

The Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) **User Protocol: *What do I need to do to use the YCA?***

Step 1: Conceptualize the department or agency's strengths-based vision and mission. Administrators or other leadership need to believe in a strengths-based approach and support its adoption for the organization. Share this philosophy with as many stakeholder groups as possible (such as judges, schools, parents, etc.) early in the process. Consider who in the agency or organization will be expected to use the YCA or other strengths-based practices, and whether it is fitting to begin implementation with a pilot group of volunteers.

Step 2: Review existing forms and guidelines related to case plan development and determine where in your system the YCA fits. Assess whether current forms support inclusion of strengths and what adjustments will need to be made to them. If possible, incorporate the YCA into your existing assessment paperwork and data management systems.

Step 3: Train administrators, supervisors, and line staff in a strengths-based approach and philosophy. Individuals at all levels of the organization, including those staff who will eventually use the YCA, need to have a basic understanding of strengths approaches to working with youth and families (NPC can assist with this training or provide resources or ideas for other trainers).

Step 4: Establish working groups/team meetings to provide a forum for staff and supervisors to support each other during the change to a strengths-based approach and as a place to discuss questions and problem-solve challenges. Recognize that staff may already look for and use strengths, but that the YCA – like any assessment tool – makes those efforts more formal and consistent. These groups can be used as a place for ongoing refresher meetings and for staff to share ideas and successes with each other.

Step 5: Train staff and supervisors in the YCA and the supplemental materials that are available. Download training guide materials from the NPC Web site or order training binders from NPC. Hire trainers/facilitators: Staff from NPC and/or staff from agencies that are already using the YCA can assist in the training and implementation process.

Step 6: Train staff and supervisors in how to take information from the YCA and use it in case/service planning and monitoring. NPC can facilitate this process and has ideas in the training materials. Part of this process is making sure the system or organization allows staff to be creative about identifying new or different community resources to support youth and their families and their particular interests and strengths.

Step 7: Create and maintain a written list of strengths-based community resources that can be used in case and service plans to build on youth and family strengths and interests (see handout in the YCA Training Manual for ideas).