

# Coaching to Support Life Beyond Emancipation

*An Evaluation of Beyond Emancipation's Creative,  
Connected, Resourceful & Whole Model*



Prepared for  
**Beyond Emancipation**

Prepared by  
**Informing Change**

**JUNE 2015**

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# Preface

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all of the Beyond Emancipation staff for their thoughtful input and guidance on the design and implementation of the evaluation as well as their reflection on and application of evaluation findings. We'd also like to thank the coaches who have helped Beyond Emancipation design and implement the Creative, Connected, Resourceful and Whole model and who also provided input into the evaluation. Finally, we would especially like to thank all the youth who have provided invaluable feedback about their coaching experience through interviews, focus groups and surveys.

For more information about the Creative, Connected, Resourceful and Whole model, contact Beyond Emancipation's Director of Coaching, Leslie Brown, MPA, CPC at [lbrown@beyondemancipation.org](mailto:lbrown@beyondemancipation.org).

## ABOUT INFORMING CHANGE

Informing Change is a strategic consulting firm dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and impact of people who are working to build a better world. We help our clients understand the change they want to create and support them in making informed decisions about their existing and future strategies.

With a commitment to continuous learning and growth, we draw on our diverse content knowledge and deep research and evaluation skills to identify, collect, analyze and share information with our clients. Our data-informed services include:

- Evaluation;
- Strategy Development; and
- Applied Research.

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## INTRODUCTION

Beyond Emancipation (B:E) was founded in 1995 by a group of Alameda County Child Welfare social workers to provide emancipated youth with more flexible services than the County was able to offer.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, it began offering a wider and more comprehensive range of services to help ensure that transition-aged youth in the child welfare system have the support they need to move into adulthood. Over the past 20 years, B:E has grown into an organization with a staff of 30 who provide a comprehensive set of programs and services for youth in the areas of: housing, education, employment, transition services, and information and referral.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 800 youth are served each year, some of whom come to B:E for drop-in services or resources, and about 200 who participate in B:E's more intensive programming, such as the group coaching programs described on page 3.

In 2010, B:E, under the leadership of Rick McCracken, Executive Director and Kate Durham, Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives, began exploring how they could move from a *transactional* model of connecting youth with services and resources to a *transformational* approach that would empower youth and set them up for a healthy, productive and connected adulthood. At the same time, a longitudinal study on foster youth, conducted by the University of Chicago, was released. It showed that too many youth aging out of foster care suffered negative outcomes (see box)—echoing the concerns B:E had already been witnessing.<sup>3</sup> In order to improve the trajectory of transition-age youth, B:E began to explore strategies to enhance their programs and services to better equip youth for the future. They decided to make this shift by applying coaching to their direct social service work with youth and within the organization more broadly.<sup>4</sup>

### OUTCOMES OF EMANCIPATED FOSTER YOUTH: THE MIDWEST STUDY

The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth was a longitudinal study conducted from 2002–2009 with 602 emancipated foster youth. When the former foster youth reached the ages of 23 or 24, the study found the following:

- Almost a quarter (24%) of former foster youth did not have a high school diploma or GED and only 3% had a 4-year college degree or higher
- Over a third (37%) had either couch surfed or been homeless since exiting the foster care system
- Less than half (48%) were currently employed
- Of those who were working, the overall mean annual income was \$12,064 (median \$8,000)
- Almost half (48%) had experienced economic hardship (e.g., unable to afford rent or utilities, eviction)
- Over a third (34%) had not maintained a positive relationship with a caring adult since they were 14 years old

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<sup>1</sup> Originally the organization was called the Independent Living Skills Program Auxiliary. In 2006, the name was changed to Beyond Emancipation.

<sup>2</sup> B:E serves youth ages 16 to 24 years; however, the majority of these youth are 18 to 21 years. Eligibility for services varies after youth turn 21 years old.

<sup>3</sup> Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Lee, J.S., Raap, M. (2010). Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Ages 23 and 24. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Retrieved April 20, 2015. [http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest\\_Study\\_Age\\_23\\_24.pdf](http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest_Study_Age_23_24.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> In addition, at the same time that B:E was introducing coaching at the organization, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB12) was passed; this law extended state assistance to young adults living in the California foster care system from 18 years old until their 21st birthday. Many social service agencies and nonprofits began to examine their support to figure out the most appropriate approach to help older transition aged youth. B:E was excited to be in a creative process that could offer alternative approaches to the field at the time.

While researching different ways to begin incorporating coaching while delivering services, B:E’s leadership met a group of coaches who had recently completed the Coaching and Philanthropy Project. This was an initiative<sup>5</sup> to promote the use of coaching to enhance nonprofit leadership and organizational effectiveness, including the number of culturally appropriate coaches committed to working within the nonprofit sector. As an outgrowth of these efforts, B:E leaders and the coaches began talking about taking coaching beyond benefitting nonprofit leaders and staff to support their clients—transition-aged foster youth. These youth have experienced and survived crises. They lack access to opportunities to develop important life skills, supports and abilities to successfully transition to adulthood. B:E leaders recognized that coaching could be a particularly effective strategy for this group. Embracing coaching’s fundamental belief that everyone is inherently creative, connected, resourceful and whole, B:E sought to put into practice a coaching strategy that:

- Cultivates qualities of confidence, curiosity, balance, fulfillment and action;
- Assumes that one’s past does not determine one’s present or future opportunities;
- Works in collaborative, rather than authoritarian, relationships; and
- Focuses on identifying solutions, rather than on analyzing problems.

## WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is a teaching, training and empowerment strategy to support the achievement of personal and professional goals. A coach helps someone question their current frames of reference and perceive their current environments from new angles. A coach partners with someone to create alignment between their values and choices.

*“We believe that youth are ‘Creative, Connected, Resourceful and Whole’ and that youth themselves hold the answers and solutions to building their pathway to productive adulthood.”*

– B:E Coaching Statement

## THE CREATIVE, CONNECTED, RESOURCEFUL & WHOLE MODEL

Determining how to apply coaching in a direct service model took time. It required B:E leaders to facilitate a culture shift and encourage staff to approach their work with youth in a new way. Over five years of co-creation, creative application and adaptation, B:E developed the Creative, Connected, Resourceful and Whole (CCRW) model (see page 6 for the evolution of this model). The core of the CCRW model is embodied by the coaching statement above, along with four key principles that guide B:E’s work, which believes that:

### WATCH YOUTH & STAFF TALK ABOUT CCRW



Youth with experience in the foster care and probation system are...

- **CREATIVE:** Leaders with the potential to dream big and design a life of their own choosing
- **CONNECTED:** Core members of the larger inter-connected community
- **RESOURCEFUL:** Individuals with the skills, experience and talents to move from surviving to thriving
- **WHOLE:** Resilient individuals who can transform their lives and the lives of others

<sup>5</sup> The Coaching and Philanthropy Project, was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Harnisch Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

As shown in Exhibit 1 below, the CCRW model involves a multi-faceted approach that incorporates coaching, permanency, youth development and crisis management. Coaching is applied in different ways and at different times depending on youth’s unique situations. While at first the coaching is primarily staff-led, over time, responsibility for the coaching sessions shifts to youth; eventually, they are expected to drive the meeting agenda and process. Within the CCRW model, coaching is applied in four characteristic ways:

- **Traditional coaching** techniques are used by staff in one-on-one settings to help youth set goals, be accountable to those goals and build their confidence. Through one-on-one coaching, B:E staff meet with youth to talk through their goals, plans and dreams. The individualized coaching is intended to support youth as they identify their own strengths and skills and help them take ownership over their actions and future goals.
- **Coaching focused on building permanent relationships** is used with youth who are part of B:E’s groups, such as the housing groups (see box), to intentionally create a space for youth to build relationships with their peers and build a community. Youth participate in group coaching sessions focused on various topics, such as resolving conflict, navigating crises, communicating with others (e.g., face-to-face, social media), navigating parenting, wellness and self-care, and relationships.
- **Coaching for youth development and skill building** is a technique used in B:E’s workforce development and education coaching groups. Youth participate in skill-building workshops with their peers. Together with integrated coaching sessions throughout the curriculum, these workshops help youth gain confidence, build relationships, support professionalism and work toward goals. These groups typically meet over a two- to six-month period with youth attending coaching sessions approximately eight times in groups and additional one-on-one meetings with B:E staff.
- **Coaching to manage crises** has also been added to the CCRW model as an approach to help stabilize youth who are experiencing crises while simultaneously supporting them through coaching. [Crisis-informed coaching](#) addresses the youth’s presenting crises, focuses on immediate solutions and supports them to begin long-term goal setting.

**B:E’S COACHING GROUPS**




-  **Workforce Development** – In partnership with Alameda County, the New Beginnings Fellowship Program provides youth with on-the-job training and mentorship to expose them to the County workforce, and build skills needed for a professional career. In addition, the Gaining Resources and Opportunities for Work (GROW) is a personal health and wellness culinary training program designed to prepare youth to work in the culinary field.
-  **Education** – The b2b Learning Community is a two-year program designed to support former foster youth to enter and be successful at Laney Community College and to prepare them for a satisfying and rewarding career.
-  **Housing** – Community Housing provides safe and secure community housing while residents work and go to school. There is one house for young women, one for young men and one for women who are pregnant and parenting mothers. Host Housing serves youth with an adult who can provide them a room in their home as well as a supportive, mentoring relationship.

