove them at any time.





Responsive
Resources
Continuum of
Placement
Options and
Supports

DCYF will have a continuum of placement options and provide supports to caregivers allowing young people to be in the least restrictive and most supportive environment so they may thrive while in out of home care.

Actions

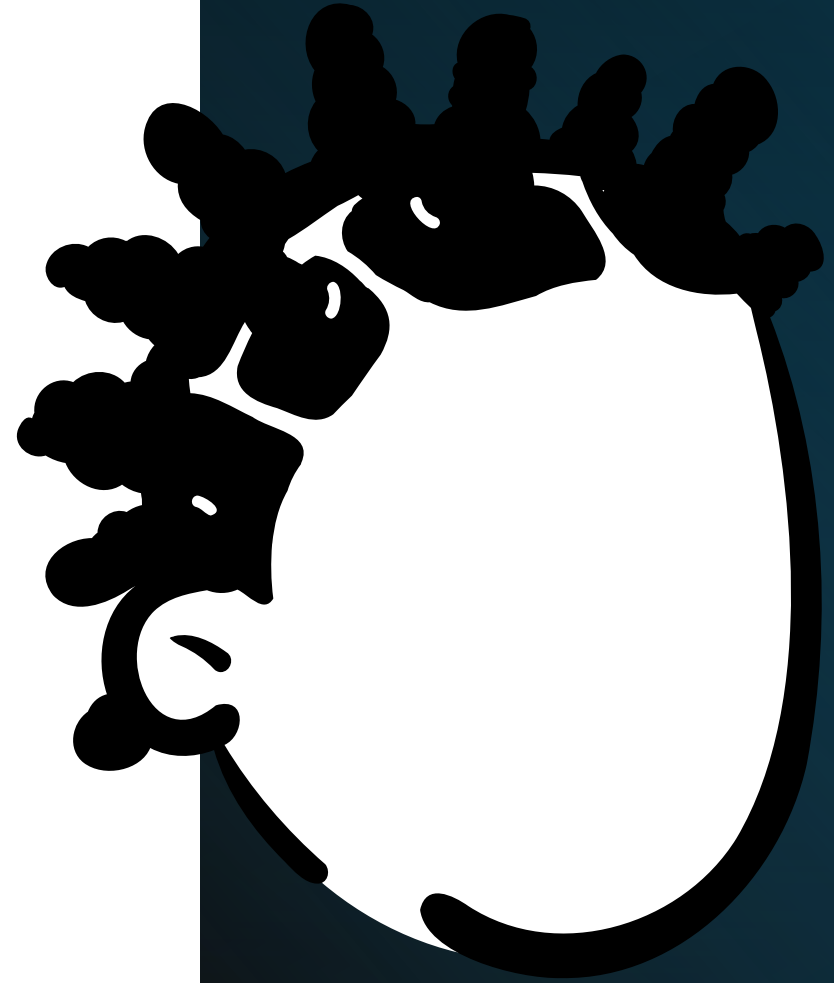
- Caregiver/provider training and support when needed
- Therapeutic supports, ongoing assessment, and adjustment of supports based on the child or young person's needs
- Intentional placement planning and preparation
- Increased or decreased supports happen without placement disruption
- Professionals for different programs and systems work together

Lived Expert Impact Statement

| Youth

Youth | My placement change was abrupt. I was in a home one day and in another the next. No one told me where I was going. I didn't have a say or even pack my own things. I didn't even get to say goodbye. The hardest part was starting over.

Youth | My whole foster care experience was about everyone making decisions about me without me. It felt dishonest. I would have felt more confident if I was included in discussions and decisions about where I lived.



Lived Expert Impact Statement | Parent and Caregiver

Parent | When transitions are rushed or unexpected, then kids struggle to adjust. In my case, they acted out a lot when they were first returned to my care. It seemed to everyone that having the return home should be a relief, but it was a hard time.

