

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Youth Support Specialist (YSS)?

A YSS is an individual aged 18 or older, who self-identifies as a present or former child member of behavioral health or child-serving systems such as the Juvenile Justice System or the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). In addition to being qualified by their lived experience, a YSS receives specialized training to provide peer support, coaching, and skill development to youth enrolled in CSoC.

2. What is a Parent Support Specialist (PSS)?

A PSS is a parent or caregiver, of a child/youth with challenges similar to those enrolled in CSoC. The PSS assists caregivers with understanding waiver/CSoC processes. A PSS receives specialized peer support training to provide support and help families develop skills needed to access resources and services.

3. Can a YSS/PSS provide counseling?

Although a YSS/PSS *may* have the same educational background and licenses as a counselor, a YSS/PSS provides non-clinical services only.

4. Completing Applications

A YSS/PSS can guide youths and parents through the process of completing applications.

5. Days/Hours of Availability

YSS/PSS availability will vary based, in part, on the needs and availability of the families they serve. BSLA's hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8AM - 8PM. Regional BSLA representatives can provide additional information at (225) 478-9685.

6. Hearings/Events/Meetings/Appointments

A YSS/PSS can attend meetings (e.g., IEP, school, medical, etc.) with a youth or parent, but they do not serve as their representative. During these meetings, a YSS/PSS can model and/or assist their youth and parents with advocating for their needs and treatment.

7. Judicial Involvement

A YSS/PSS will support families' judicial involvement through role playing, organizing information, listening, and providing emotional support. They are unable to attend court, testify on families' behalf, or become involved in family law matters including custody proceedings.

8. Housekeeping

A YSS/PSS does not provide maintenance, upkeep, and/or improvement of families' residences.

9. Links to Resources, Services, and Supports

A YSS/PSS is knowledgeable about the resources within their community and can assist youth and families with accessing those supports.

10. Medication

A YSS/PSS has no role in handling, administering, or discussing medication with youth/parents other than encouraging compliance with their providers' guidance.

11. Monetary Transactions

A YSS/PSS may not make purchases for, or loan money to, youth or parents, but they can connect them with community and crisis resources.

12. Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Services

A YSS/PSS can encourage and help educate a youth about the importance of personal hygiene and implement strategies to assist with healthy eating and exercise. However, a YSS/PSS does not provide PCA services.

13. Provider Referrals

A YSS/PSS can assist families with searching for providers, but their role in the Child and Family Team does not include making formal, written referrals to service providers.

14. PSS working with Youth

A PSS can work with a youth when the service provided is supported by a strategy on the POC and delivered in the presence of their parent/guardian.

15. Transportation

On occasion, a YSS or PSS may choose to temporarily provide transportation for a member if it supports a strategy on their Plan of Care. The YSS/PSS must first meet a strict criteria and receive clearance from BSLA. A YSS/PSS is *not required* to transport and may opt out at any time, but they will assist members with finding permanent transportation.

16. Tutoring

A YSS/PSS does not provide tutoring, but they can help youth and parents make connections to community resources that provide these services.

17. Working with Members’ Siblings

A YSS can work with siblings in the same household as long as they are currently enrolled in CSoC and assigned to the caseload of the YSS.

18. YSS/PSS Reassignments

BSLA will inform families of changes to their YSS/PSS assignments within 48 hours of a reassignment, or within 7 days of their separation. Regional BSLA representatives can respond to requests for additional information at (225) 478-9685.

19. What is the difference between Peer Support, Respite, and Independent Living/Skills Building?

All services are individualized, youth-centered, and delivered face to face.

	Roles
YSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ uses their personal experiences to engage families ➤ ensures active participation of youth in the treatment planning process; reinforcement of skills learned throughout the treatment process ➤ promotes skills for coping with & managing psychiatric symptoms while facilitating the utilization of natural resources and enhancement of community living skills ➤ helps the child develop a network for information and support from others who have been through similar experiences, while reducing reliance on their YSS over time ➤ services are provided to children aged 12 and older, by a peer/youth with similar lived experiences
PSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ uses their personal experiences to engage families ➤ assists with gaining knowledge and skills to help families understand and address the service options and treatment needs of their child ➤ helps to develop/enhance families’ problem-solving, coping skills, and strategies for their child’s behavior management

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ assists the family in understanding the waiver process, crisis/safety plan and plan of care (POC) ➤ helps families understand how to navigate child-serving systems ➤ services are provided by a parent/caregiver of a child with similar challenges
Short Term Respite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ provides temporary, direct care and supervision for a child where the primary purpose is relief to the child or the family/caregiver ➤ helps de-escalate stressful situations on a planned or emergency basis and provides a therapeutic outlet for the child ➤ services are provided by a Direct Service Worker
Independent Living/ Skills Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ assists children aged 14 and older with their transition to adulthood ➤ helps children acquire, retain, and improve self-help, socialization, and adaptive skills to become successful in employment, housing, education, and community life domains ➤ services and activities are provided by a Transition Coordinator in the community

20. YSS/PSS Role During a Crisis

A YSS/PSS has a limited role during a crisis. During a *non-clinical* crisis, a YSS/PSS can provide reassurance to a youth/parent in distress. They will also encourage members to utilize the prevention steps outlined in their Crisis Plan, which may include contacting other supports/providers.

A YSS/PSS does not have a role in a *clinical* crisis, and will redirect a member to the appropriate resources, supports/providers, and action steps outlined in their Crisis Plan.