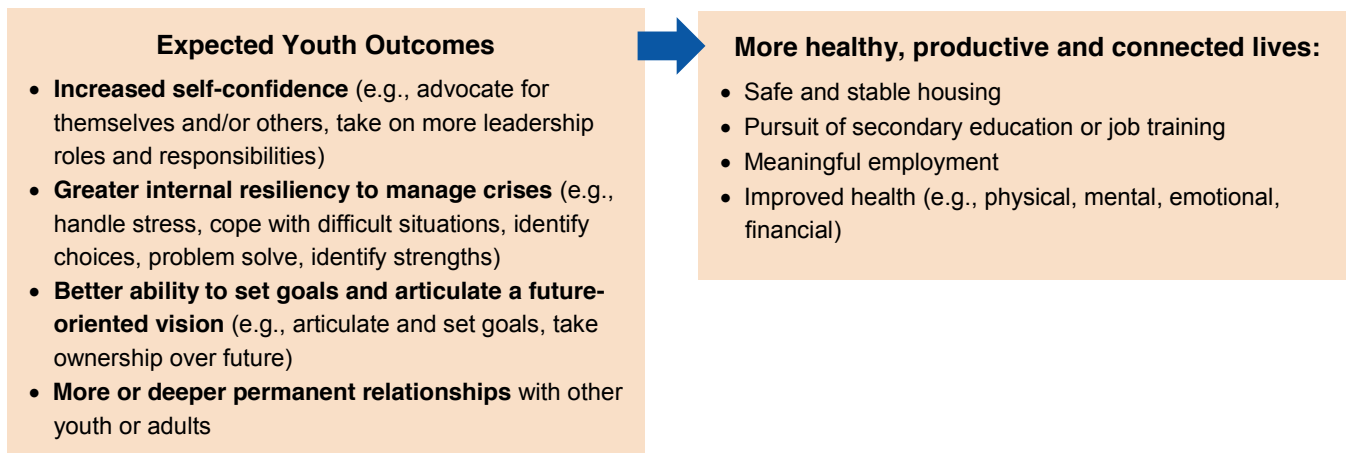
Exhibit 1  
CCRW Model



As a result of implementing the CCRW model, B:E hopes to enhance transition-aged youth’s confidence, develop their internal resiliency to manage difficult situations or crises, think toward the future and set goals and develop more permanent relationships. As a result of these outcomes, B:E anticipates that youth will more successfully transition from the foster care or probation system into healthy, productive and connected adulthood (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2

### Expected Outcomes of the CCRW Model Among Youth



To implement the CCRW model, all B:E staff receive information and training about key coaching skills (see box), which they are encouraged to use with youth as well as each other in their professional relationships. They have various learning opportunities and trainings to practice and refine their coaching skills, including:

- **All-staff coaching trainings** on an on-going basis throughout the year;
- **Monthly coaching clinics** where staff work together to practice and refine their coaching skills;
- **Weekly intensive coaching hours** when staff check-in with the Director of Coaching to ask coaching questions or receive coaching themselves;
- A variety of **learning communities** that focus on enhancing specific types of coaching skills (crisis-informed coaching, group coaching, coaching supervision) as well as introduce new staff to the CCRW model and B:E’s coaching culture; and
- **Coaching tools and resources**, which the Director of Coaching provides for staff to use in their coaching with youth.

**CCRW’S SIX STEPS & TWELVE SKILLS**

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**Step 1: Create a Safe Coaching Space**

- Take a coaching stance
- Hold the person’s agenda by focusing on the person’s needs

**Step 2: Get Curious**

- Ask empowering questions that evoke self-reflection
- Display curiosity and be open

**Step 3: Support Awareness**

- Notice and articulate what is happening
- Mirror and reflect back what coach is hearing

**Step 4: Encourage Exploration**

- Use all skills and tools to adaptively support person

**Step 5: Support Application of New Discovery**

- Acknowledge the person’s current situation and contributions
- Validate the person’s strengths, contributions or impact
- Brainstorm to generate ideas, new possibilities or strategies
- Champion and encourage the person’s strengths
- Interrupt to keep the person on track

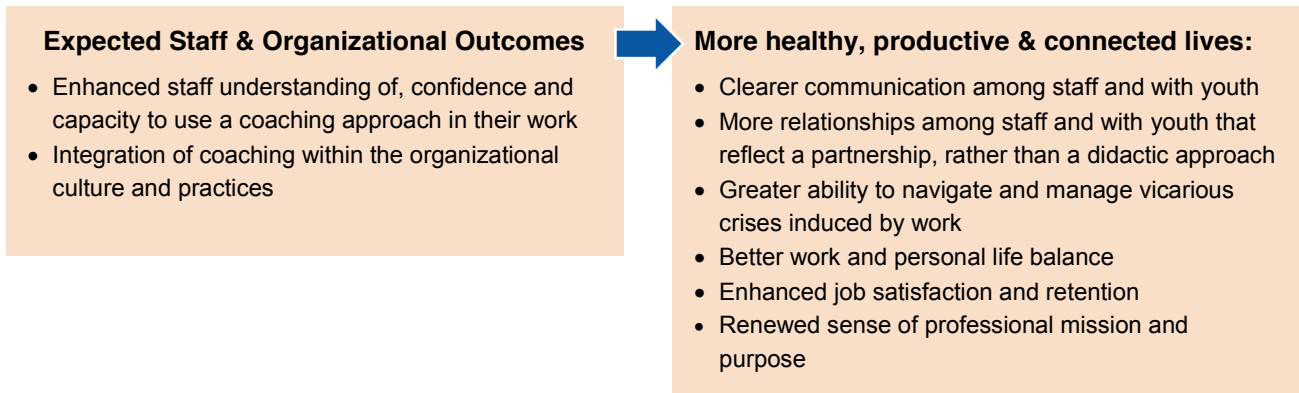
**Step 6: Create Accountability for Action**

- Request permission to challenge person to make or revisit a plan of action

B:E hopes that applying a coaching framework across its program and organizational practices will lead to key outcomes among staff and the organization (Exhibit 3). See Appendix A for B:E’s full theory of change.

Exhibit 3

### Expected Outcomes of the CCRW Model Among Staff & the Organization



### ABOUT THE EVALUATION & THIS REPORT

This report is intended for nonprofits, funders or coaches who want to learn about B:E’s experience designing and integrating coaching within a social service organization that serves youth. This may include people working specifically in the youth development or foster care fields, as well as others working with youth and young adults in the workforce development and education fields. As a result of the evaluation, this report provides learnings about the successes, challenges and outcomes of B:E’s experience.

B:E engaged Informing Change in 2012 to document and evaluate their CCRW approach. This evaluation is focused on the coaching aspect of B:E’s programming as opposed to the overall program and services of the organization. Data collection tools (e.g., staff surveys, post-coaching group surveys for youth, focus groups of staff and youth, and staff coaching session forms) have been developed with input from B:E staff and coach consultants. B:E staff administered data collection tools and sent data to Informing Change for analysis.

This report includes both qualitative and quantitative data from youth and B:E staff. The data include information from three focus groups with youth coaching groups and six phone interviews with a total of 26 youth, as well as a total of 134 youth survey responses (91 responses from a January 2015 point-in-time survey reflecting on one-on-one coaching sessions and 43 responses from a survey administered after coaching groups ended). In addition, 24 B:E staff members took part in four focus groups, 15 submitted coaching session feedback forms from staff’s one-on-one session with the Director of Coaching in 2014, 13 staff submitted a post-coaching session feedback form in 2013 and most staff responded to a staff survey after the annual training in 2013 and 2014 (24 and 19 responses, respectively).

There are a few key limitations to keep in mind while interpreting the evaluation findings.

- **Self-reported data:** All data collected are self-reported and, as a result, may present some bias.
- **Evolving nature of the program:** The CCRW model implementation has evolved and been continually refined. While this approach results in a strong program, it has created some challenges for evaluation. For example, the model’s evolution has made it difficult to use consistent language and frameworks for data collection tools throughout the evaluation. Also, due to the dynamic nature of the CCRW model implementation, staff have introduced coaching to youth in various ways and to different degrees over the years.



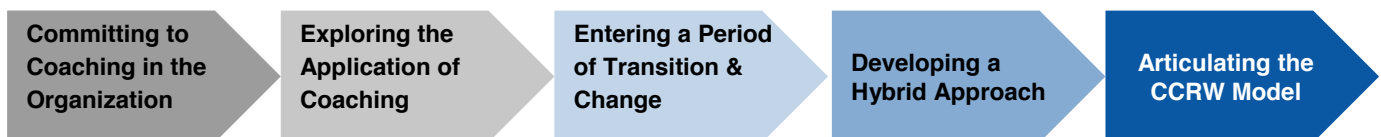
- **Contribution of coaching:** B:E’s approach does not employ coaching as a standalone strategy; instead it is integrated throughout the organization’s service delivery and culture. While this is beneficial for the youth and staff, it makes it more difficult to isolate the impact of coaching from other aspects of B:E’s work. The evaluation findings must also be taken into account with other factors that facilitated progress toward achieved outcomes, such as personal action and other supports that youth received outside of B:E.
- **Tracking impacts over time:** B:E staff had limited internal organizational capacity to collect data about key program outcomes (e.g., housing, employment, education) in a rigorous, quantitative manner over time. They are in the process of refining internal youth data-tracking systems and practices to more effectively track the status of these outcomes on a regular and ongoing basis.

Despite these limitations, the assessment is supported by a number of strengths. First, the evaluation represents a large number of youth who have been involved in B:E’s intensive programming and staff involved in design and integration of coaching into youth services and the organization more broadly. Additionally, different types of people who participated in data collection efforts (e.g., youth in various programs, direct service staff, organizational leaders) allow for multiple perspectives on similar issues and areas of inquiry. Finally, the evaluation relies on quantitative survey assessments, as well as qualitative focus groups and interviews to better understand nuances of the CCRW model and its impact.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODEL

Over the past five years, B:E leaders, board members, staff, coaches and consultants integrated coaching approaches within the organization, getting feedback and adapting the model as needed to make it relevant and applicable to the many situations where staff support youth. B:E leaders developed and customized a coaching model that fits with the work of their organization. As shown in Exhibit 4, the organization has gone through different phases in evolving the CCRW model; in subsequent paragraphs, we highlight the key aspects of each phase.

Exhibit 4  
**Process of Creating a Coaching Model at B:E**



### Committing to Coaching in the Organization

**Given that B:E had not seen coaching systematically applied in a direct social service organization, they launched into an exploratory and learning process.** B:E leaders and the coaches knew that they would need to creatively adapt several universal coaching concepts to meet transition-aged youth’s particular needs. Coaching would not be applied as a standalone component, but rather integrated into their organizational culture and services (e.g., housing, education, employment, transitional services). They sought to build the core of the model on a foundation of coaching principles alongside best practices for youth with experience in the foster care and probation systems. This, in essence, tasked the organization with developing a uniquely designed coaching approach.

## Partnering with Coaches to Explore the Application of Coaching

**In 2010, B:E introduced coaching to all levels of the organization including board, leadership staff, direct service staff and youth.** They partnered with KLM Consulting, which included coaches Sangita Kumar, Sujin Lee and Johnny Manzon-Santos, to co-create a coaching model that could be integrated into B:E's service delivery and organizational culture. The early vision was that the whole organization—and all departments—would shift to use coaching in all their interactions with youth. Together as a staff and with the coaches, B:E talked about and experimented with how to apply coaching techniques to B:E's traditional youth case management services in housing, education, employment and transition services. At the same time, they adopted coaching as a strategy to deepen their organization's internal interactions and processes. This time of exploration allowed the organization to raise awareness among staff about where coaching was a natural fit for direct services and where it needed to be adapted. By promoting a culture of curiosity and creativity, B:E encouraged staff to identify places in their work where they could continue to modify traditional coaching to fit the unique needs of the youth they serve.

