



Capacity Building
CENTER FOR STATES

Perspectives on Normalcy Handout: Treat Me Like a Normal Child

This handout is part of the series, “Perspectives on Normalcy: Videos and Discussion Questions.” It is designed to facilitate discussion about the issues raised in the video, “Young Adult Formerly in Congregate Care: Treat Me Like a Normal Child.”

About the Interviewee:

Brandon is a 21-year-old alumnus of the foster care system. He was in the foster care system for about 10 years. He has worked in State government for about 3 years and has served as a foster care advocate for the last few years. He feels that normal activities for all youth in foster care should include getting a driver’s license, going on out-of-State and overnight trips, and participating in sports.

Quotes from the Interviewee:

“The only thing that matters is our safety. But the real thing that matters is well-being. Well-being, yes, it does include safety, but it has to include happiness.” – *Brandon*

“We need love, we need support, we need validation. We have to have the freedom to fail so we can succeed.” – *Brandon*

“If I had one thing to tell child welfare workers, and also the youth in care, it's that ‘this is your time to be a kid. This is the time that you need to learn. This is the time that you need to fall.’ And for those workers, you need to let them fall. Because if they never fall, they'll never know how to get back up. They'll just fall and that'll be it. [...] It's more about the fact that they can't figure out who they are. Instead, they're just told who they have to be. You can't avoid mistakes in life.”
– *Brandon*

Questions for Discussion:

- ▶ How can congregate care settings promote normalcy?
- ▶ What opportunities can congregate care settings provide to prepare young people for adulthood?
- ▶ What supports do congregate care settings provide to promote lifelong connections?
- ▶ Brandon talks a lot about well-being—why is this important?
- ▶ What could the system have done differently to provide Brandon with a different experience?

To access the video, please visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/foster-care-permanency/perspectives-normalcy/congregate-care-video>.

