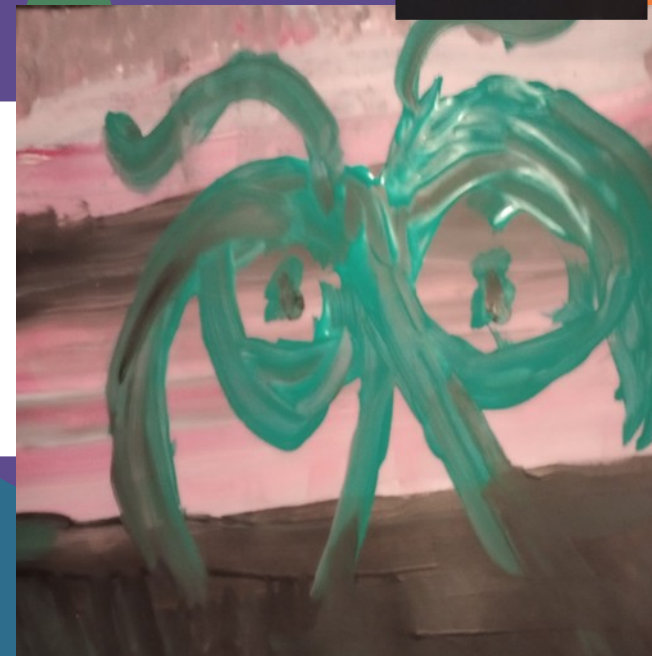
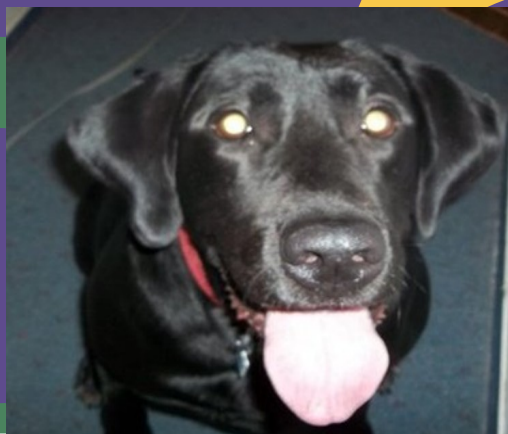
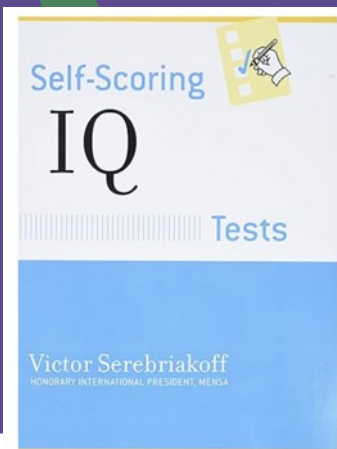