**When B:E launched coaching in the organization, it was implementing new workforce development and education programs. Coaching was integrated into these efforts early in the program design.** KLM Consulting pilot tested this integration into the first group of the b2b program at Laney Community College (see description of B:E coaching groups in the box on page 3). B:E staff held four group coaching sessions with students in the b2b group and began using coaching in one-on-one interactions. Through the b2b pilot, B:E leaders and staff saw the strong benefits of bringing transition-aged youth together in a group setting for coaching. These group coaching sessions helped youth develop relationships with their peers and learn from each other. While recognizing the benefits, B:E also saw that staff would need group facilitation and group coaching training; prior to this point, B:E groups had been more rooted in education and information sharing.

*“Our team has been very supportive in knowing we live in a pilot.”*

– B:E leader

## Entering a Period of Transition & Change

**B:E leaders and coaches knew that applying coaching throughout the organization was a major organizational change effort that required significant attention.** B:E leaders felt that it was important for the staff and organization to embrace the unknown and discomfort that arises when striving to make real change. They saw this “neutral zone”<sup>6</sup>—the place in between what was and what will be—as a place for great creativity. B:E leaders and Be The Change Consulting coaches, Sangita Kumar and Tanya Mayo, worked with staff to maintain an open space for conversation and feedback to co-create what ultimately became the CCRW model.

**Not all staff were ready to embrace coaching as a strategy to improve the outcomes for the youth they served.** Many staff were still comfortable with the old approach of traditional case management and providing expert advice to the youth. As they began using coaching with some of their other services—housing programs and transition planning—staff found applying coaching to be more difficult. In B:E's housing and transition planning work, staff worked closely with youth to set them up with their basic needs; applying coaching was more difficult when youth were in crisis or needed immediate help (e.g., not having a place to sleep, domestic abuse). These services were more fluid compared to the structured education and employment programs, which could more easily incorporate coaching practices such as visioning and goal setting.

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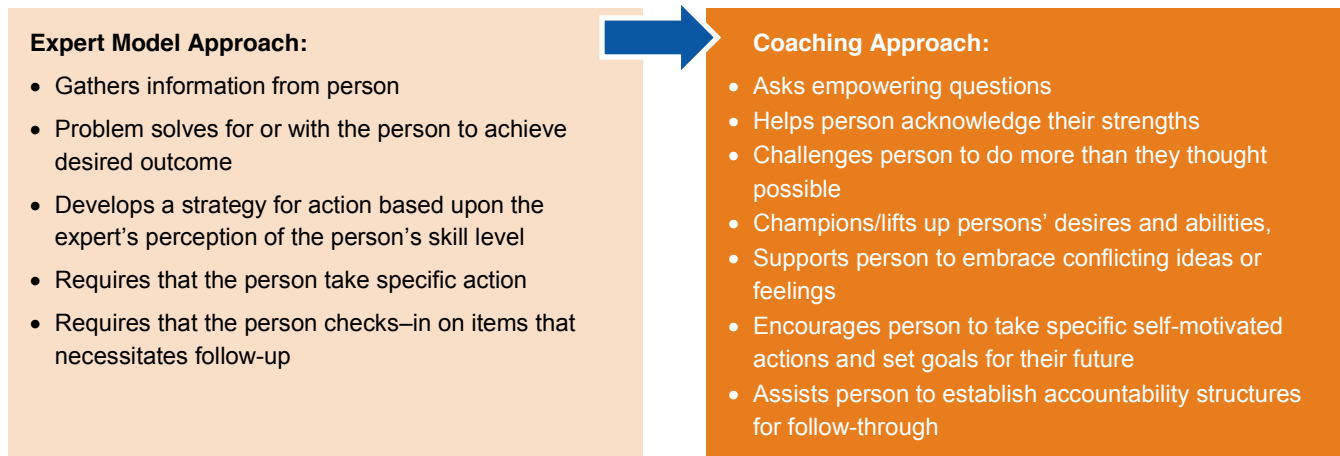
<sup>6</sup> William Bridges created the Transition Model, which articulates three phases of transition: Ending, Losing and Letting Go; The Neutral Zone; and The New Beginning. Retrieved on May 5, 2015 from <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/bridges-transition-model.htm>

*“In the beginning, B:E went through a lot of trials... we had to adjust what we were doing and figure out where and how coaching fit within the organization.”*

– Staff

## Developing a Hybrid Approach

Through this process, B:E began to develop a hybrid model which layered coaching within and across the organization. The staff and coaches developed the “B:E Coaching Approach,” which articulated the organization’s shift to working with youth and colleagues (see box). This approach could be used with youth in a wide range of situations and assisted staff as they moved from an expert model to a coaching model.



*“The organization shifted.... The leaders acknowledged that there are going to be times when we coach and times when we don’t coach. Once we had that permission, we could be very intentional about when to apply coaching. That’s when everybody started to come on board. We had direction.”*

– Staff

As B:E continued to explore how a hybrid model of coaching could support deeper integration of coaching in the organization, they also hired a Director of Coaching. In 2013, B:E moved from working with the *Be the Change* coaching consultants, who were on-site for part of the week, to hiring Leslie Brown, a part-time, certified Director of Coaching to ensure coaching’s application and sustainability. Having someone on staff who was embedded in the organization and available more regularly helped colleagues customize the integration of coaching in their day-to-day work, as well as helped to establish coaching practices within the broader organization. For example, staff felt that using coaching with youth in certain crisis situations was not always the best way to address these youth’s needs. From this experience, B:E developed a “crisis-informed coaching” approach (Exhibit 1 on page 3), which allows staff to focus on the youth’s most urgent needs prior to supporting him or her in thinking toward future planning and action.

*“We began to differentiate in the application of the coaching at the organization; that was a shift for us.”*

– B:E leader

**B:E leaders began to understand that the more specificity around when and how staff could use coaching, the more staff would be able to intentionally integrate it into their work.** As B:E began to dive deeper into applying the CCRW model, it became easier for B:E to articulate and train staff on the different ways to use coaching. For example, they realized that while all staff would be trained in coaching, some staff would become more specialized in specific types of coaching (e.g., group coaching, one-on-one coaching, crisis-informed coaching). Given this realization, B:E began offering additional support to staff who were more heavily involved in coaching through establishing staff learning communities to train and practice the particular approach that they used most often.

**B:E staff continue to apply coaching to other aspects of the organization.** They are becoming more intentional about applying coaching in supervision, and naming the situations where coaching may not be appropriate (e.g., when corrective behavior is needed, when requirements of the job are not being met). They are also bringing coaching into the organization’s human resources practices (e.g., training staff across the organization in giving and receiving feedback), as relevant.

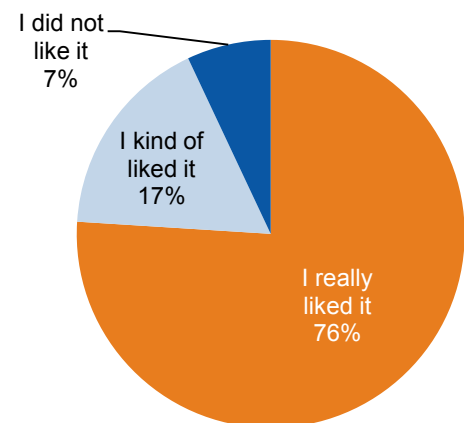
*“We started out really big, without a lot of focus or clarity around coaching, but we homed in and have gotten more concrete. We are able to move from theory to how coaching is applied on the ground.”*

– Staff

## YOUTH REFLECTIONS ON COACHING

**Youth appreciate the group coaching and the one-on-one coaching for different reasons; access to both is an effective combination for moving toward B:E’s desired outcomes.** The youth generally see the groups as a welcoming, accepting and safe place. As shown in Exhibit 5, about three-quarters of the youth involved in groups report that they “really like” the coaching sessions with their peers. Some youth are shy or more hesitant to participate in a group setting, but over time as they feel more comfortable, they often open up and share more. More vocal or active youth report that it can be hard when not everyone in the group is engaged in the discussion. The one-on-one coaching sessions provide a more private venue for youth to discuss topics they do not feel comfortable talking about in a group. In one-on-one sessions, they receive focused help on skills they want to strengthen (e.g., communication, conversing with adults, being positive, how to interview for a job).

Exhibit 5  
**Youth’s Reflections on the Coaching in Group Settings**  
(n=41)



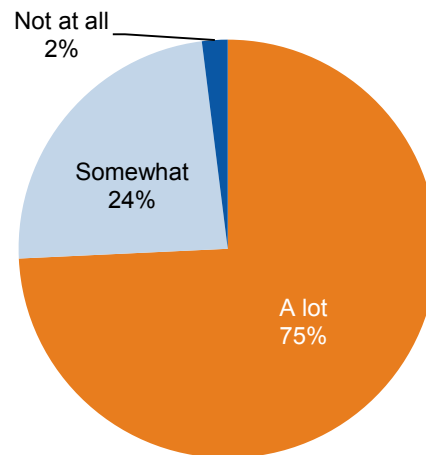
*“I liked the one-on-one coaching because it helped me with my goals and it had hands-on activities. For example, we did a journal and talked about my values.... There was more interaction on a personal level.”*

– Youth

## Youth Outcomes

The CCRW model is intended to **build youth's confidence**, strengthen their internal resiliency to **address challenges or crises** in their lives, **envision and set goals for their future** and **establish more permanent relationships** with peers and adults. In the following section, youth report on how coaching has helped them move forward in these areas. Overall, almost all youth think that the coaching sessions have helped prepare them to address challenges and work toward their future goals (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6  
**Extent that Coaching Has Helped Youth to Address  
Challenges & Work Toward Their Goals**  
(n=131)



*“I tend to get easily overwhelmed and frustrated, so the coaching helped me come to [a] realization that things are the way they are and you just have to find ways to deal with it.”*

