

T3C Training Series

Supporting Transition for Older Youth

Self-Study Manual

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Curriculum

Module 1: The Adolescent Brain & Executive Function — **25 minutes**

Module 2: Balancing Support & Autonomy — **25 minutes**

Module 3: Life Skills Coaching (DFPS/T3C Aligned) — **20 minutes**

Module 4: Goal setting, Natural Supports & Aftercare — **20 minutes**



How to Use This Manual

This manual is designed as a self-paced training that should take approximately 90 minutes to complete when followed as written. Each module includes the content a trainer would normally deliver in person, presented as “Read & Learn,” and then reinforces that content through practice activities, reflection prompts, and a self-check to confirm understanding. If you are completing this on your own, read each section in order, complete the activities as you go, and answer the knowledge check at the end to verify you can apply the information. If you are facilitating a small group, use the “Instructor Notes (Optional)” callouts to guide facilitation, highlight key points, and support participants through the training flow.

Structure of Each Module

What You’ll Learn – a quick overview of the key points covered in the module.

A brief opening summary that previews the module’s main topics and key takeaways. It helps the learner understand what the module will cover, what skills or knowledge will be emphasized, and what they should be able to explain or apply by the end of the module, so reading and practice stay focused on the most important points.

Read & learn – full content written in clear, plain language (what a trainer would normally cover).

The primary teaching section that provides the full content in clear, plain language, written as if a trainer were delivering it directly. It explains the core ideas and practical guidance in a step-by-step way, ensuring the learner has the needed context before moving into exercises, reflection, and real-life application.

Try It – short exercises and scripts to practice skills.

Short, structured exercises and practical scripts designed to practice skills immediately after learning them. This section helps the learner rehearse what to say and do, build confidence through repetition, and reduce uncertainty by turning concepts into concrete practice that can be used in common real-life situations.

Apply It – concrete steps you can take at home to transfer learning.

Clear, concrete actions that the learner can complete at home to put the module into practice. This section is designed to move learning into daily routines and real-life follow-through, so the concepts become consistent habits rather than just information read once.

Self-Check – 3–5 questions to confirm understanding.

A brief set of 3–5 questions that reviews the key points and confirms understanding before moving forward. It helps the learner check recall and application, and it highlights what to review again if any answers are uncertain.

Instructor Notes (Optional) – short facilitation guidance if a leader is present.

Brief guidance for a facilitator leading a small group, providing simple prompts and tips to



support discussion, emphasize key points, and keep delivery consistent. It helps a leader guide the module efficiently while still supporting participation and understanding.

DFPS Standards Callouts

Supervision and safety planning appropriate to risk: §749.1133.

This callout emphasizes that supervision and safety planning must match the youth's current risk level and context. Supervision should be adjusted up or down based on patterns you are seeing, and safety planning should be practical, clearly understood, and applied consistently to support safety without over- or under-reacting.

Aftercare coordination and discharge planning: §749.2813.

This callout emphasizes planning ahead for aftercare and discharge so supports continue without gaps. Coordination should identify needed services, key contacts, and follow-up steps early, with clear handoffs and scheduling so the youth remain connected to support during and after transition.

Module 1: The Adolescent Brain & Executive Function — 15 minutes

Estimated 15 minutes

What You'll Learn

Explain how teen brain development affects decisions and emotions.

Explain how teen brain development shapes choices and emotional responses by recognizing that decision-making and emotion regulation are still maturing, which affects how teens respond under stress and why their reactions look inconsistent from day to day.

Use scaffolds to support planning and follow-through.

Use scaffolds as practical supports that help teens plan, remember, and complete tasks, so follow-through improves without relying only on willpower or “should,” and without adding shame when a teen struggles.

Read & Learn (approx. 8 minutes)

Adolescents are wired to explore.

Adolescents are wired to explore, which means they naturally push for independence, test limits, and seek new experiences as part of development, even when adults would prefer more caution.

Executive functions—planning, attention, impulse control—are still developing, and trauma can make skills uneven.



Executive functions like planning, attention, and impulse control are still developing, so teens may have strengths in some areas and gaps in others. Trauma can make these skills uneven, meaning a teen may manage well one day and struggle the next, especially when stressed or triggered.