Caregiver | It is complicated when you don't know how long the placement will be and the worker cannot give any guarantees since decisions are out of their hands.



Responsive Resources Individualized Assessment and Services

Developmentally appropriate assessments lead to individualized service plans that are created with input from those who are impacted by the plan.

Actions

- Use age and developmentally appropriate tools
- Prepare child, young person, family and caregivers for meetings and support their participation
- Document child, young person, family and caregiver input in shared decisions
- Regularly review and update treatment plans and goals with child, young person, family and caregivers
- Include cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and trauma informed in plans
- Accommodate different levels of ability for young people and families

Lived Expert Impact Statement

Youth | It felt like my worker relied only on what my caregiver said. I wish they would have checked in other ways to see if my placement was stable like school and grades, interest in activities, or withdrawing from my friends.

Caregiver | When you grow up in dysfunction, you don't see it because it's all you know. Our worker helped me know what is and isn't safe for the child in my care by being clear and articulate about the safety threat and suggested ways for me to provide trauma-informed care.



Measure and Inform Outcomes Driven

Key well-being and programmatic measures, co-determined with impacted partners, are measured to ensure that we are reaching standards and outcomes.

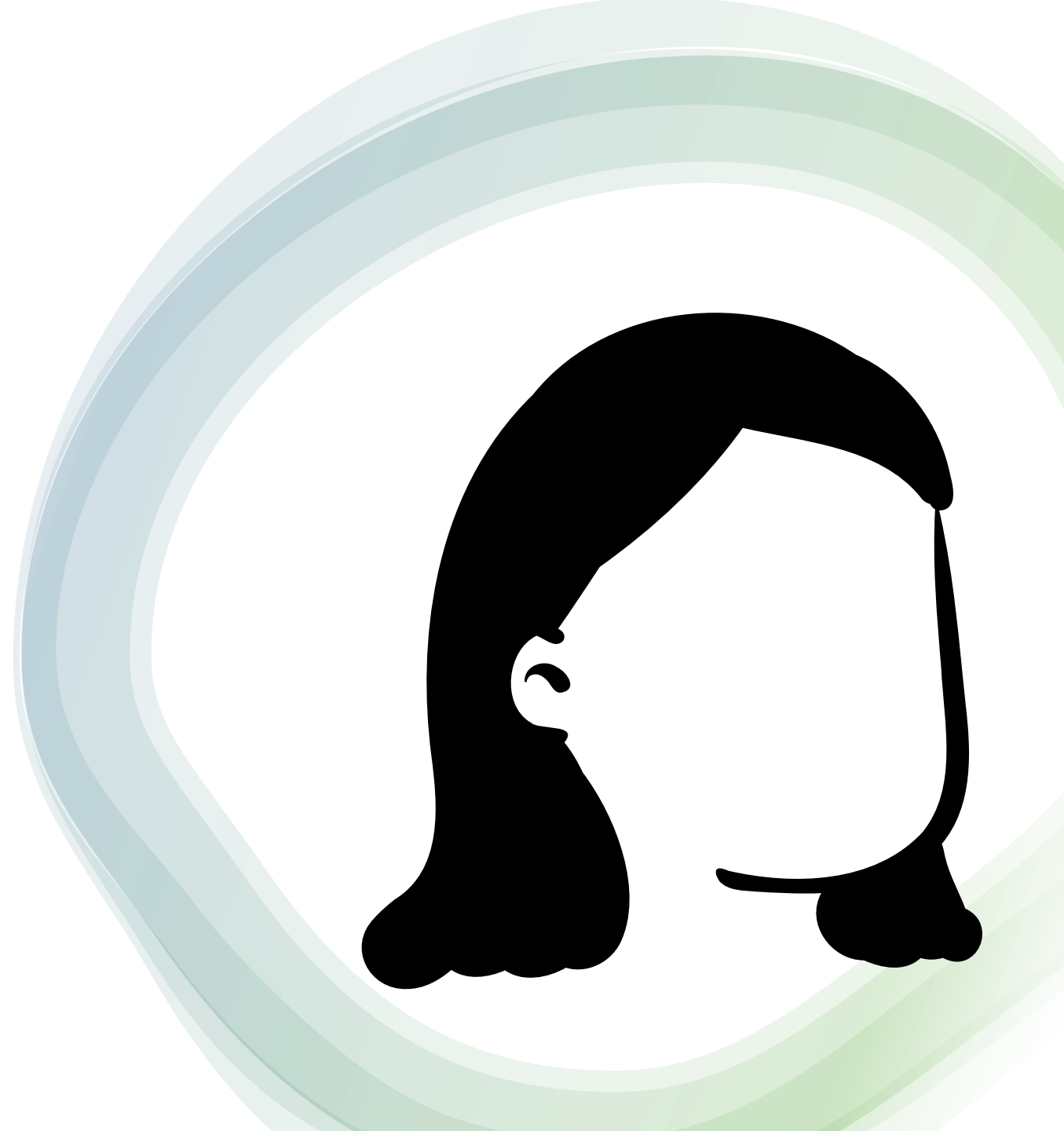
Actions

- Partner informed selection of metrics
- Regular data review and feedback loops
- Clear performance benchmarks with emphasis on quality services
- Transparent sharing of results
- Continuous quality of improvement process

Staff Impact Statement