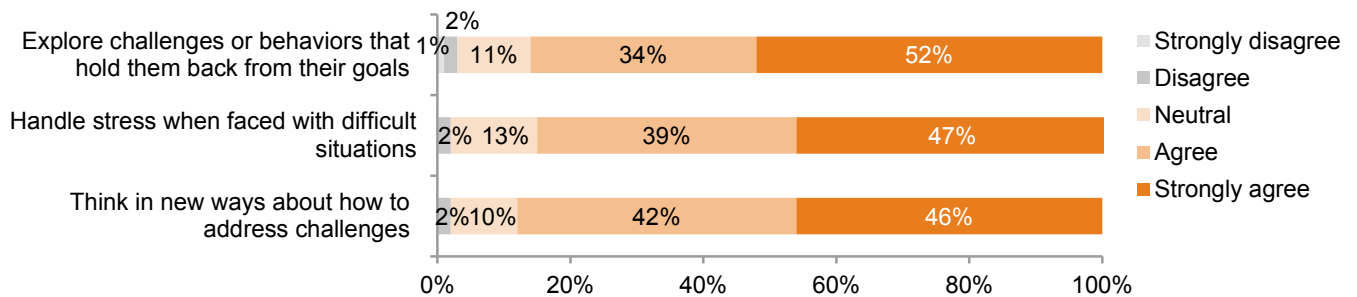
– Youth

**Coaching has helped youth learn how to handle their emotions and address conflict.** Youth note that the coaching has helped them find ways to deal with challenging feelings (e.g., a lack of acknowledgment, disrespect, frustration, anger, being overwhelmed) that they encounter and address the source of these feelings. For example, they describe how coaching has helped them understand what “triggers” these emotions, identify steps to manage their reactions (e.g., settling down, not lashing out) and practice patience with and empathy for others. They also have learned how to resolve conflict more productively by acknowledging their own role in the situation and approaching people in a more positive way to talk about the issue. As shown in Exhibit 7, most youth agree or strongly agree that coaching has helped them explore their behaviors, handle stress in difficult situations and think about new ways to address challenges.

Exhibit 7  
**Effectiveness of Coaching in Helping Youth Address Challenges or Crises**

(n=128–130)

The coaching sessions helped youth become better able to...

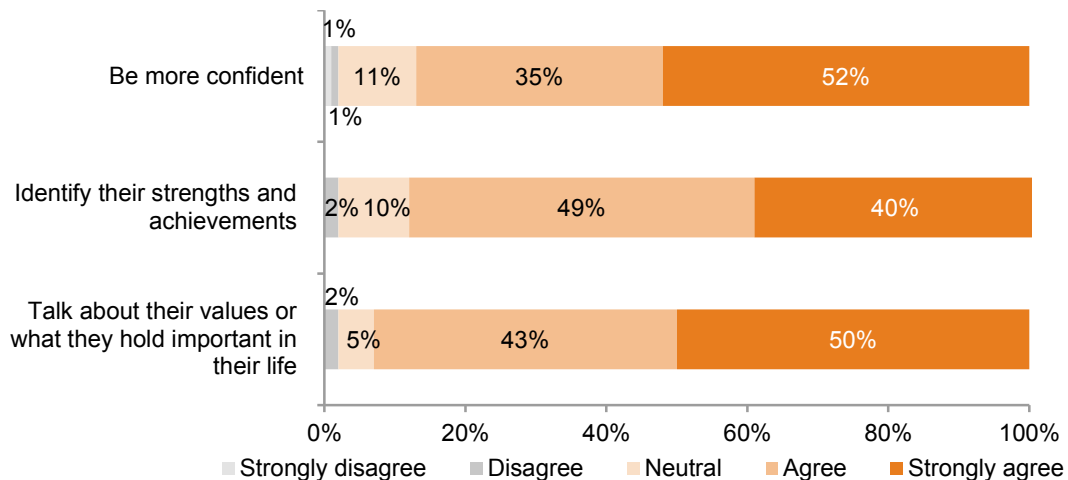


**Through coaching, youth exhibit more confidence, especially in their ability to express their thoughts and communicate with others.** Coaching helps youth, especially those who are scared or shy, to open up and articulate their thoughts. The group coaching has been particularly helpful, as it allows a safe space for youth to practice speaking in front of others and share more about themselves. For some youth, the one-on-one coaching supports them in overcoming their fears and opening up to others. As shown in Exhibit 8, coaching has also helped youth identify their values and strengths, which empowers them.

Exhibit 8  
**Effectiveness of Coaching in Helping Youth Become More Confident & Self-Aware**

(n=119–131)

The coaching sessions helped youth become better able to...



*“I learned that you should always try to put yourself in someone else’s shoes.... It may affect the way that you look at something.”*

– Youth

***“I was stuck in a bubble. Now I realize I can talk to people. Just being in the groups and talking to people has helped.”***

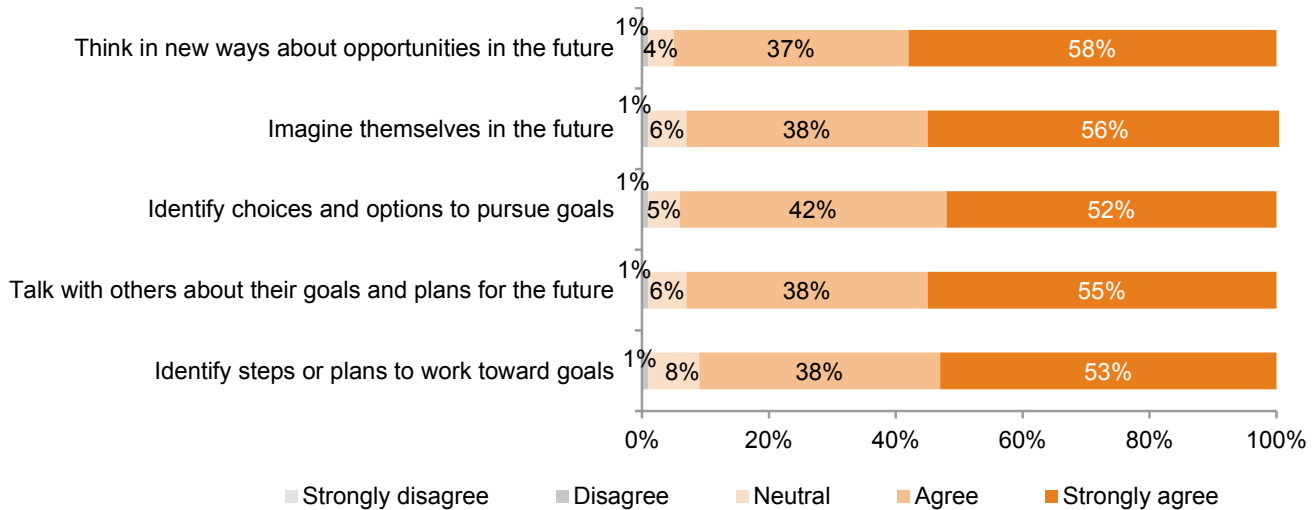
– Youth

**Over time, coaching has helped youth articulate their goals and identify a path to achieving these goals.** As shown in Exhibit 9, most youth agree or strongly agree that coaching has helped them imagine and plan for their future. The staff’s coaching with youth helps them make decisions about their goals (e.g., graduating college), prioritize those goals and address issues that may be hindering them from reaching those goals (e.g., not going to class). The workforce development groups have also exposed youth to potential careers and sparked a vision for their future. This process of meeting with B:E staff has helped some youth feel more accountable for their future.

Exhibit 9  
**Effectiveness of Coaching in Helping Youth  
 Imagine & Establish Goals for the Future**

(n=128–131)

The coaching sessions helped youth become better able to...



***“Being in a group coaching session helped me talk in front of people and made me more of a social person. That is something I struggled with before.”***

– Youth

## Youth's Point of View: Identifying Needs & Setting Goals for the Future

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When B:E staff asked Stacie what she wanted to do in the future, she did not know how to respond. “I told them that I didn’t see anything good happening in the future.” Stacie may have had trouble picturing her future because her past was so unstable. Over the previous year, she had spent months moving from place to place—living with her aunts, then with her sister in New York, then a boyfriend and finally moving from one friend’s couch to another. B:E staff worked with Stacie to help her imagine her future; they coached her to start by asking herself: “What did she need?” Reflecting on those conversations, Stacie says “they told me to sit down and write out my goals, as well as all the people I know who could help me accomplish those goals.” Stacie’s goals included getting a job and finding stable housing.

At the suggestion of B:E staff, Stacie signed up for the New Beginnings Fellowship Program and began an internship at Alameda County Social Services Agency in Hayward. “I thought New Beginnings was just going to get me a job,” notes Stacie, but she soon found out that the program also offered peer group coaching workshops. The workshops brought youth together to discuss a variety of issues (e.g., dealing with colleagues, supervisors, challenges in their internships or personal lives). Over time, Stacie began to open up and share her experiences with the other youth in the program. “It was like we were a whole family,” she says, “we would eat together, talk together and relax together. Everyone let their guard down and became real. We really bonded outside of our work and outside of B:E.”

As the New Beginnings Program came to a close, B:E staff asked Stacie to revisit her list of goals and people who could offer support: “I was able to write down more people on my list because of all the people I met in the program and at my internship. Also some of my goals were being accomplished!” Stacie’s sense of pride in her accomplishments compelled her to continue working on her goals, and she took part in another internship through B:E’s culinary GROW Program.

These employment experiences have prompted Stacie to explore her career options. “I may go back to work for the County, because I have my foot in the door through my internship, or I may go into the culinary field, since I like art and cooking is an art.” While Stacie considers the next step in her career, she will be able to do so from the comfort of her own home. Recently, she moved into an apartment in Oakland with support from the Family Unification Program. Stacie reflects on how far she has come, “B:E staff have seen me at my lowest. They know where I came from and the struggles I faced. For them to see what I have accomplished, I have no words to describe that.”

