Supplemental Volume to

BraveLife (BLI) Intervention Manual

Additional Training for Peer-2-Peer Navigators

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Introduction

The BraveLife Intervention (BLI) is a youth-centered, strength-based initiative that uses Peer-2-Peer (P2P) Navigators to support youth currently or formerly in foster care in achieving their goals. P2P Navigators are young adults with lived experience in the foster care system who are trained and employed by the agency implementing BLI.

The BLI is comprised of three phases:

1. **Engagement** – The BLI begins with a P2P Navigator reaching out to and building positive healing relationships with at-risk youth. The P2P Navigator can build an empathetic and trusting relationship with an at-risk youth based on the understanding that they have walked in the same shoes as the youth who are in care or have been in care.

2. **Empowerment** – The Empowerment process is strength-based and youth-driven because P2P Navigators listen to youth's priorities and focus on building and strengthening the skills youth need to work on. The Empowerment phase is composed of two stages:
    1. Stage 1: The P2P Navigator helps the youth understand the roles and responsibilities of the various people either in the system or outside the system who interact with the youth. The P2P Navigator also supports, mirrors, and models skills and behaviors for the youth to aid in their interactions with professionals.
    2. Stage 2: A joint meeting takes place with the youth and others who support them, such as family members, case workers, aftercare workers, employment counselors, and education advocates. The purpose of this joint meeting is to continue dialogue and underscore the amount of support the youth has in this process. In this stage, the P2P Navigator helps the youth focus on articulating their goals.

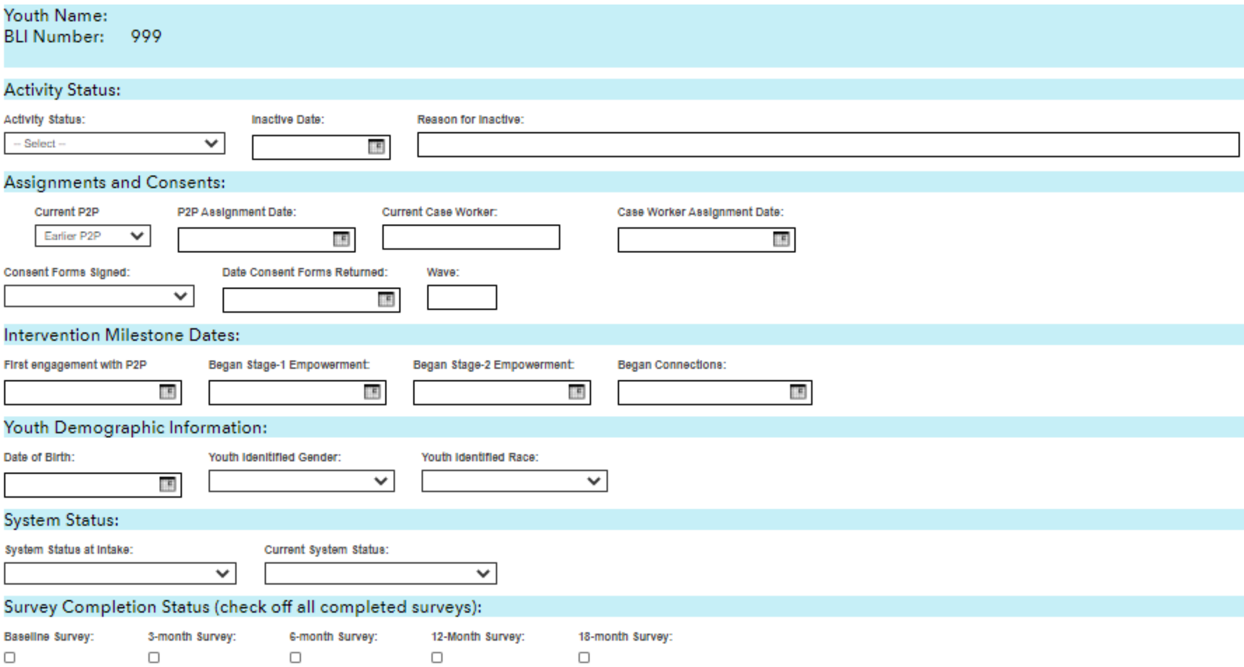
3. **Connections** – During the Connections phase, the P2P Navigator takes a step back, and encourages the youth to make linkages on their own to appropriate services in the community that correspond with the youth's goals.