Expect good days and tough days.

Expect both good days and tough days as part of normal development and trauma impacts, and plan supports that work across both types of days rather than assuming progress will be perfectly steady.

External scaffolds (checklists, visual planners, reminders) reduce cognitive load and help teens succeed without shame.

External scaffolds such as checklists, visual planners, and reminders reduce cognitive load by taking pressure off memory and impulse control. These supports help teens succeed by making tasks clearer and easier to follow, and they support progress without shame when executive function skills are still developing.

Try It (approx. 3 minutes)

Create a weekly visual planner and identify two high-risk times to add prompts.

Weekly visual planner (key tasks/routines):

High-risk time #1: _____ Prompt you will add: _____

High-risk time #2: _____ Prompt you will add: _____

Apply It (approx. 3 minutes)

Post the planner where it will be seen; review it together on Sunday nights.

Where will you post it? _____

Sunday review plan (time + what you will cover):

Notes / Plan



Self-Check (approx. 1 minutes)

1. Why do teens take more risks?

Answer: _____

2. Give two examples of scaffolds.

Answer: _____

Instructor Notes (Optional)

- Reframe setbacks as information for coaching, not verdicts about character.
When a teen misses a task, reacts emotionally, or makes a poor decision, treat it as useful information about what support is needed rather than as a judgment about who the teen is. Use the setback to identify what broke down (planning, attention, impulse control, stress, or a trigger), then coach the next step with practical support like prompts, checklists, or reminders. Emphasize that setbacks are part of learning and development and use them to adjust scaffolds and expectations instead of labeling the teen as “lazy,” “defiant,” or “unmotivated.”

Module 2: Balancing Support & Autonomy — 15 minutes

What You'll Learn

Shift to a coaching stance while keeping safety non-negotiable.

Shift your approach from directing every step to coaching the youth through decisions and follow-through, while keeping safety expectations firm and non-negotiable so support increases independence without lowering safety.

Use graduated independence with reflection cycles.

Use graduated independence by increasing responsibility in steps, then using reflection cycles to review what happened, what worked, and what to adjust, so independence grows with learning rather than with guesswork.



Read & Learn (approx. 8 minutes)

Older youth need chances to try, reflect, and try again.

Older youth build skills when they are allowed to try, reflect on the outcome, and try again, because practice and learning from outcomes are key to developing planning and follow-through.

Stay connected even when you set limits.

Maintain connection and relationship even while setting limits, so boundaries are clear without pushing the youth into disengagement or “all-or-nothing” conflict.

Use curious questions and affirm effort.

Use curious questions to understand what happened and what got in the way and affirm effort so the youth feel recognized for trying, which supports motivation and keeps the conversation constructive.

Keep safety plans proportional to risk; adjust up or down based on patterns.

Keep safety plans proportional to the current risk level and adjust supervision and supports up or down based on patterns you are seeing, rather than reacting only to one moment or relying only on history.

Try It (approx. 3 minutes)

Role-play a supportive conversation after a missed appointment.

Curious question #1: _____

Curious question #2: _____

Effort you will affirm: _____

Next step (reschedule plan): _____

Reminder/support you will use: _____

Apply It (approx. 3 minutes)

Write two choices you can offer for a recurring conflict (choices within limits).

Choice #1 (acceptable + safe): _____

Choice #2 (acceptable + safe): _____



Notes / Plan

Self-Check (approx. 1 minutes)

1. What does a coaching stance sound like?

Answer: _____

2. When do you tighten supervision?

Answer: _____

Instructor Notes (Optional)

- Avoid power struggles; provide choices within limits.
- Avoid power struggles by offering choices that stay within safety limits, so the youth experiences autonomy without losing structure. Present choices calmly, keep the limit clear, and avoid arguing over the boundary itself. This approach supports engagement and cooperation while keeping boundaries consistent and predictable.

Module 3: Life Skills Coaching (DFPS/T3C Aligned) — 20 minutes

What You'll Learn

Teach budgeting, job readiness, healthcare navigation, housing readiness, benefits, and self-advocacy.