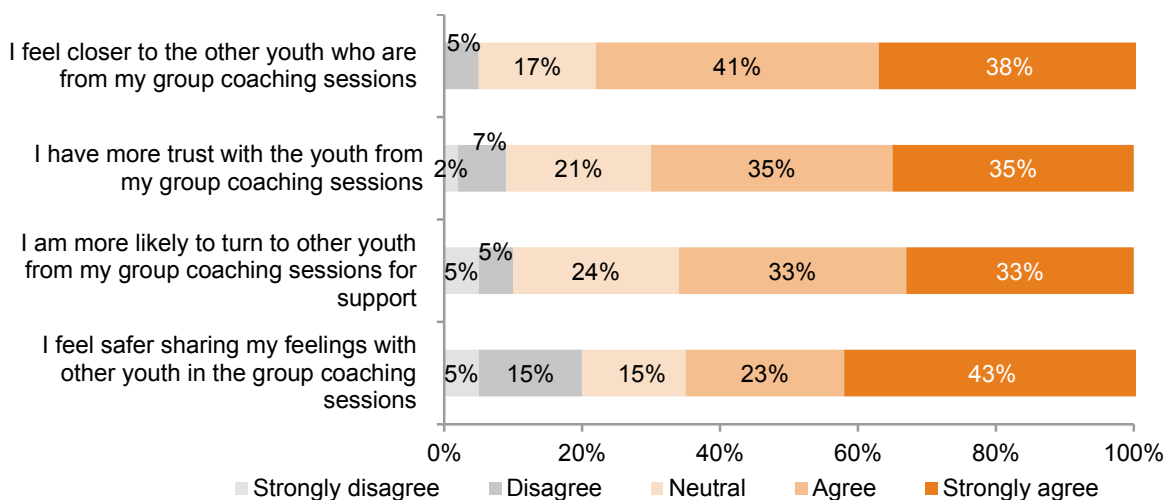


**Youth establish more trusting relationships with their peers in the group setting.** The coaching groups offer space and time for youth to get to know others who have experienced similar situations. In the groups, youth come together, many of whom have not met before. They note that by becoming acquainted with each other and beginning to talk about their experiences, they start to recognize similarities or common experiences. They build trust with each other and this trust has allowed them to share about what is going on in their lives. They have developed relationships with their peers that range from acknowledgement and friendliness when they see each other in passing, to calling them up for advice. As shown in Exhibit 10, the majority of youth agree or strongly agree that coaching has helped them to build trust and relationships with the other peers in their coaching groups.

*“Through the groups, I learned how we [our group] can be a family.”*

– Youth

Exhibit 10  
**Effectiveness of Coaching in Helping Youth Build Peer Relationships**  
 (n=40–43)



*“In the groups, I can see how others have overcome issues that I might be going through.... When others share, it helps me get through it.”*

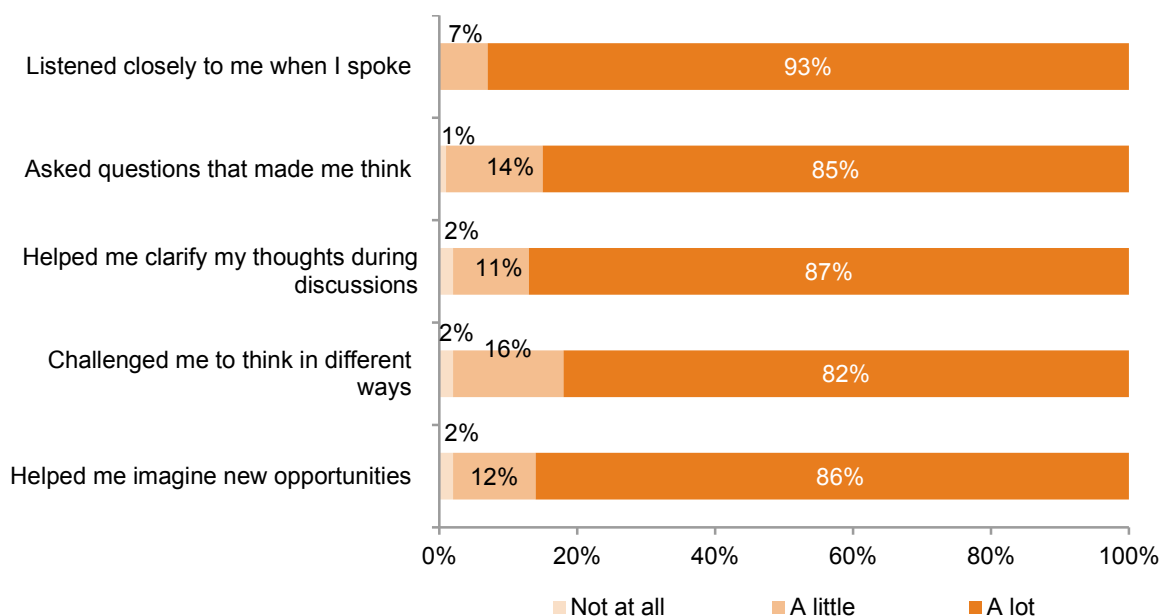
– Youth

**Youth form trusting and respectful relationships with B:E staff through coaching.** They feel that staff are their advocates and “have their backs.” Youth describe that these relationships are often built by staff listening and providing a safe space to explore ideas, opportunities and challenges—all aspects of the coaching approach (Exhibit 11). They report that it is particularly nice to have an adult to talk to about issues that come up in their lives. Additionally, youth appreciate that the B:E staff hold them accountable for their goals and follow up with them; this shows the youth that the staff care. They see the staff as positive and supportive role models, who guide them through difficult experiences.

*“When I first met [B:E staff]... I was in trouble. I was angry. I didn’t trust anyone. I was coming from the foster care system, so I didn’t trust her at first, but we built our relationship. She helped me with anger.”*

– Youth

Exhibit 11  
**Youth's Ratings of How Often B:E Staff  
 Display Coaching Characteristics**  
 (n=131–133)



***“B:E staff are nurturing and understand me. They create a comfortable space for me to talk about my issues.”***

– Youth

**Youth's Point of View: Experiencing Supportive Adult Relationships**

One youth involved with B:E's New Beginnings Fellowship Program talks about how he found positive role models that he could look up to:

*“I am a totally new man because of the coaching. We are all foster kids and most of us didn't have a lot of positive adults in our lives, so when someone is willing to guide us and help us, that is important since we lacked this before with people of authority. I never had a role model growing up or even today outside of this program. I have met people who are willing to check-in on me, but I am always going to remember that [B:E staff] was there and acted as my mentor.”*

**Coaching contributes to a foundation for youth's interdependence and decision-making as they transition out of the foster care system and move into adulthood.** Along with the outcomes of coaching as described above, the groups and coaching have helped youth move toward healthy, productive and connected adulthood in other important ways by enhancing their knowledge (e.g., housing, education paths, professional environment and healthy relationships), skills (e.g., cooking, job interviewing, financial management skills) and accountability, (e.g., obtaining healthcare, being on time, going to class, paying attention to schedules and appointments, confronting mistakes, not putting things off, asking for help).

## Youth's Point of View: Working Toward a Career with Support from Others

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At the age of 16, Chris started transitioning out of the foster care system. As he transitioned from meeting with his social worker, his foster mom suggested he look into Beyond Emancipation's services. He began working with B:E staff, who checked in with him regularly and talked with him about his future goals. "The [B:E staff] believed that I could do anything," notes Chris, "She understands where I come from and we can sit and talk regularly." During these conversations, Chris began to articulate his future career goals of entering law enforcement and ultimately becoming a U.S. Marshall.

To help move along this career in the criminal justice system, Chris enrolled in Merritt College, a community college in Oakland, California. B:E staff helped him select classes he would need to obtain an associate's degree in Administration of Justice and B:E provided a stipend to pay for his books. In Summer of 2014, B:E staff also told Chris about the New Beginnings Fellowship Program.

Seeing this as a good opportunity for real-world experience, Chris signed up for the Fellowship Program and began a 6-month paid internship at Alameda County's Probation Department. As part of the Program, every Friday, B:E staff would convene a group coaching session for youth to come together and share their experiences. The B:E facilitator led coaching exercises to sharpen their interview and professional skills, while also offering space for the youth to talk about their internship experiences (e.g., how they interacted with colleagues, dealt with a problem in the workplace). Chris found that his peers pushed and motivated each other, "We talked about how it doesn't matter what situation we came through, we aren't making excuses... your life is what you make of it." Chris also came to trust and open up to the other youth in his group. "Before this experience, I was a little embarrassed about being in the foster care system... I didn't want anyone to know and a lot of people didn't understand. But with my peers it was easy to open up about it."

During Chris' internship at the Probation Department, he identified that he wanted to become a Juvenile Institutional Officer, which requires a high school diploma and college course units. Chris notes, "This is the career that I wanted and I knew I needed a degree to get that job." He met with various professionals who encouraged him to pursue his career in criminal justice and noted the option of working in the Department at night and going to school during the day. He is continuing to pursue his studies at Merritt College and plans to graduate with his Associate's degree in 2016 after which he will transfer to San Francisco State University. In the meantime, he is continuing to work at Alameda County's Probation Department. Chris notes, "I want to start my career while I get my degree. I don't have time to waste, every decision I make is critical."

As he reflects on his experience, he notes that B:E staff helped set him on the right path when he was transitioning out of the foster care system, "I would have been lost without B:E. I would have had to find everything out the hard way, bumping my head as I went. They guided me in the right direction."

## STAFF REFLECTIONS ON CCRW SUPPORTS

Staff appreciate having a leader on staff who is a coaching expert and a dedicated point person. Since hiring the Director of Coaching, staff note that coaching at B:E has evolved and become more applicable to their work. They have seen the Director of Coaching help to streamline the “coaching message” at the organization, bring in new ideas, develop protocols and work individually with staff to understand when to use or not use coaching. They find it helpful to have someone at the organization “own the process,” and feel that it has helped to engrain the coaching approach in the organizational culture. Staff find that the Director of Coaching is accessible and they can ask questions and receive support in a timely way. In addition to receiving assistance on their coaching with youth, staff value their own one-on-one coaching sessions with the Director; this helps them to build their confidence, identify challenges (e.g., working with youth, work-life balance) and meet their professional goals.

*“Having the Director of Coaching on staff makes coaching more of a reality than an idea.”*

– Staff

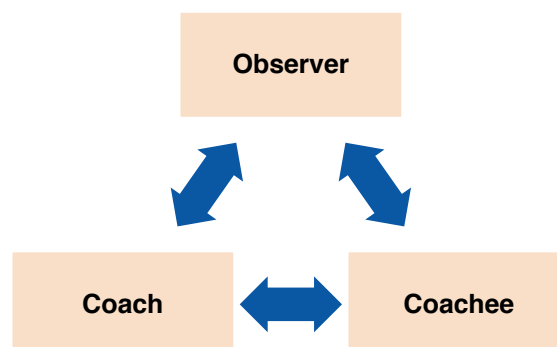
The monthly coaching clinics provide a place for all staff to come together, practice their coaching skills and experience being the “coachee.” These clinics enable staff to see coaching in action, learn skills, obtain tools and become more confident in their coaching. A few staff note that the coaching clinics were especially helpful when they were new to the organization and provided a good venue for understanding how the organization used coaching. Staff appreciate the structure of “triad coaching”—where one person coaches, one person is coached and another person observes (see Exhibit 12). This allows staff to both practice coaching, observe others coaching and get input on how to improve their coaching. They also find this practice useful because they get to “put themselves in the shoes of the youth.” Staff think this is especially important since being the coachee is not always a comfortable position; it is critical to understand how to respect personal boundaries, ask permission and refrain from offering advice or suggestions.

