



Adolescent Brain Development Training Resources

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Available from NASW

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has developed training resources that will give child welfare workers, social workers, foster parents and others who work with older youth critical information about how the adolescent brain develops.

Many people do not realize that the brains of youth continue to develop until they are in their mid-twenties. Understanding how adolescent brain development influences adolescent thinking and behavior can be applied to practice – to work with adolescents to acquire new skills, decrease impulsive behavior and poor life decisions.

The knowledge professionals acquire through NASW's [**Integrating Adolescent Brain Development into Child Welfare Practice with Older Youth**](#) will help older youth - especially those in foster care or who have been involved in the child welfare system – obtain the skills they need to overcome past trauma and become successful adults. On the [**Integrating Adolescent Brain Development into Child Welfare**](#) webpage, viewers will find background

information about brain development as well as links to a detailed [13 module curriculum](#), [handouts](#), [PowerPoint slides](#) and [audio](#) and [video recordings](#).

The curriculum will help users understand how our own current beliefs and attitudes about adolescence impact our work and to consider socio-cultural assumptions and implicit biases when working with young people. The activities explore the impact of trauma and racism and provide guidance on how to employ effective practices to help young people understand their experiences and to heal and grow. Embedded in the materials are strategies for engaging in youth-adult partnerships and promotion of positive youth development.

These materials, all available for free from NASW, can be used for self-study, or as educational, training, or continuing education materials. Beyond child welfare, these can be a resource for professionals who provide mental health and health care services to adolescents; those who work in schools or juvenile justice facilities; and social work faculty who are training new generations of social workers to work with older youth.

The curriculum and related materials were developed in keeping with the Casey Foundation's [Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's](#) commitment to "Train and equip practitioners to understand the role of trauma and racism, and employ effective practices to help young people understand their experiences and develop effective strategies for healing and growth."

Each year more than 23,000 children age out of the foster care system in the United States. Many have missed the opportunity to have stable schooling or friendships or lack family support. Odds are higher that they will become incarcerated, become single parents, not

complete college, or have trouble finding stable jobs and housing. Unfortunately, while in foster care, youth often do not develop long-lasting permanent connections and are not given growth opportunities to take risks, accept responsibilities or make important decisions that help to shape a young person. This, coupled with a lack of resources, leaves young people unprepared to go out on their own. Opportunities to experience normal adolescent experiences are critical to development.

NASW is providing these resources so we can help change the trajectory of outcomes for older youth in care and who are aging out of foster care by applying what we learn from science and integrating those findings into child welfare practice.

To learn more about adolescent brain development, visit the [curriculum website](https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Child-Welfare/Child-Welfare-Professional-Development/Integrating-Adolescent-Brain-Development) at <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Child-Welfare/Child-Welfare-Professional-Development/Integrating-Adolescent-Brain-Development>

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