Teach core life skills that older youth need for successful transition, including budgeting with realistic spending choices, job readiness skills for applications and interviews, healthcare navigation for scheduling and communicating with providers, housing readiness for understanding leases and expectations, benefits access and follow-through, and self-advocacy skills so the youth can speak up appropriately and take ownership of next steps.

Read & Learn (approx. 11 minutes)

Use real-life tasks: budget with actual numbers, complete applications, practice calls to clinics, and read a sample lease together.

Use real-life, hands-on tasks rather than abstract lessons so the youth practices skills in the same format they will need in daily life. Budget using actual numbers that reflect real income and expenses, complete real or realistic applications so the youth learn the steps and follow-through, practice calls to clinics so the youth can speak clearly and ask for what they need and read a sample lease together, so housing expectations feel understandable and concrete.



Track micro-goals weekly and celebrate progress to build momentum.

Track small micro-goals every week so progress stays visible and the youth can see steady movement even when the overall transition feels big. Celebrate progress in a simple, consistent way to reinforce effort and follow-through, building momentum over time and helping the youth stay engaged with the process.

Try It (approx. 4 minutes)

Build a monthly budget and identify one expense to reduce and one saving habit.

Monthly income (estimate): _____ Total monthly expenses:

Expense to reduce (what/why/how):

Saving habit (small, repeatable routine):

Apply It (approx. 4 minutes)

Schedule one practice call (e.g., refill request) and complete it with the teen.

Practice call type: _____ Date/time: _____

What the teen will say/do: _____

What you will support/confirm: _____

Notes / Plan



Self-Check (approx. 1 minutes)

1. Name two items on a first-apartment setup list.

Answer: _____

Instructor Notes (Optional)

- Practice scripts for calls and appointments; role-play before doing the real thing. Practice short scripts for calls and appointments so the youth has words ready and feels less stuck in the moment. Role-play briefly before doing the real task, then complete the real-world step as soon as possible so practice turns into action and the youth builds confidence through successful follow-through.

Module 4: Goal-Setting, Natural Supports & Aftercare — 20 minutes

Estimated 20 minutes

What You'll Learn

Turn aspirations into SMART goals owned by the youth.

Turn broad aspirations into SMART goals that the youth own and understands, so goals are specific and actionable rather than vague. Youth ownership means the youth participates in choosing the goal, shaping the steps, and tracking progress, which supports follow-through.

Expand safe adult and peer connections; plan for aftercare.

Expand the youth's safe adult and peer connections by identifying supportive people and creating planned touchpoints, and plan for aftercare so supports continue beyond transition points and do not drop off unexpectedly

Read & Learn (approx. 11 minutes)

SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) keep progress visible.

SMART goals make progress visible because they clearly define what will be done, how it will be measured, and by when. This structure reduces confusion, supports accountability, and makes it easier to notice progress in small steps.

Map natural supports—family, mentors, peers—and plan specific touchpoints.

Map natural supports such as family, mentors, and peers so the youth know who is in their support network. Plan specific touchpoints—scheduled check-ins or contacts—so support is active and reliable rather than assumed.

Begin discharge planning early. Warm handoffs reduce dropout and isolation.

Begin discharge planning early so services and support are arranged before the transition



happens. Warm handoffs reduce dropout and isolation by making direct connections and clear next steps, which helps the youth stay engaged with supports during and after transition.

Try It (approx. 4 minutes)

Draft a 30-day plan with two micro-goals per week.

Week 1 micro-goal A: _____ micro-goal B: _____
Week 2 micro-goal A: _____ micro-goal B: _____
Week 3 micro-goal A: _____ micro-goal B: _____
Week 4 micro-goal A: _____ micro-goal B: _____

Apply It (approx. 4 minutes)

List three safe adults and schedule two check-ins this month.

Safe adult #1: _____ Safe adult #2: _____ Safe adult #3: _____

Check-in #1 (who/date/time): _____

Check-in #2 (who/date/time): _____

Notes / Plan

Self-Check (approx. 1 minutes)

1. What makes a goal SMART?

Answer: _____

2. Why start aftercare planning early?

Answer: _____

Instructor Notes (Optional)

- Review goals weekly; adjust without shame.
Review goals weekly to keep progress visible and to make timely adjustments. Adjust without shame so setbacks are treated as information for improvement rather than failure, supporting continued engagement.