*“Going through [the practice coaching], makes you empathetic to the whole session. You are able to feel what youth may be feeling in that situation.*

*Being put on the spot is uncomfortable because it makes you feel vulnerable.”*

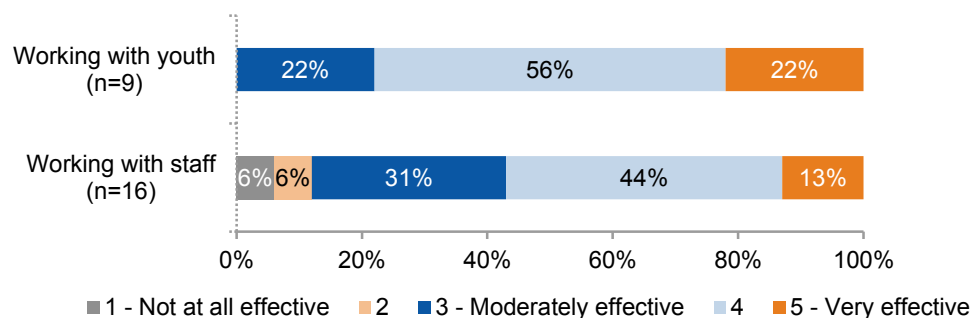
– Staff

Exhibit 12  
Triad Coaching Used in Coaching Clinic Trainings



The annual staff coaching trainings are a good use of dedicated time to engage the entire staff. Staff appreciate having time with their colleagues to learn more about coaching and enhance their coaching skills. As shown in Exhibit 13, staff report that at the 2014 training, B:E leaders were “moderately” to “very” effective in setting clear expectations about how to use coaching in their work.

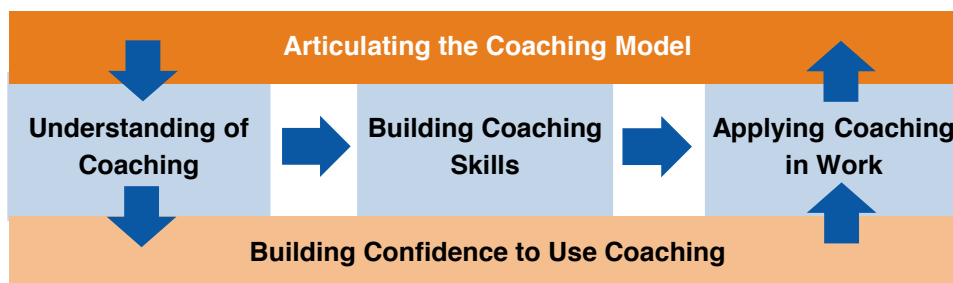
Exhibit 13  
**Organization’s Effectiveness in Setting Clear Expectations for Coaching<sup>7</sup>**



### B:E Staff Outcomes

As depicted in Exhibit 14, the articulation of the CCRW coaching model led to increases in understanding how to use coaching, build coaching skills and apply coaching in staff’s work both with youth and with others in the organization. Throughout the implementation process, staff have built their confidence to use coaching in their day-to-day work, which has impacted the staff as well as the youth.

Exhibit 14  
**Process of Moving From Articulating to Applying Coaching Within the Organization**



**Staff have a better understanding of how to apply coaching to their work.** Given the dynamic evolution of the CCRW model, some staff were confused in the initial stages about how to apply coaching in their work. Over time, they began to better understand how to integrate it. They know there is not a “cookie-cutter approach” to when they should apply coaching. B:E has empowered staff to make judgments about the appropriate use of coaching given particular situations, youth or environments.

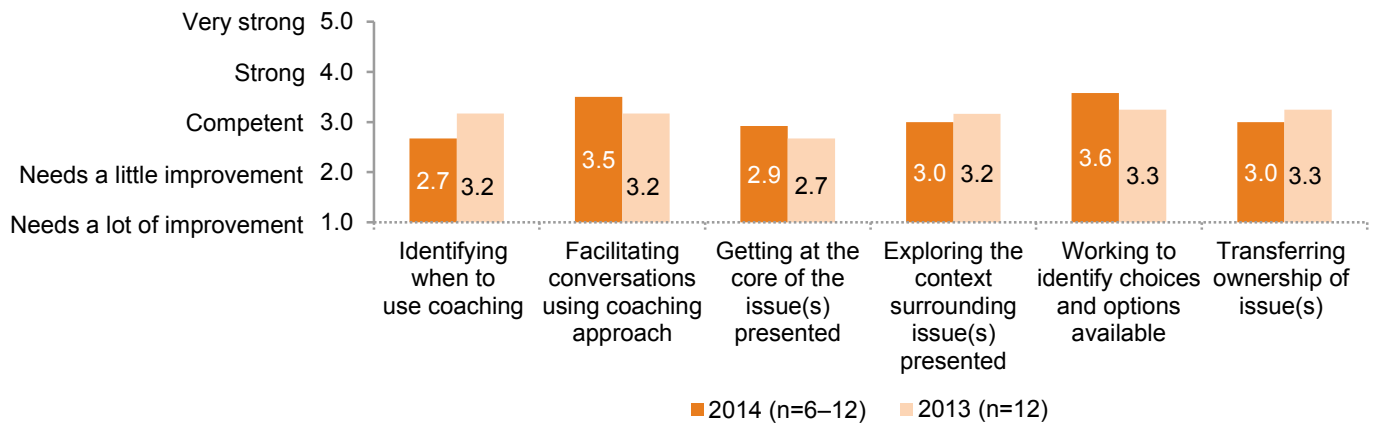
*“It is very much within our hands to decide when to use coaching and when not to use it. The staff use many criteria to decide that, but there isn’t a check list of when to use coaching. It is subjective, very situational.”*

– Staff

<sup>7</sup> The first prompt was not asked of staff who do not work directly with youth.

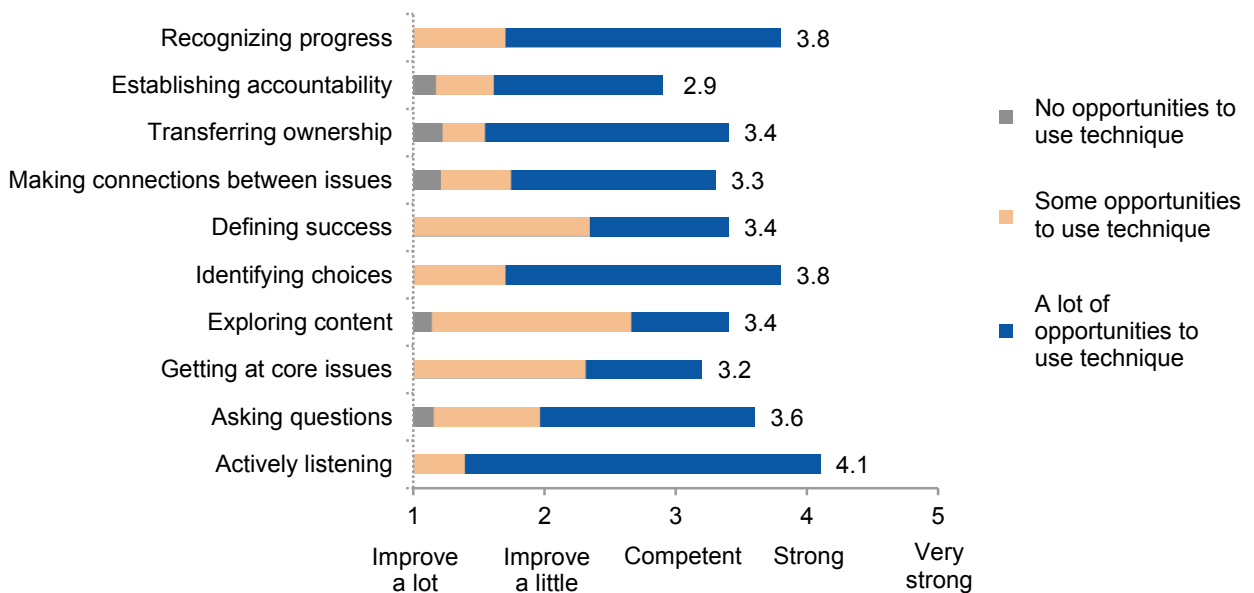
**Staff continue to build their coaching skills through trainings and practice.** Through B:E’s training and peer learning opportunities, staff have learned how and when to use specific coaching skills, especially when they need to let youth make their own conclusions even when the staff think differently. For example, some staff note how they are better at empowering youth by “letting go” and “putting the onus on the young person.” After the 2013 and 2014 coaching trainings, staff felt generally competent in key areas of the coaching approach (Exhibit 15). However, there was not much change from year to year, indicating that staff should continue to focus on improving their skills.

Exhibit 15  
**Staff’s Competency Ratings After the 2013 & 2014 Coaching Trainings**



**Staff increasingly apply coaching to their work.** With the clearer articulation of CCRW’s model within the organization, staff are increasingly drawing on their training and experiential practice to apply coaching skills in real-world situations with youth. As shown in Exhibit 16, staff usually have opportunities to apply coaching techniques in their day-to-day work and feel “competent” to “strong” in their coaching abilities. On average, staff perceive that they need more improvement in helping youth establish accountability structures.