The following supplemental volume to the BLI Intervention Manual details some of the additional training requirements needed to support youth with lived experience in child welfare in being P2P Navigators. The particular topics addressed are: (1) use of the case management system; (2) writing to improve documentation; (3) ethics; (4) keeping boundaries when working with youth; and (5) supportive leadership and self-care.

1. Use of Case Management System

A database system has been developed to manage information about youth participating in BLI. There are two essential components: a details page and a progress notes page.

The details page keeps track of some demographic information about the youth as well as important dates. Among the dates recorded are when the youth entered the BLI and all consent forms were signed, the first interaction with the P2P Navigator, when the youth completed each survey (baseline and all follow-ups), and when the youth entered each phase of the BLI (Engagement, Empowerment 1, Empowerment 2, and Connections). Program administrators are responsible for entering data on the details page.

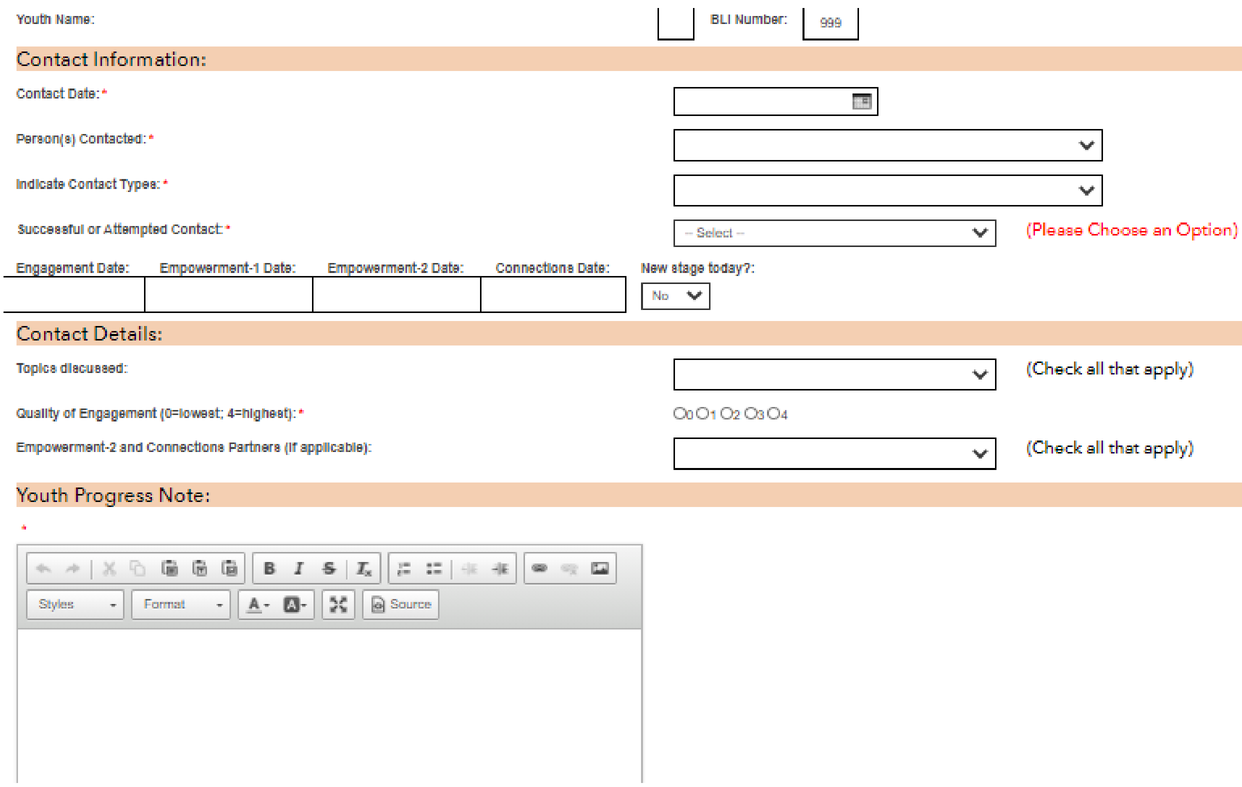

Youth Name:
BLI Number: 999
Activity Status:
Activity Status: -- Select --
Inactive Date:
Reason for Inactive:
Assignments and Consents:
Current P2P: Earlier P2P
P2P Assignment Date:
Current Case Worker:
Case Worker Assignment Date:
Consent Forms Signed:
Date Consent Forms Returned:
Wave:
Intervention Milestone Dates:
First engagement with P2P
Began Stage-1 Empowerment:
Began Stage-2 Empowerment:
Began Connections:
Youth Demographic Information:
Date of Birth:
Youth Identified Gender:
Youth Identified Race:
System Status:
System Status at Intake:
Current System Status:
Survey Completion Status (check off all completed surveys):
Baseline Survey:
3-month Survey:
6-month Survey:
12-Month Survey:
18-month Survey:

The second component of the database is the progress notes page, which enables the P2P Navigators to document every contact they have with the youth.

- The progress notes page begins with a calendar entry, where the P2P Navigator records the date of the contact with the youth.
- Then there are a series of drop down lists to record details about the contact, such asthe person contacted, noting whether it was just the youth, or others including family members, the case worker, or an aftercare worker.
- Next, the P2P Navigator chooses the type of contact, whether it was a text, a phone call, face-to-face meeting, social media, or some combination.,
- Then the P2P Navigator chooses whether it was an attempted contact that did not actually take place, or the contact with the youth was successfully carried out.The P2P Navigator also chooses from a list of possible topics discussed with the youth during the contact, including housing, education, employment, permanency, and social and well-being.
- The P2P Navigator also assigns a rating of the quality of the engagement with the youth, using a scale of 0 to 4. A 0 is for an attempted contact that did not occur, a 1 is for a contact that displayed minimal interaction with the youth, up to a 4, which indicates very meaningful interaction with the youth.