Case Study

First Apartment, First Curveball

K., age 17½, is pursuing independent living and is in the early stages of taking on adult responsibilities. After a bad interview experience, K. responds by rejecting help and then misses



an Independent Living (IL) meeting, suggesting that discouragement and stress are affecting follow-through. At the same time, unopened mail is piling up and a past-due phone bill is accumulating, indicating practical tasks are being avoided and deadlines are slipping. This case highlights how a single setback can trigger withdrawal, reduced engagement, and missed responsibilities, and how small logistical issues (mail and bills) can quickly become larger barriers to stability if not addressed with structured support and coaching.

Guided Prompts

Script a coaching conversation that preserves connection and problem-solves the bill.

Script a coaching conversation that keeps the relationship connected even after the setback, uses a calm and curious tone, and shifts toward practical problem-solving. The conversation should preserve connection while also addressing the past-due phone bill directly—what happened, what the next step is, and how to prevent the issue from piling up again—without turning it into shame or a power struggle.

Break the bill into a 20-minute action plan and budget adjustment.

Break the phone bill problem into a short, doable 20-minute action plan with clear steps that can be completed right away, and then make a simple budget adjustment so the plan is financially realistic. The goal is to move from avoidance to follow-through by keeping the steps small, time-limited, and measurable.

Tools & Templates

Monthly budget template

A template to map monthly income and expenses with realistic numbers, making it easier to see what is due, what can be adjusted, and how a bill fits into the overall budget.



Job application checklist & interview questions

A checklist and practice questions that support job readiness by organizing application steps and preparing for interviews, especially after a discouraging experience.

Healthcare navigation checklist

A checklist that supports healthcare follow-through by outlining the steps for scheduling, calling, and managing appointments, so tasks are clear and repeatable.

First apartment setup list

A practical list of basic first-apartment needs that helps the youth plan essentials and reduce last-minute gaps when moving toward independent living.

Aftercare contact sheet

A simple contact sheet that lists key supports and follow-up contacts, so the youth knows who to reach out to and support can continue without gaps.

Module Knowledge Check (10 minutes)

Provide one micro-goal K. could complete this week.

Provide one small, concrete action K. can complete this week that supports follow-through and reduces piling tasks, such as taking one clear step toward resolving the phone bill or progressing on employment tasks.

Name two natural supports to add to K.'s map.

Name two supportive people or connections that could be added to K.'s natural supports map, focusing on safe adults and peers who can provide consistent check-ins and practical encouragement.

Answer Key (for Self-Study Review)

Example: call the phone company to set up a payment plan; apply to two jobs.

These micro-goals are concrete and time-limited: calling the phone company moves the bill toward resolution, and applying to two jobs keeps forward momentum after a setback.

Mentor/coach; extended kin; school counselor; peer support group.

These supports expand K.'s network beyond one person and provide different types of help—coaching, practical guidance, and consistent encouragement through safe adult and peer connections.

Resources & Referrals

DFPS Minimum Standards §749 (Child-Placing Agencies) and §748 (General Residential Operations).



Use these standards as the baseline reference for required expectations related to supervision, safety planning, documentation, and coordination.

STAR Health Behavioral Health Coordination & 24/7 Nurse Line.

Use Behavioral Health Coordination for service linkage and next steps, and the 24/7 Nurse Line for after-hours medical guidance.

Local MHMR or mobile crisis number; 988 Lifeline.

Keep MHMR/mobile crisis contacts and 988 available for urgent escalation and immediate crisis support.

Education advocacy: local school district special education contacts; IEP/504 resources.

Use district special education contacts and IEP/504 resources for evaluations, accommodations, and school supports when needed.

Caregiver peer support and respite/IAC networks.

Use peer support and respite/IAC networks to reduce burnout and strengthen consistent follow-through.

If you are in immediate danger or a youth is at risk, call emergency services and follow agency critical incident procedures.

Call emergency services immediately when safety is at risk, then follow agency critical incident procedures for required notifications and documentation.