Exhibit 16  
**Staff’s Perceptions of Their Coaching Competency & Opportunities to Apply Coaching**  
 (n=15-18)



**Staff continue to express a desire to learn how to most effectively use their coaching skills with youth and B:E colleagues.** Although they think that they have built their coaching skills over the past few years, they request more opportunities for training and feedback to address the following areas of their coaching:

- “Going deep” and exploring issues that youth find difficult, especially ones that trigger intense emotions
- Developing more comfort and knowing when to “let go” and let youth make their own decisions—i.e., determining the right moment to be an advisor versus a coach (see box below)
- Getting reluctant youth to engage in the coaching process—i.e., inviting them to coaching without pushing or forcing them
- Working with youth on a consistent enough basis to establish a good relationship

**Staff’s Point of View: Learning How to Shift into a Coaching Approach**

*“A hard piece of coaching for me is when you work with a youth and they make a decision, but you can tell that in six months, they are going to fall flat on their face.... Coaching is teaching us to go with the process and to be there for the youth if things don’t work out. It can be uncomfortable when you disagree with their decision, but don’t want to taint their [decision-making process].... We just have to hold that for them.”*

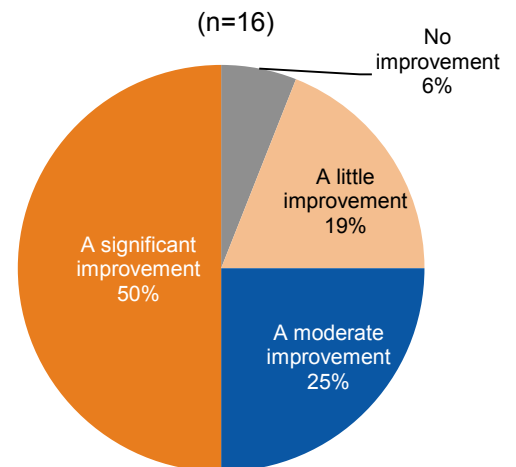
*“We tend to do coaching in our work naturally, but it is good to have a structure around the concept, so that you can recognize the moments where you are giving clients feedback instead of letting them come to their own conclusions. It is helpful to identify those moments when you catch yourself wanting to provide the solution... then you recognize that the youth have to come to it in their own time and terms.”*

*“It can be challenging trying not to be solution focused because that is the kind of work that we do. We are trying to help youth solve problems. We are trying to get their lives in a direction.”*

*“Sometimes I ask myself, is [coaching] what parenting is like? We are in a position where we have to bite our tongue and let the youth experience things because that is how they are going to learn. However, you hope their decisions will not put them in a bad situation. Sometimes they put themselves in situations where we just have to let go. But knowing when to let go is the tough part.”*

**Staff are improving their confidence to use coaching in their work, which has helped them become more intentional and deliberate about its use.** As shown in Exhibit 17, half of staff said their confidence to use a coaching approach has “significantly improved;” an additional quarter noted a “moderate improvement.” Staff report that they learn by doing—in holding coaching sessions, they have built confidence in how to apply coaching with the youth. Also, the flexibility of CCRW’s model, in allowing staff to determine how to integrate coaching into their work, gives them more confidence in using coaching in situations that they deem appropriate.

**Exhibit 17  
Improvements in Staff’s Confidence in Applying Coaching to Their Work**



**Staff have more flexibility, creativity and ownership for how they approach their work.** They report that the coaching culture at B:E helps them “push the envelope in a good way.” Staff are able to be more creative in their work without having as many organizational boundaries. They also have greater flexibility and responsibility to create activities for the youth. Due to youth being more open as a result of coaching, they have gained new insights into the youth’s situation. This in turn has helped them think about how to approach their work in new or creative ways.

*“Since I started, I have seen a shift in the trust that leadership shows us in terms of creating programs and allowing us to use coaching.”*

– Staff

**Staff are better at recognizing the strengths, skills and values that they bring to their job.** Through coaching, staff have identified their own abilities and interests, which has helped them develop professionally (e.g., creating a project that they are passionate about, developing their own coaching style, setting professional development goals). They also have begun to realize the value they bring to the broader organization and, as a result, are bringing forth new ideas, speaking up more during meetings and pushing through their self-doubt to make contributions at an organizational level.

*“Coaching has enabled me to look at what’s challenging me, and take steps to address it head-on, rather than ignoring or avoiding it.”*

– Staff

**Staff are better at managing their well-being at work.** The coaching sessions have provided a place for staff to check in with themselves. Staff note that this has assisted them in exploring situations where they struggle in their job, helped address emotions and feelings that the work conjures up, balanced their responsibilities and reduced work-related anxiety.

## **Organizational Impacts**

**Staff think that the organizational culture has changed to reflect a coaching approach.** Staff report that B:E has developed more of a culture of listening to each other, asking curious questions, encouraging leadership and using and sharing strengths with others. They note that B:E is moving away from transactional approaches with both staff and youth and working to understand people at a deeper level (e.g., what led them to make a decision). They also notice that the organizational culture has shifted to empowering each other to identify issues and address them without providing a specific solution or answer.

*“I see our staff using coaching a lot more than they actually know. Especially when they are asking questions.... They are all doing coaching and sometimes they don’t even realize it.”*

– Staff

**The organization facilitates more communication and information-sharing across staff.** Staff note that coaching, especially the coaching clinics, have provided valuable opportunities to learn more about and strengthen their relationships with their B:E colleagues. Staff note that they:

- Share and problem solve more often with colleagues facing similar challenges;



- Know their colleagues at a deeper level and have a better understanding of their working style, responsibilities and personalities; and
- Find it easier to work across departments in the organization (e.g., they can more easily connect youth to other colleagues or departments for information or resources).

*“I have seen a lot of openness and connectedness [at B:E] and I think it is due mostly to the coaching.”*

– Staff

**Staff are demonstrating greater ownership of the organization’s future.** The B:E coaching approach is framed so that staff look for their own answers and are empowered to share their ideas. As noted earlier, staff have greater flexibility to create programming and encouragement to share ideas, which contributes to more shared leadership. While the organization is still working out the situations, structures and nuances of empowering all staff, leaders have opened up the roles and responsibilities of organizational leadership beyond the senior staff.

*“As a leader it is not my job to have all the answers but to create a space for team members to come up with answers too.”*

– Staff

**The organization continues to establish organizational policies and procedures that reflect a coaching approach.** For example, B:E is working to integrate coaching into various areas of the organization, such as supervision meetings, human resources and hiring practices, marketing and communications, as well as board relations.

*“[Coaching] is a positive influence on the organization and in how we work and in my supervision. I can feel the difference in how people talk, how we are supervised and how we relate to each other.”*

– Staff

## LESSONS LEARNED & CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the last five years, B:E has adapted and tested ways to integrate coaching into a service-delivery model with youth and throughout their organization, and learned valuable lessons along the way. Below are key lessons learned based on B:E’s successes, as well as challenges in three areas: 1) integrating coaching into an organization, 2) training and developing staff and 3) coaching with youth. We offer corresponding considerations for others—especially those who may be interested in adopting the model—to think about in each of these areas.

### Integrating Coaching into an Organization

**Lesson 1: Integrating a new approach and culture at an organization takes time and requires intentional effort, resources and patience.** B:E has worked for five years to introduce, test, create, adapt and refine their CCRW model. This has involved evolutions and learnings in how coaching is communicated to staff and youth, what types of training and supports staff receive and how coaching is rolled out within the organization.

### Considerations:

- **Anticipate and plan for a period of time when there may not be a straightforward path to change** – Embrace the period of uncertainty and acknowledge that the unknown can be difficult. Cultivate an environment that pushes staff’s creativity about how a different future could look and the processes for getting there.
- **Gather input from staff and youth** – Work with both staff and youth to get feedback on how the coaching is working and aspects of coaching that may need to be customized or adapted. Consider confidential forms or feedback loops to gather candid input.
- **Develop organizational systems to monitor and track coaching services** – Build out databases to better understand the type and frequency of coaching services received and status of key outcomes measured over time. Institute a process for systematic and regular updates of these data and analyses, so that the organization can better understand which services are effective and where improvements are needed.

*“If you are going to [change the organization’s approach] just make sure you have an open forum for everybody to talk.”*

– Staff

**Lesson 2: It is unlikely to have an effective “one-size-fits-all” approach when applying coaching within an organization.** Over the years, B:E has realized that they needed to customize their coaching approach for their specific youth population, programs and departments. B:E has found that a coaching approach is easier to apply in some situations where goal setting and visioning is part of the program (e.g., workforce development, education programs) as compared to others where staff work to stabilize and provide basic needs to youth (e.g., housing, transitional planning). They continue to be curious—a key coaching quality—to identify areas where traditional coaching may not perfectly fit and where new approaches are needed.

### Considerations:

- **Be curious about different ways that a coaching lens can apply to the organization’s work** – While some situations may lend themselves more easily to coaching (e.g., professional development, new leadership roles, goal setting), explore other ways to apply the 12 coaching skills (see page 4) in the organization’s work.
- **Set expectations and monitor the use of coaching in various settings** – When the approach to working with youth is highly subjective based on particular relationships and situations, make sure there are clear guidelines about how and when to use coaching. Also, ensure ongoing mechanisms to monitor the quality of these approaches.

*“We are a coaching organization with a coaching culture and that may not always match up with traditional leadership roles. It is about balance and an understanding of how far coaching goes in the organization.”*

– B:E leader

## Training & Developing Staff

### **Lesson 3: Building staff's coaching skills and confidence requires ongoing organizational investment.**

When launching a coaching approach at an organization, it takes time to build the staff's skills and confidence. Although B:E staff have become more skilled and confident over time, they still want to continue to grow and refine their skills to handle different types of situations. Having a Director of Coaching available on-site part time<sup>8</sup> has been invaluable for the staff's learning and development.

#### **Considerations:**

- **Provide a range of staff development opportunities** – Plan different trainings, peer groups and opportunities for staff to learn coaching skills and practice them in realistic settings. Develop an on-boarding process, so that new staff can quickly get up to speed on the organization's approach. Have staff experience coaching sessions themselves, so that they more fully understand what it is like to be coached.
- **Develop internal expertise and provide regular feedback** – If taking an organization-wide approach to coaching, consider bringing coaching expertise in-house by hiring specific staff to oversee the coaching or having current staff get their coaching certification. These trained professionals can help other staff grow their skills and gain confidence by providing valuable feedback to staff about their coaching.
- **Pay particular attention to developing skills around addressing difficult issues** – Given that coaching is intended to “go deeper” and bring more intense emotions to the surface, make sure that staff are adequately prepared to handle situations when a youth has triggered past traumas or issues that may require therapy versus coaching. Teach staff how to identify and handle these situations if they are not a trained social worker or therapist.

*“There are times where I meet with a client and do impromptu coaching and I feel stuck about how to close the coaching out safely... sometimes I am not sure how to respond or take care of the youth as a coach.”*

– Staff

**Lesson 4: Coaching may not be the best approach to use in all situations.** Given the past experiences of transition-aged youth, it is important to identify situations when staff need to take a non-coaching approach. Through the CCRW experience, B:E has identified times when coaching is not appropriate (e.g., domestic violence, emergency housing situations) and youth need “straight talk” or advice. They have developed an innovative way to incorporate a coaching approach in situations through crisis-informed coaching (Exhibit 1, page 3).