- The final drop down list only applies for youth who are in the Empowerment Stage 2 and Connections phases, where the outside partners who have participated in a contact are

identified, such as aftercare workers, case workers, housing specialists, employment counselors, and education advocates.

- The P2P Navigator then provides written documentation about what transpired during the contact with the youth, which is discussed in more detail in the next section.



Youth Name: BLI Number: 999

Contact Information:

Contact Date:*

Person(s) Contacted:*

Indicate Contact Types:*

Successful or Attempted Contact:* -- Select -- (Please Choose an Option)

Engagement Date: Empowerment-1 Date: Empowerment-2 Date: Connections Date: New stage today?: No

Contact Details:

Topics discussed: (Check all that apply)

Quality of Engagement (0=lowest; 4=highest):* 0 1 2 3 4

Empowerment-2 and Connections Partners (if applicable): (Check all that apply)

Youth Progress Note:

*

Styles Format Source

2. Documentation to Support Service Delivery and Planning

Documentation is an essential process for keeping track of youth's progress in the intervention. Good documentation needs to be systematic and consistent. The purpose is to provide information about what transpired between the P2P Navigator and the youth, which can assist in the planning process, and to describe how the youth has responded to different situations. P2P Navigators should complete the documentation soon after meeting with the youth—ideally within three days—to remember and accurately record what transpired. Documentation can also help supervisors identify problems to address in working with the youth.

The progress notes should use the following format: Purpose, Presentation, Process, and Plan. If the youth has entered the Empowerment phase, then the goals that the youth is working on are also listed.

- Purpose – Identify the point of the interaction with the youth.
- Presentation – Describe how the youth presented, this is most relevant with face-to-face meetings. For example, was the youth dressed appropriately for the weather.
- Process – What was discussed with the youth and how did the youth respond to the conversation.
- Plan – Identify any follow-up activities with the youth.
- Goals – If the youth has progressed to at least Empowerment Stage 1, the P2P Navigator will describe short, intermediate, and long-term goals that the youth is working on.

Characteristics of Good Documentation:

- Writing is clear and concise and should strive for accuracy.
- Respectful language about the youth is used.
- Run-on sentences are avoided.
- The note describes what transpired with the youth during the interaction.
- Information about the youth's presentation is clear and describes what was observed about the youth.
- The note provides substantial detail, such as dates, people involved, measurable achievements, and the emotions of the youth.
- From reading the progress note, it is possible to know what the interaction was about, and what the plan is for the future.