Youth-Friendly Approaches in Psychosis

Jennifer Gerlach, MSW and Grace
Chapel





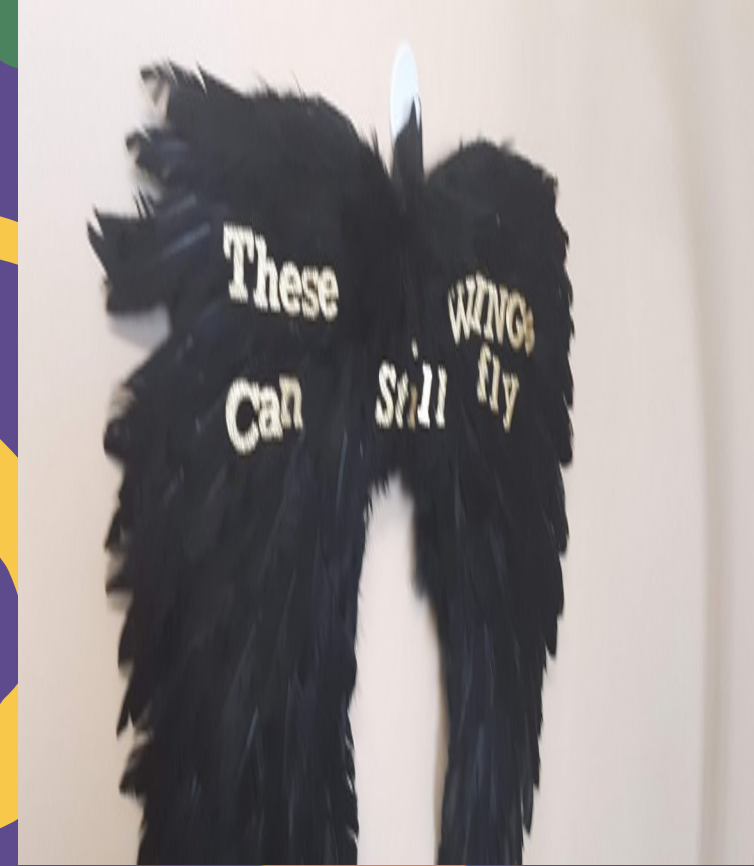
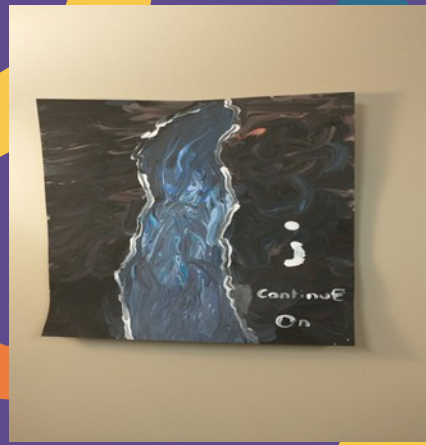
Before



Losing Petals



Lost, Psychosis



These Broken Wings

Just because
You feel like
Trash doesn't
mean that you
are trash



Meaning Making and Recovery



Life Now





Youth Advisory Council

What is a Youth Advisory Council?

Group of youth and young adults with lived experience who can advise an organization on the development of programs, services, materials, etc.



EPC Youth Advisory Council

- Youth and young adults ages 15-35
- Personal lived experience with psychosis
- Working to reduce stigma about psychosis by **sharing resources, raising awareness, and providing fact-based education** in order to improve young people's access to care
- Helps EPC create more effective, targeted, and responsive services, while also **engaging youth, building community, reducing stigma, and elevating the voices of lived experience**



Our Resources

- Trauma-Informed Storytelling Handout
- Educator Toolkit
- Holiday Resource
- Workplace Accommodation Brochure
- Goals Workbook
- Wellness Toolbox



Trauma-Informed Storytelling Handout

- Tip sheet for individuals with lived experience with mental illness to **share their story in a way that feels safe and empowering.**
- Provides information to listeners on **responding supportively, nonjudgmentally, and respectfully.**

Telling Your Story

Why Storytelling Matters
Talking about experiences can help storytellers...

- Make sense of their experiences
- Cope with their emotions
- Connect with others
- Facilitate healing
- Build hope and resilience
- Raise awareness
- Reduce stigma
- Advocate for change

Taking Care of Yourself
When telling your story, it may be helpful to...

- Be aware of your emotions and activators
- Set boundaries
- Seek support
- Practice gratitude and self-care
- Stay calm with techniques like grounding, breathing, and mindfulness
- Stories can be told in many ways: speaking, writing, art, music, etc. Tell your story in the most comfortable way for you.

