

# Applying a Positive Youth Development Framework to Emerging Adult Justice

September 27, 2019

Advancing Juvenile Justice Reform in Vermont Conference

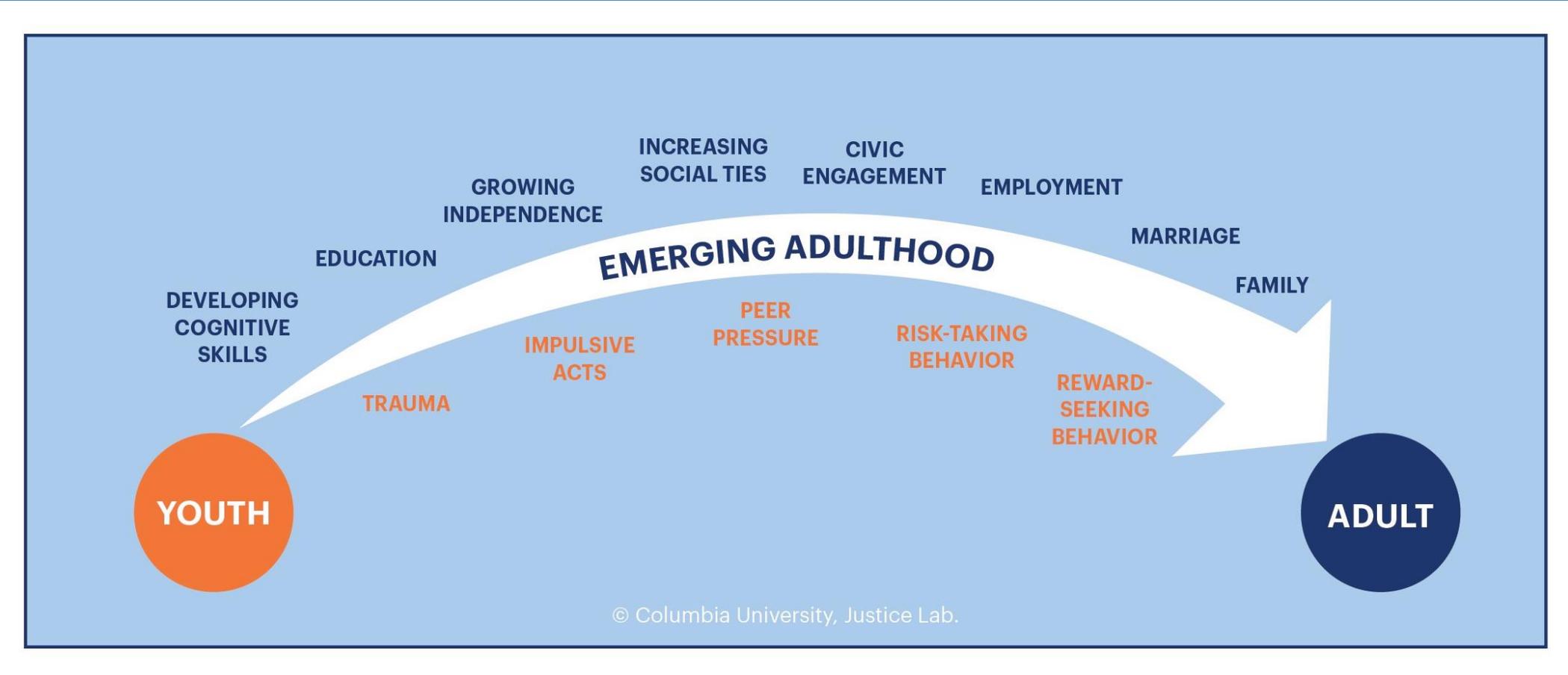
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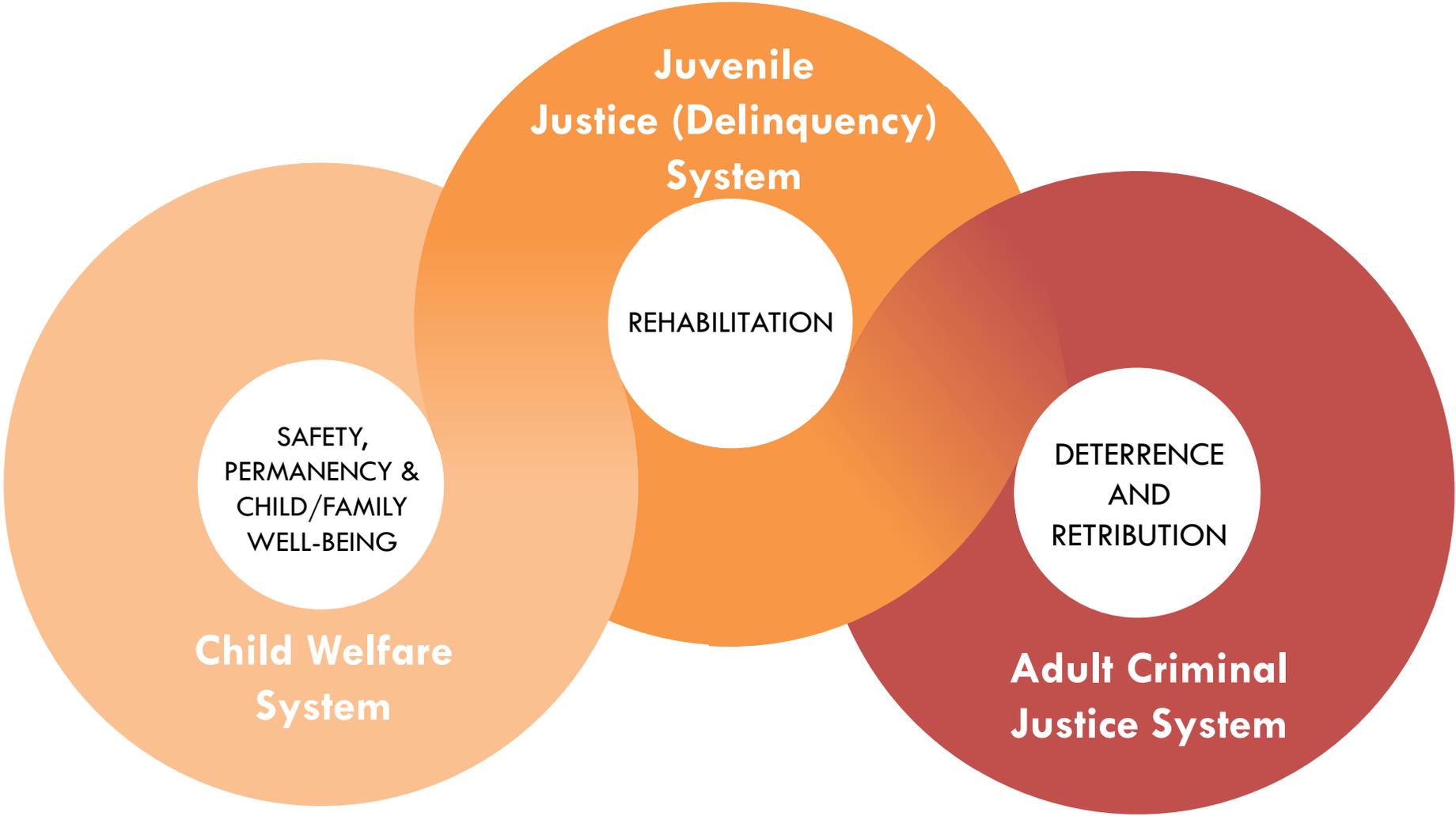
# Sneak Preview

- Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework used to increase public safety
- Key PYD areas for emerging adults
- Example of PYD in action

# Key developmental factors and milestones along the pathway to adulthood



# Youth may navigate multiple systems along the way



# Positive Youth Development

- ALL young people can develop positively when connected to the right mix of:
  - **opportunities**
  - **supports**
  - **positive roles**
  - **relationships**
- ALL youth need a **wide range of pro-social experiences** to practice and demonstrate competency and to embrace his or her responsibilities and value to the larger community.

