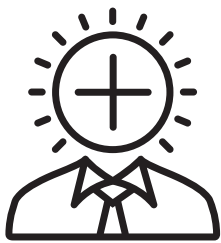


## **ADVISOR**

Definition

### **Definition of Advisor -**

By definition, an advisor involves speaking on behalf of a person to ensure that their rights and needs are recognized. The SFA Advisor is an individual identified by the youth to be designated as the youth's advisor on the application of Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards (RPPS). RPPS allow foster parents to use their best judgment in making day-to-day decisions about activities foster youth are involved in. This applies to activities and being able to participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, academic, enrichment, and social activities that promote a sense of "normalcy" while in foster care. Advocacy is about increasing the amount of control that a person has over their own lives, the advisor needs to ensure they are working in a way that fosters independence.



## **IDENTIFY**

An Advisor

### **Identify reliable and caring adults who can serve as a stable, ongoing connection and can provide support**

- Talk about family members (who is close to the youth)
- Talk about family friends
- Talk about adults that are around at school, church, other youth-involved activities
- Talk about who the youth would put down for a reference when applying for a job
- Talk about who would be invited to a get together or party their family was hosting
- Talk about where the youth spends holidays
- Talk about who the youth goes to for help at school
- Talk about who the youth would call when something exciting happens to them
- Advisor cannot be a current caseworker or foster parent



## **ROLES OF**

An Advisor

### **Advisor roles and responsibilities the youth may want help with**

Example: What activities or changes would help build your sense of normalcy while you're in care?

- Attending school activities
- Participating in Cultural/Religious activities
- Advocating for social activities with friends
- Advocating for extracurricular activities
- Getting driver's licenses other certifications
- Assisting with employment/education
- Celebrating age appropriate milestones

**What makes the young person feel different from their peers?**

Allow the youth to identify roles and responsibilities for the advisor.

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**Individuals identified by the youth to be a potential Advisor -**

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**How is the identified advisor going to be invited to the team if not a part of the team already?**

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**How will the team handle disagreements with the advisor?**

- Try to reach a compromise
- Agree to disagree (the worker has the ultimate decision)
- Listen to all opinions

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**How will the worker ensure the advisor make sure the youth's voice is heard?**

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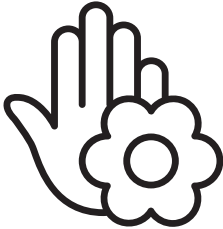
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**Disclaimers:**

DHHS/PromiseShip reserves the right to deny an identified individual to act as the youth's advisor if it is not in the best interest of the youth. Provide the advisor with a list of contact information for team members for cases of emergency.



**ADVISOR**  
Definition

**Definition of Advisor -**

By definition, an advisor involves speaking on behalf of a person to ensure that their rights and needs are recognized. The SFA Advisor is an individual identified by the youth to be designated as the youth’s advisor and advisor on the application of Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards (RPPS). RPPS allow foster parents to use their best judgment in making day-to-day decisions about activities foster youth are involved in. This applies to activities and being able to participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, academic, enrichment, and social activities that promote a sense of “normalcy” while in foster care. Advocacy is about increasing the amount of control that a person has over their own lives, the advisor needs to ensure they are working in a way that fosters independence.



**ROLES OF**  
An Advisor

**The Advisor must agree to be a participant on the team (as defined by the youth and team).**

- Build relationships and communicate with team members to best serve the youth.
  - o Team members that may be a part of the team
    - ◆ Family Permanency Specialist (FPS) – Case Manager
    - ◆ Guardian ad Litem (GAL) – Legal advisor for the youth, attorney who represents the youth’s interests at court
    - ◆ Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) – Volunteer who gathers information and make recommendations to the judge
    - ◆ Independent Living Specialist (ILS) – Worker assigned to help set and meet goals of the youth in order to build self-sufficiency skills.
    - ◆ Foster parents – Foster parents provide care for children who cannot safely remain in their own home.
- Roles, responsibilities, participation, and communication may change based on the youth’s current situation.
- The advisor has the option to withdraw from the position at any time.
- The youth has the option to rescind the offer to advisor at any time if they feel the individual is not working in their best interest.
- Specific situations the youth would like the advisor to assist them with:

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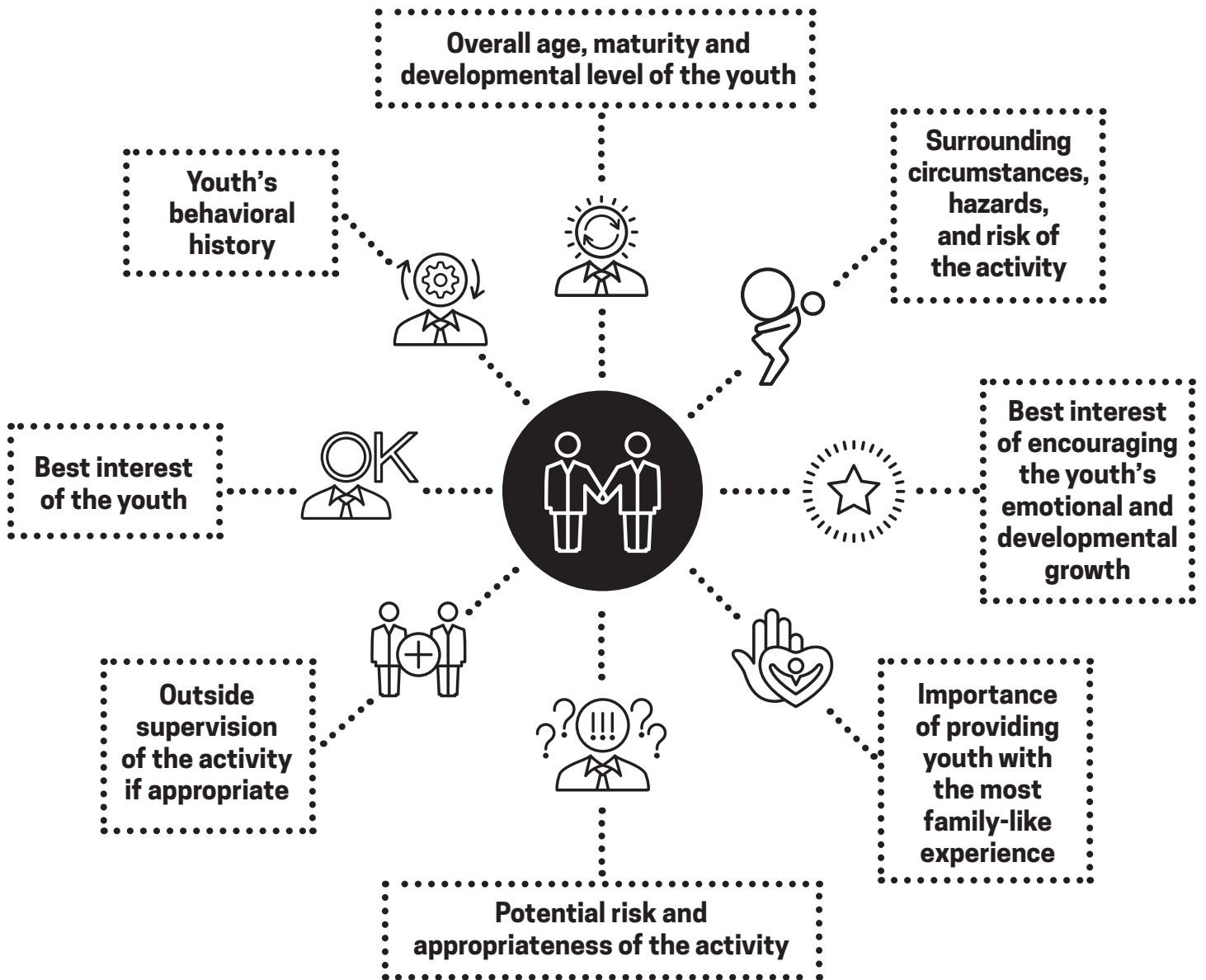
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**Identify how the advisor is going to communicate. How is the youth’s voice going to be heard?**