#### **Considerations:**

- **Identify and articulate situations when coaching alone is not the appropriate approach** – This involves situations in which a youth has immediate needs and their well-being is at risk (e.g., housing, domestic violence). This does not necessarily preclude a coaching approach after the youth's immediate needs are met (e.g., looking toward the future, setting goals, understanding why a challenge occurred).
- **Help staff feel comfortable using coaching to empower youth to make their own decisions** – This includes times when coaching is appropriate, but when it may be hard for staff to “let go” and let youth make their own decisions, particularly when staff do not see it as the best choice.

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<sup>8</sup> B:E's Director of Coaching is a 80% FTE.

*“We had to get specific about where to plug the coaching into our work. Was it in our one-on-one meetings when they had an emergency? Absolutely not, because they were dealing with a crisis. We had to understand where to apply coaching and found that it was very situational.”*

– Staff

## Coaching with Youth

**Lesson 5: Some youth will resist coaching.** B:E staff report that youth often have some initial resistance to using a coaching approach. As noted earlier, challenging and encouraging youth to explore the deep issues that may be holding them back can be difficult, especially among youth who have a history of not trusting adults.

### Considerations:

- **Clearly present what coaching entails** – Some youth—and adults—may not understand what coaching means or the intention behind the approach. When using coaching in a service delivery model, provide an introduction to coaching by explaining what it is and how it works, as well as answering questions about the process.
- **Develop relationships before attempting to engage youth who show resistance to coaching** – Spending time getting to know youth and building rapport allows youth to get to know and trust staff before entering into a coaching relationship. Building trust with the coach can help youth “trust the coaching process.”
- **Be patient** – Part of coaching is empowering youth to make their own decisions. Periodically check in with youth to see if they are comfortable with the idea of coaching and ready to engage in it. Attempt to get youth involved, but recognize and respect their boundaries and personalities.
- **Explore small ways for youth to benefit from a coaching approach versus an explicit coaching session** – If youth are not ready to participate in a more formal coaching process, encourage them to take part in coaching activities on a small scale. For example, some youth may be more likely to keep a reflective journal or be an active listener in a group coaching setting before opening up and sharing their own thoughts.

*“Everyone will speak up in their own time; it’s usually just a matter of when. I would tell coaches to be patient. They have to see it from our point of view where we grew up feeling abandoned... so we need to know the coach is there and that they are supportive.”*

– Youth

**Lesson 6: Coaching in group settings is beneficial for youth with common experiences.** B:E saw that the group coaching sessions gave youth an opportunity to learn from their peers, share experiences and build relationships. This was especially valuable because the youth could identify with each other and share commonalities from being in the foster care or probation systems.

### Considerations:

- **Convene youth who are in the same program or have similar situations** – Group coaching sessions for youth attending similar programs can facilitate shared experiences (e.g., dealing with workplace challenges at their internship); this is also true for youth who have faced similar life experiences (e.g., housing crises, becoming new parents).
- **Train staff in group facilitation** – Coaching youth in groups requires a different skillset than coaching youth in one-on-one settings. Ensure that staff are adequately trained in group facilitation techniques to effectively lead the group coaching sessions.
- **Consider pairing staff to lead the group coaching sessions** – Especially in the initial group sessions, consider having two staff lead the group to provide each other with support and learn from each other; this can be especially helpful if one staff member has more experience than the other.

*“In the coaching groups, I might be going through something now that someone else went through a year ago. Hearing others share their experience helps me get through it.”*

– Youth

**Lesson 7: Some youth will want direct answers from their coach.** Direct service staff have historically provided advice, so moving to a coaching approach requires a mind shift on the part of the youth and the staff. Instead of looking to the adult or coach for answers, youth are asked to identify and work toward their own solutions. Some youth may see these interactions as “vague” or lacking “real information,” which can be frustrating when they want more concrete direction.

### Considerations:

- **Clearly present what coaching entails** – Again, it is important to articulate what coaching is and clarify that the role of the staff member will change from an advisor or information source to a “guide.”
- **Establish a set time for coaching** – Making intentional space and time for coaching is important to distinguish when staff are acting as advisors and when they are acting as coaches. This helps to set expectations for youth as to when they are expected to “step up to the plate” and identify their own solutions.

**Lesson 8: Finding time and space for coaching youth can be difficult.** Coaching works best when there are regular meetings and check-ins to follow up on progress. However, transition-aged youth are often busy taking care of themselves or their families without much support and prefer a drop-in approach. Youth note that they have many responsibilities (e.g., taking care of children, attending class, going to work), which make it difficult to schedule time to regularly meet with their coach.

### Considerations:

- **Balance youth’s other responsibilities with regular coaching sessions** – Ensure that youth are prioritizing important adult responsibilities, such as school, employment or care taking, but encourage them to also prioritize the coaching meetings. Work with youth to determine the best times to schedule coaching meetings, but allow for some flexibility to accommodate other priorities.

- **Consider coaching over the phone** – Although in-person coaching is more ideal for youth, coaching over the phone can allow for more flexibility with schedules and still provide the space and time needed to coach the youth about various issues.

*“I don't always see the youth on a consistent basis, so it's hard to build that [coaching] relationship.”*

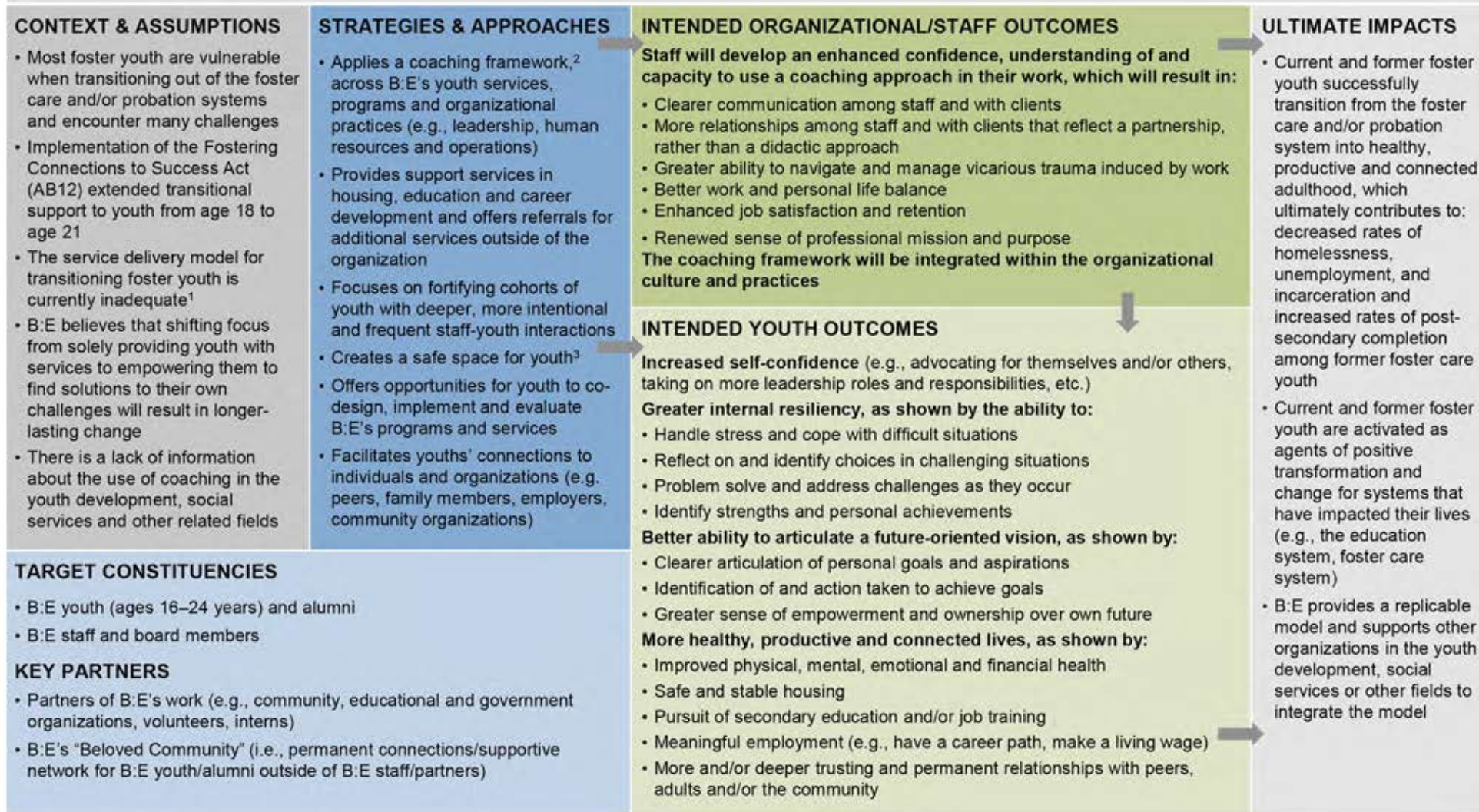
– Staff

## CONCLUSION

Through a creative and evolving process, B:E has developed an exciting new model to integrate coaching throughout their organization. Moving from a transactional approach to working with youth to a transformational approach through coaching, B:E staff are better able to prepare youth for a healthy, productive and connected adulthood. Staff continue to sharpen their coaching skills and learn how to most appropriately apply different coaching practices based on specific situations and programming. B:E leaders and staff benefit from this experience, beyond their direct work with youth, to their relationships with B:E colleagues and their more engaged role in the organization's practices, programming and future. Moving forward, B:E can continue to deepen its use of coaching throughout the organization. It can more rigorously evaluate and collect data on the amount of coaching in different areas of the organizations' work and progress toward expected areas of impact. Now that the model is established, other youth service organizations can learn from this experience, creating the potential to benefit thousands of youths' life trajectories.

# Beyond Emancipation's (B:E) Theory of Change

**PURPOSE:** To provide a transformational environment for transition-aged youth, who have experience in the foster care and/or probation systems, so that they can live more healthy, productive and connected lives.



1 Courtney, Mark. (2005, April). Youth aging out of foster care. Network on Transitions to Adulthood (11). Retrieved from <http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/downloads/courtney--foster%20care.pdf>

2 B:E's coaching framework, Creative, Connected, Resourceful and Whole, means that staff take a coaching approach to their interactions with both other staff and youth by: asking empowering questions, challenging each other to do more than they thought possible, helping others acknowledge their strengths, championing their desires and abilities, embracing conflicting ideas or feelings, establishing accountability structures, and requesting that people take specific actions and set goals for their future. B:E applies this coaching framework through individual, peer and cohort coaching models.

3 B:E staff are trained in youth trauma and provide both physical and emotional safety for youth.

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**INFORMING  
CHANGE**

Date: April 11, 2014 A1



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