**Justice system traditionally focuses on **problems** and **deficits**;**

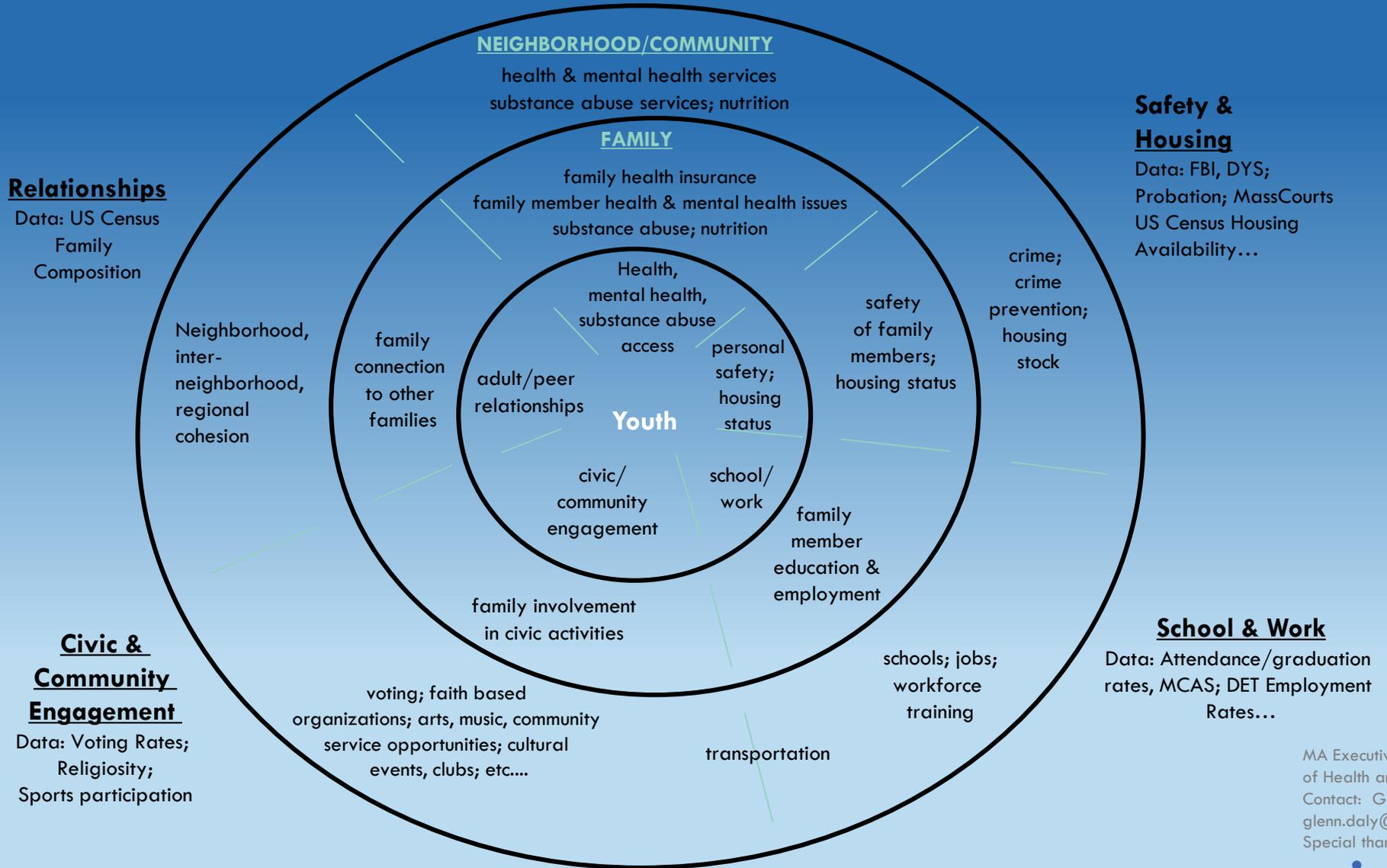
**PYD focuses on **protective factors** and building new **social assets****

