The ARC Framework

For Runaway and Homeless Youth Serving Agencies

(Attachment, Self-Regulation, Competency)

ARC[1], **Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency,** provides a conceptual framework and core principles of intervention for working with youth who have experienced multiple and/or prolonged traumas, a key characteristic of many youth experiencing homelessness. The Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership (HHYP), a collaboration of 8 agencies, selected this framework from available trauma treatment approaches because it provides a flexible model of intervention that is developmentally appropriate and relevant for addressing a continuum of trauma exposures. The ARC framework has been a useful tool to understand homeless youth, guide our interventions, and inform agency policies and practices.

Below is a brief description of the three main components of the ARC framework, followed by questions that highlight the ways in which the core concepts can help further our understanding of youth experiencing homelessness. This framework can be used for clinical work with youth, as well as incorporated in team meetings to generate new understandings and creative approaches to work with homeless youth.

Attachment:

The capacity to form and maintain a healthy emotional bond with another person or persons which is a source of mutual comfort, safety, and caring.

Attachment Questions:

- What do we know about the quality and consistency of this youth's early care-giver child experiences (with parents, guardians or other care-givers)?
- What quality of relationship does this youth form with his/her peers?
- How does this youth relate to adults, program staff and authority figures?

Self-Regulation:

Developing and maintaining the ability to notice and control feelings such as frustration, anger, and fear.

Self-Regulation Questions:

- What does it look like when this youth is experiencing unpleasant feelings?
- How often does this occur?
- How intense is their response to unpleasant feelings?
- How quickly do they recover?
- What kinds of situations trigger these unpleasant feelings?
- What methods does the youth use to calm down?

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[1] Kinniburgh, K. & Blaustein, M. (2005). Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency: A comprehensive framework for intervention with complexly traumatized youth. *A Treatment manual.* Boston

Developmental skill competency:

Mastering the developmental tasks of adolescence and developing the ability to plan and organize for the future.

Areas of Competency include some of the following:

- Judgment
- Impulse control
- Planning
- Prioritizing tasks

- Organizing
- Insight
- Empathy
- Decision making

Competency can also include specific skills that the individual needs to manage in his or her environment, such as:

- Interviewing for a job
- Literacy
- Hygiene
- Budgeting and Banking
- Shopping and cooking
- Transportation

- Completing job applications
- Safety Planning
- Constructive use of free time
- Time Management
- Ability to comfort self and others
- Ability to be assertive

Competency Questions:

- How clear is this youth's thinking?
- Does this youth accurately assess their reality and their relationship with their environment?
- Is this youth able to think about their past, present and future?
- Is this youth able to "problem solve," organize and prioritize their time, or plan ahead?
- Does the youth exhibit sound judgment?
- What specific skills does this youth possess?
- What skills does this youth still need to acquire?

Several agencies have begun to use the ARC Framework in their case conferences and care planning efforts.
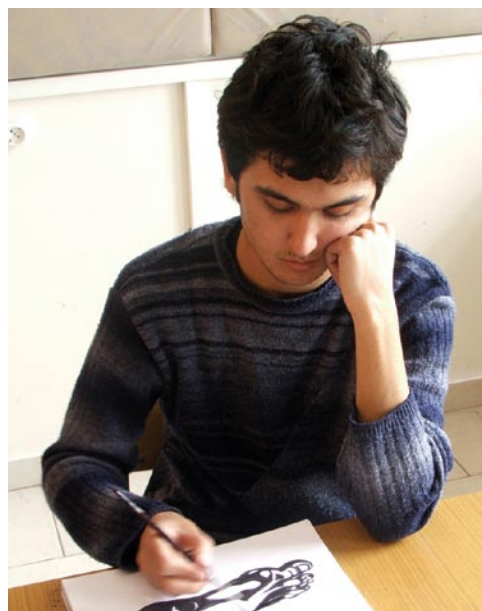
Viewing Agency Policies and Procedures through ARC

One of the powerful aspects of the ARC framework is that it can be used as a tool to review agency policies and procedures and their impact on attachment, self-regulation and competencies for the youth that the agency serves.

The following questions designed to generate dialogue around the impact of the agency environment on a youth's growth in the areas of attachment, self-regulation and skill competencies.

Attachment

How do agency policies, procedures, and culture support a youth's positive self regard, attachment to the program, their peers, staff, family, and community?

Self-Regulation

How do the agency policies, procedures, and culture support the youth's ability to learn and practice appropriate self-regulation skills?

Competencies

How do the agency policies, procedures, and culture support the youth's development of new competencies and skills?

After reviewing an agency's strengths and weaknesses in each of the areas, staff can engage in a meaningful discussion about how to improve the agency's support in the three key areas. Often time, small, low or no cost efforts can make significant improvements in creating a healing environment for youth.

Examples include:

- Create a structured and predictable environment by establishing rituals and routines (Attachment)
- Show unconditional respect and acceptance (Attachment)
- Train staff to manage intense affect (Attachment/self regulation)
- Train staff to help youth accurately identify their own feelings (Self-Regulation)
- Create a safe space for youth that are experiencing intense emotions (Self Regulation)
- Create opportunities for youth to positively engage with peers, adults, and community members (Competency)

For more information, please visit www.hhyp.org