Characteristics of Poor Documentation:

- The note lacks detail. Someone reading the document would have a hard time understanding what the purpose was and what actually took place in the interaction with the youth.
- There is limited information about the individuals present at the meeting. For example, if there is anyone other than the youth involved, there is no mention of this.
- The note does not provide the youth's voice. There is no sense of how the youth was feeling or what the youth was thinking about during the interaction.
- There is no identification of the goals that the youth is working on.

3. Ethics

A. Key ethical principles that P2P Navigators must keep in mind

In working with the youth, it is critical to follow strict ethical guidelines. Ethics can be defined as moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity. The following model of ethical decision making (Congress, 1999)[1]can assist in making ethical decisions as quickly and effectively as possible.

- **E**xamine relevant values – these include personal, societal, agency, client, and professional values.
- **T**hink about relevant laws, policies, regulations, and codes – including the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (see link below).
- **H**ypothesize about different consequences that may arise from making different decisions.
- **I**dentify who will be helped and harmed, taking into consideration a commitment to help the most vulnerable.
- **C**onsult with supervisors and colleagues about the most ethical choice.

All P2P Navigators have an on-board training program when they are first hired by the organization. During this training the following topics are covered: work responsibilities, work hours, tardiness, and dress code. All of the rules of conduct from the employee handbook are reviewed with the P2P Navigators.

Next, the highlighted areas of the NASW Code of Ethics (which can be found at https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English) are reviewed. Although the P2P Navigators are not social workers, this document gives them a useful perspective on ethics for their work with the youth. Ethical principles are based on the core social work values of service, social justice, dignity, and integrity. It takes into account the worth of the individual, respect for others, and advocating for others' needs while being mindful of society's needs.

The P2P Navigators are reminded that being ethical means taking another person's actions and behaviors into consideration when making decisions, as well as being mindful of individual and cultural differences.

B. Activities to support training on ethics

A core component of the ethics training is a discussion of appropriate versus inappropriate actions in working with the youth. The P2P Navigators are given a series of scenarios that they may encounter with the youth, along with options for how to proceed. In these scenarios there are discussions around the "preferred choice" among the options. A review of the other options

[1] Congress, E. (1999). Social work values and ethics: Identifying and resolving professional dilemmas. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth., chapter 3.

and why they are not preferred are also discussed to provide a learning opportunity for the P2P Navigators.

The following are some of the scenarios that could present ethical dilemmas for the P2P Navigators in their work with the youth:

- While at a bar over the weekend, the P2P Navigator encounters one of their youth who wants to party with them.
- A youth makes repeated “follow” or “friend” requests to the P2P Navigator’s private social media account.
- The P2P Navigator receives $30 in petty cash to spend on a youth, but the youth cancels the meeting, leaving the P2P Navigator with a choice about what to do with the money.

4. Keeping Boundaries when Working with Youth

A. Importance of keeping boundaries

P2P Navigators may have had similar experiences to the youth and feel they can help because they have “been there” and might understand how the youth feels. Yet, it is critical to maintain healthy boundaries. The P2P Navigator needs to understand the painful experiences of the youth and provide continuity and predictability. At the same time, the P2P Navigator must have clear expectations about healthy behaviors and be careful not to cross boundaries.

Boundaries are there to help both the P2P Navigator and the youth. Overstepping boundaries can hurt the youth and create more loss for the youth. It is important that the P2P Navigator keep in mind that the youth is always watching and learning from their example.

B. Defining boundaries and limitations

P2P Navigators set boundaries by maintaining professional relationships with their youth. It is important to set boundaries with the youth right from the beginning, so that there is no confusion about expectations. In setting boundaries with the youth, the P2P Navigators should not interact with the youth the same way as they would with a “best friend.” Open communication is key, and the P2P Navigator must frame the context of the relationship to create a sense of safety for the youth. This is accomplished by the P2P navigator explaining to the youth that their relationship is professional not social. For example, this means that P2P Navigator cannot socialize with the youth (e.g. going out to dinner, meeting for drinks). It also means not giving advice on personal health matters or financial issues.