Butts, Jeffrey A., Gordon Bazemore, & Aundra Saa Meroe (2010) *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*.

# PYD Framework

## Health & Mental Health

Data: Medicaid, DPH, DMH health indicators



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Special thanks to America's Promise

[eajustice.org](http://eajustice.org)

# Positive Youth Development – 5 domains

Physical & Mental Health

Nurturing/Positive Relationships

Safe Places to Live and Learn

Educational and Economic Opportunity

Structured Activities & Civic Participation

# Sample of key issues for emerging adults

Education, Employment, Family, Health, Housing

# Education

- In the general public, >70% of males ages 18-24 have at least a H.S. diploma or GED
- Among incarcerated males ages 18-24 , <20% have at least a H.S. diploma or GED
- Two-thirds (68 percent) of African-American male high school dropouts have been imprisoned by the time they reached age 35.
- Impact? Over the past four decades, the earnings of young men without college education have declined significantly.

# Employment

- Emerging Adults are very likely to be “disconnected,” meaning they are out of both school and work.
- According to the most recent available census data, the unemployment rate for 16-19-year-olds in Vermont was 13.5%, almost twice the rate of those 20-24 years old (7.2%) and more than three times the rate of those 25 and over (ranging from 1.4% to 3.7%).
- According to 2016-2017 data, only 38% of 18- and 19-year-olds in Vermont were employed.
- Steady employment, in the context of a stable family, facilitates normative transition towards desistance from lawbreaking.

# Family

- Greater degree of independence from family than younger adolescents but still financially/practically dependent
- For this age, “family” includes intimate partners, older siblings, mentors, grandparents, coaches, etc.
- In 2007, 44.1% of young adults aged 24 or younger in state prisons were estimated to be parents.

# Mental Health

- EA is age when many mental health issues present themselves
- The first onset of schizophrenia, for example, usually occurs in late adolescence and emerging adulthood (early 20's).
- Youth mental health services cut off; adult services may be inappropriate/non-responsive to EA mental health needs or EAs may not meet accessibility requirements

# Housing

- Research shows that nationally, **1 in 10** young adults, or **3.5 million young people ages 18-25** experience homelessness in a year, **73%** for one month or more.
- Includes: sleeping outdoors, in emergency shelters, in cars, or couch surfing.
- At greatest risk are young people who are LGBTQ+, Hispanic, African American, unmarried parents, or do not have GED/H.S. diploma
- Parents are no longer legally required to house them.

See Lisa Pilnik, *Implementing Change: Addressing the Intersections of Juvenile Justice and Youth Homelessness for Young Adults*

# Example: PYD in Action

Diversion

# Example: Diversion for peer assault case

## Traditional Approach

- Focus: Fix problems
- Anger management
- Drug Testing
- School attendance
- Curfew
- Community services
- No association with peer

## PYD Approach

- Focus: Assets & relationships
- Learn woodworking from community program
- Community elder mentor (outside JJ)
- Assist connection to health services
- Restorative approach



*"We're encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue."*

# Questions and Discussion

# Focus on building the EA's strengths through relationships

“Positive youth development (PYD) is an approach to working with youth that emphasizes **building on youths' strengths** and providing **supports** and **opportunities** that will help them achieve goals and transition to adulthood in a productive, healthy manner.” - U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Servs. Definition of PYD

<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/positive-youth-development/index.html>