

WELCOME!

QPI CHAMPIONS TRAINING:



*The Importance of
Relationships Through the
Lens of Lived Experience*



September 15, 2026

TRAINING AGENDA



1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Training Recap & Elevator Pitch
3. Panel: Impact of Relationships
4. Breakout Groups
5. Closing and Reminders



Our Learning Journey

What We've Covered — and What's Next

*Excellent parenting
for every child
every day.*

1



What is QPI?

Our mission, approach,
and why adolescent
development matters.

2



The Science Behind QPI

Attachment and
relationships.

3



The Importance of Relationships

Through the lens
of lived experience.

4



Branding as a Change Strategy

How to tell the QPI story
and build momentum
for change.

5



The Art of Persuasion

Tools and strategies
to influence, engage,
and champion change.

COMPLETED

UP NEXT

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CHANGING SYSTEMS, NOT ADOLESCENTS

*Applying Developmental
Science to Help Youth Thrive*

SAVE THE DATE:

OCTOBER 27 - 28, 2026

QPI Champions Conference

San Diego, CA

Registration Coming Soon!



WHAT IF WE STOPPED ASKING **ADOLESCENTS** TO FIT OUR SYSTEMS— AND STARTED DESIGNING SYSTEMS THAT **HELP ADOLESCENTS THRIVE**?

THAT QUESTION IS AT THE HEART OF THE 2026 QPI CHAMPIONS CONFERENCE.

Over the past several years, the Youth Law Center's Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) has brought together leading adolescent development researchers, young people and families with lived expertise, caregivers, practitioners, and child welfare leaders to explore what development is happening among adolescents in QPI systems.

NOW IT'S TIME TO MOVE FROM SCIENCE TO ACTION.

Join colleagues from across the country for an interactive, working conference focused on translating developmental science into meaningful changes in child welfare policy, practice, and systems.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

This conference is designed for multidisciplinary teams committed to improving outcomes for adolescents in foster care. We encourage QPI sites to attend with a diverse team that may include:

- ✓ Young People and Families with Lived Expertise
- ✓ Caregivers Supporting Adolescents
- ✓ Child Welfare Leaders
- ✓ Supervisors and Practitioners
- ✓ CQI/QA and Implementation Staff
- ✓ Placement and Permanency Leaders
- ✓ Training and Development Staff
- ✓ Community and Cross-Systems Partners

BRING THE PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP TURN
LEARNING INTO **LASTING SYSTEMS CHANGE**.

**REGISTER
TODAY!**

[Visit our Event Page](#)



QPI CHAMPIONS TRAINING

Elevator Speech

Short Message.
Big Impact.



What We Learned



Youth Law Center is a systems change advocacy organization.

We work to change the policies, practices, and systems that shape the lives of children, youth, and families.



The Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) is YLC's systems change strategy for foster care.

QPI works to ensure that every child and youth in foster care receives excellent parenting and has strong, positive relationships.



Parenting and relationships are the most powerful tools we have to support children's development and healing.

Safe, stable, and responsive relationships help children and youth heal, develop, and reach their full potential.

Youth Law Center

Systems change
advocacy organization



QPI

Systems change
strategy for foster care



**Excellent Parenting
+ Strong Relationships**

The Science of Attachment

Key takeaways from Dr. Zeanah's session



Attachment is about protection, safety, and connection.

Children are biologically wired to seek comfort and protection from trusted caregivers, especially when they are distressed, frightened, or uncertain.



Attachment develops through everyday caregiving.

Consistent, responsive interactions teach children that adults can be trusted to notice their needs, respond, and help them feel safe.



Children can form new attachments.

Past experiences matter, but they do not determine a child's future. New, responsive caregiving relationships can support development, recovery, and healing.



Our systems can either support or disrupt relationships.

Placement decisions, transitions, visitation, and everyday practices should protect and strengthen the relationships children depend on.



**Need or
Distress**



**Responsive
Caregiver**



**Safety &
Trust**



**Development
& Healing**

The Science of Attachment

Key Takeaways from Dr. Zeanah's Session



Relationships are central to healthy development.

Children rely on trusted caregivers for safety, comfort, regulation, and connection.



Transitions should protect relationships — not abruptly end them.

Moves are not simply logistical events. How a child moves from one caregiver to another matters, and transitions should be planned around the child's developmental and relational needs.

The Three C's of Developmentally Informed Transitions



Collaboration

Adults work together around the child rather than operating separately.



Communication

Children, families, and caregivers have the information they need and understand what is happening.



Continuity

Important relationships are maintained whenever possible instead of being unnecessarily disrupted.

The goal: fewer moves, no abrupt transitions, and relationships that continue across change.



**What's the most
important question
we have to ask
before each transition?**



The Answer:

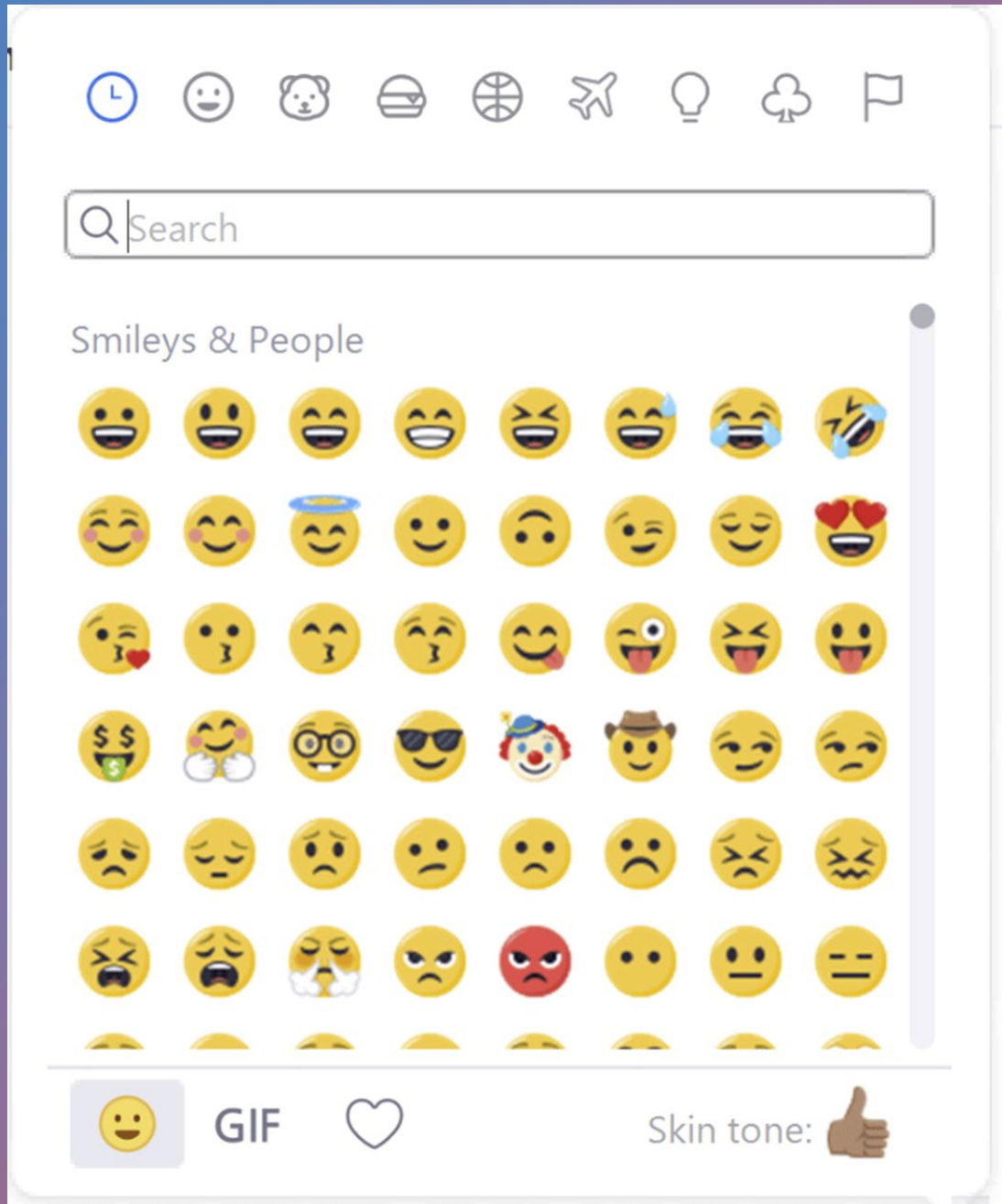


**Does it need
to happen?**

"Emoji Reflections"

Adolescent Reflection:

- In the chat, share an emoji or a combination of emojis that encapsulates your thoughts and feelings about adolescence and relationships. This can be based on your personal experiences, those of your children, or the youth you work with.



Adolescence is the age of opportunity

“People certainly do not enter adolescence with a ‘blank slate.’ Rather, adolescent development is partly a consequence of earlier life experiences. However, these early life experiences are not determinative, and the adaptive plasticity of adolescence marks it as a window of opportunity for change through which mechanisms of resilience, recovery, and development are possible.” *



* National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/25388>



“Safe, secure, and sustained relationships are the most important factor for healthy development, resilience, recovery, and healing for youth. Such relationships can help them heal from hard pasts. Our efforts must enhance, rather than disrupt, youth's protective relationships.”

Ken Ginsburg, MD, MS Ed, FAAP, FSAHM

Adolescence:

An Incredible Opportunity for Growth

Adolescence is a unique and powerful stage of development. Young people are learning, exploring, and shaping who they are — and relationships play a vital role.



The brain is still developing.

Areas responsible for planning, decision-making, and self-regulation are still maturing.



The brain is highly adaptable.

This is a period of heightened plasticity, meaning experiences and environments can have a powerful impact.



Relationships matter more.

Belonging, acceptance, and connection are especially important during adolescence.



Identity is taking shape.

Young people are figuring out who they are, what they value, where they belong, and who they want to become.



Exploration has a purpose.

Trying new things, testing boundaries, and taking healthy risks help young people learn and grow.



Positive experiences make a difference.

Supportive relationships, meaningful opportunities, and environments where young people can contribute can shape development in lasting ways.

**Adolescence is a window of opportunity for
connection, growth, and healing.**

Where Does Our System Struggle?

Remember Dr. Z's points?

- Overlooking/not considering youth's perspective
- We don't tell youth what is happening
- We don't think developmentally
- We underappreciate and undermine foster parents
- We keep families apart
- We struggle to balance science and values

QPI CHAMPIONS TRAINING

Meet Today's Panel



Devin



Erica



Aleesha



Ashley

*Thank you
for being here! ♥*

Discussion Group



Breakout Discussion

1

What are some of the unique challenges that older youth in foster care face when building and maintaining positive relationships?

2

What are common experiences?
Common barriers?

Share your perspectives!

Discussion Group

Breakout Discussion



*Relationships.
Agency.
Opportunity.*

1

What policies or practices in your area support youth's relationships?

What's working well? What helps young people build and maintain meaningful, supportive relationships?

2

What policies or practices create challenges for youth's relationships?

What gets in the way? How do these challenges impact young people's ability to feel connected, supported, and have a sense of belonging?

3

Think about a space that's ripe for change in your community or work.

Based on what you've discussed, what's one opportunity to improve a policy or practice? How could changes in this space lead to broader system change?

Share your perspectives!