P2P Navigators must also adhere to the limitations of their intended roles working with the youth. They help youth navigate the service networks available to them but they should not directly try to provide services such as professional counseling or psychosocial intervention. The P2P Navigators needs to know when to refer youth in foster care to social workers or other counselors.

C. Setting standards in working with youth

The P2P Navigators should set standards in working with the youth, and consistently follow these standards. For example:

- It is not appropriate to allow a youth to “friend” or “follow” a P2P Navigator on their private social media accounts.
- Caution needs to be exercised in the choice and style of language used with the youth. There needs to be a balance between professional speech and a more relaxed way of speaking so that the youth is receptive to what the P2P Navigator is saying, although cursing is never appropriate.

- If the youth is angry and starts cursing, it is important to help them calm down first and then redirect them towards appropriate language so they will be heard better.
- The dress code should be adapted according to the situation. If there is a meeting with professionals, the style of dress should be more formal, but if it is just a casual meeting with the youth, dress can be more informal.

D. Approach to training

In the training, it is essential that the discussion on boundaries and limitations be interactive. The P2P Navigators need to have an opportunity to provide their understanding of a number of topics, such as the difference between boundaries and limitations, as well as offer examples of each in their work with the youth.

The training also covers boundaries and limitations with colleagues and supervisors. It is important to separate work life from personal life, such as having two different phones, one for work and the other for personal matters. Although work friendships can form, one should take caution in having work relationships because individuals need to be able to work together despite what is going on in their relationship. In addition, cliques in the workplace should be avoided, and one needs to understand the line between being personable and professional.

5. <u>Supportive Leadership and Self-Care</u>

A. Supportive Leadership

In addition to being comprehensively trained to perform their functions effectively and professionally, the P2P Navigators need to be fully supported by a network of experienced social workers and other professionals. During the training, the P2P Navigators are introduced to the leadership team, who explain their functions and how they can be a resource of ongoing support. The P2P Navigators are encouraged to reach out to members of the leadership team any time they are in need of support or guidance.

The members of the leadership team include the P2P Navigator Coach/Supervisor, the BLI Coordinator, a Supervisor, and Executive Support.

- **P2P Navigator Coach/Supervisor** – is a seasoned professional who has lived experience in the foster care system. The principal role of the P2P Navigator Coach/Supervisor is to supervise the P2P Navigators and provide them with the needed support and guidance so that they can work effectively with the youth.
- **BraveLife Intervention (BLI) Coordinator** – is an experienced social work professional who has lived experience in the foster care system. The BLI Coordinator specializes in conducting administrative work, including recruiting, hiring and training of P2P Navigators. Both the BLI Coach/Supervisor and Coordinator assist the P2P Navigators in handling difficult cases, processing their emotions when working with the youth, and helping them to normalize any trauma triggers from their own past experiences.
- **BraveLife Intervention (BLI) Supervisor** – is a social work professional with extensive experience in supervision and support. The supervisor is a clinician with specialized training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) to add an extra layer of support to the P2P Navigators.
- **Executive Support** – is provided by a member of the executive staff, to support the work of the P2P Navigators and their supervisors. This ensures that support is forthcoming from the highest levels of the organization for the intervention.

B. Self-Care

An effective P2P Navigator has the following attributes: empathy, authenticity, openness, compassion, and listening skills. Yet, to be effective, P2P Navigators have to find a balance between helping others and caring for themselves. Therefore, to support others, the P2P Navigators also have to understand how to support themselves. In doing this work with the youth, self-care is of great importance.

Self-care involves three main components:

- The first is being self-aware, meaning that the P2P Navigators know themselves and what their triggers are.
- The second is having self-regulation, which is the ability to regulate one’s emotions.

- The third is knowing how to balance personal and professional lives. P2P Navigators should recognize that they need personal time for themsleves, which may include their own personal hobbies, family time, and vacation time. Having personal time can help to allievate stress that may be experienced in their role working with youth in foster care.

During the training, the P2P Navigators are asked what they can do to promote self-care. Among the possible responses could be: getting enough sleep, eating healthy meals, exercising, and spending time with friends and family.