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# FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN ADVOCATING FOR RPPS AND NORMALCY ACTIVITIES



## TIPS FOR THE ADVISOR



**Know the facts**



**Identify the problem, if there is one**



**Identify key decision makers**



**Use respectful and assertive communication**



**Maintain confidentiality**



**Know who/how to contact in cases of emergency**

# HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVISORS

## SET BOUNDARIES AND KEEP UP YOUR SELF-CARE

It can be difficult to navigate your own wellness and also provide peer support to someone else. If you aren't healthy or practicing self-care yourself, you may not be able to help someone at this time. Becoming a successful advisor for others is only possible once you're able to advocate for your own health and well-being. Before you decide to become an advisor, it's important to ask yourself if you are in a place where you will be able to offer support, or if you need to set a boundary. And if all you can offer is friendship, you're still helping so much!

Setting boundaries is a great tool to help you manage the support you can give (e.g. when you can connect, what's out of your comfort zone, etc.). If you're coming from a place of compassion, setting a boundary with the support seeker is an act of support; it means you want to make sure you can be as helpful as possible, even if that means connecting them to other support options. Even when you're able to act as an advisor for others, or simply connect with them, it's important to manage expectations and draw boundaries that protect your own needs.

Let the support seeker know that you aren't responsible to provide them with counseling, social services crisis intervention, financial assistance. Someone you're talking with is probably going through a difficult time, so ask, "How can I help?" and make sure you listen to what they need from you. That person's needs are valid, but it's up to you to decide if you are able and willing to offer them help.

## BE A CONFIDANTE

Acting as an advisor for others means people may confide in you. Your goal is to create an environment where people feel safe to share and connect. In doing that, someone may share information that's difficult to understand or shocking to hear. Focus on the person and not their actions. Offer them support in a positive and non-judgmental way.

Trust is a fragile thing, so it's important to honor that confidentiality except in the case of a crisis situation. At the same time, be clear about the circumstances where you will have to reach out to a 3rd party for help.

## KNOW THE CRISIS WARNING SIGNS

Part of being an advisor for others means being aware of signs that someone is in crisis. If you realize someone is in crisis, remember to stay calm when you talk to them, while still taking them seriously and not underacting – if you're worried, it's okay to show that you're worried. It's also important to not promise confidentiality, as you may need to contact a professional on their behalf if they aren't willing to. If they are not in immediate danger, it's best to try to help them connect with another competent professional. If they need convincing, share concrete reasons why you believe they are in crisis and need to reach out for more help. Acknowledge their feelings and reassure them that there is help out there. Don't be argumentative or judgmental; just listen, be honest, and don't relieve the person of responsibility for their actions. Try to stay in contact with them until you're sure they've connected with a professional.

## BE SENSITIVE IN YOUR LANGUAGE

Be deliberate in the choices of language you use when talking with someone who needs support. Be careful not to monopolize the conversation, but you don't have to be a silent sounding board, either! Share your thoughts and opinions about what the other person is saying, without giving advice or telling them what to do. Instead, try to respond emotionally, with understanding and compassion. If something they've said resonates with your own experience, share it if you feel comfortable doing so. Sometimes sharing a piece of your own journey is the best way to show you understand someone else's.

## SOMETIMES ADVOCACY IS JUST BEING A GOOD FRIEND

If you're acting as a support for someone who isn't in crisis, the most important thing to do is be a caring friend! Remember to ask "how are you?" and genuinely listen to the answer. Don't act uncomfortable if someone confides in you that they are going through a difficult time; just listen and say "how can I help?" or offer to help them with something specific. Be patient if they are down during a rough patch. Be happy with them when the rough patch is over. Be one of the people in their life who sees them as a whole person