Staff | Collaboration with caregivers, families, young people, and agencies is central to providing quality supports and ensuring programs meet the **ACTUAL** needs of young people and families.

Staff | I do my best work when I'm collaborating, working with partners, and can implement ideas and strategies from those most impacted. It's the best feeling to work with a group where we accomplish shared learning, growth, and **MEANINGFUL CHANGE**.



Measure and Inform Informed by Evidence

The levels of care for young people, as well as the strategies to support young people and caregivers, are informed by the best available research and other relevant sources of information.

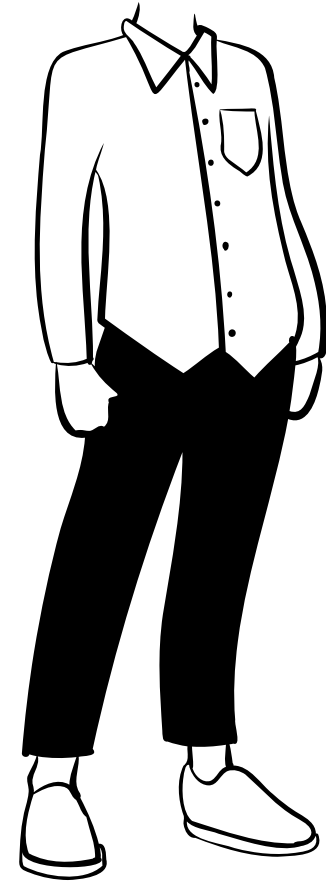
Actions

- Use evidence informed models and tools
- Integrate lived experience and young person voice
- Ongoing training aligned with current research
- Review outcomes and emerging best practices
- Adapt supports without increasing restrictiveness unnecessarily

Staff Impact Statement

Staff | A clear and grounded understanding around current best practice, and what is relevant for young people being served, helps me to provide **meaningful and impactful support**.

Staff | It is my job to provide the **“right support at the right time”** for our young people and their families. Without up-to-date practice information and data, we could be handing out sunglasses to someone desperate for an umbrella.



Taking Theory to Action

1. Values oriented
2. Connections focused
3. Culturally responsive and affirming care
4. Trauma informed
5. Continuum of placement options and supports
6. Individualized Assessment and Services





Why this
really
matters



Thank You

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Table 1 | Share out notes

Table 2 | Share out notes

Table 3 | Share out notes

Table 4 | Share out notes

Table 5 | Share out notes

Table 6 | Share out notes