Empowerment Through Storytelling

- ☞ You are in control of how you tell your story
- ☞ Highlight personal growth and resilience
- ☞ Remember your strengths and positive attributes
- ☞ You are never obligated to share your story

Responding to Stories 🎧

Do	Don't
Respect storytellers' boundaries and pace	Pressure people to tell their stories
Encourage and give positive feedback	Judge or criticize
Use active listening skills	Interrupt or correct stories
Recognize and respect cultural differences	Make assumptions
Connect storytellers with resources and networks	Lean on stereotypes
Encourage peer support and collaboration	Center the listener

Tips

- Storytellers must feel physically and emotionally safe
- Some may feel more comfortable sharing after hearing from others with shared experiences
- Build a community which values and uplifts individual stories
- Create an inclusive and culturally sensitive environment

EPC
EARLY PSYCHOSIS CARE - MISSOURI



Educator Toolkit

- Resources for educators at the middle, high school, and college levels with **essential information about early warning signs, classroom accommodations, stigma reduction, and connecting students to care**
- Due to high quantity of face time, educators have a **unique role in identification and support** for psychosis and **need layperson-friendly information**

Educator Toolkit



EARLY
PSYCHOSIS
CARE
MISSOURI



Holiday Resource

- Suggestions for family members to aid them in handling a loved one's psychosis in kind, accommodating, sensitive ways at the holidays
- **Raises awareness, aids young people in communicating with their families, encourages familial support in mental illness management**



EARLY PSYCHOSIS CARE
MISSOURI

Navigating the Holidays with Mental Health in Mind: A Guide to Compassionate Connections

Instead of...	Try...	Explanation	Example
Asking questions about milestones, achievements, or stressful topics such as school or work	Asking about lower-stakes topics, such as hobbies and interests	Mental health difficulties can interfere with your loved ones' ability to achieve goals on the "expected" timeline. It can be saddening or frustrating to be reminded of this.	"Have you read any good books lately?" "What have you been doing for fun lately?" "Do you still play soccer?" "Did you see the new Marvel movie?"
Providing unsolicited advice about managing mental health conditions	Asking what has helped your loved one, or how you can provide support	Your loved one's care team is best qualified to provide treatment recommendations	"Is there anything that's been making life a little easier or harder for you lately?" "I know you've been going through a difficult time. Please let me know if there's anything I can do."
Linger on mental health topics or asking invasive questions about symptoms, experiences, and treatments for psychosis	Asking about other topics, such as what your loved one is looking forward to in the new year	Many people prefer to focus on meaningful connections and positive topics during holiday gatherings, rather than discussing their mental health challenges.	"Do you have any new years resolutions?" "I have a trip coming up that I'm really excited about. Do you like to travel?"
Centering yourself or your own experiences when discussing a loved one's mental health condition	Active listening and giving your loved one space to bring up the topic in their own time	Active listening means focusing fully on the other person without interrupting, judging, or thinking about how to respond. This approach shows empathy and respect, making your loved one feel heard and understood. Giving them space to bring up sensitive topics at their own can reduce pressure, especially if they're not ready or comfortable discussing their mental health at the time.	"If there's anything you want to talk about, just know I'm here to listen—no pressure to share anything you're not ready to." "I don't want to push you to talk about anything you're not ready for. I'm just glad to be spending time with you. I'm here to listen if there's anything on your mind!"
Pejorative language	Supportive, person-first language	Person-first language means putting the person before their diagnosis or condition—for example, saying "person with psychosis" rather than "psychotic person." This approach respects your loved one's humanity, acknowledging them as a whole person rather than defining them by their mental health.	"She's dealing with some mental health challenges." "He lives with schizophrenia." "He experiences delusions."



Workplace Accommodation Brochure

- Information for youth to share with their employers about psychosis, ADA rules, and potential workplace accommodations
- Supports youth in self-advocacy and employers in fostering employee success while managing mental health

Psychosis Does Not Have to Be Limiting



Vincent van Gogh
Despite experiencing episodes of psychosis, Vincent van Gogh created revolutionary art filled with emotion and brilliance. His struggles didn't define him, and his creativity and impact continue to inspire the world.

Selena Gomez

Selena Gomez has experienced bipolar disorder-related psychosis but has thrived as an actress, singer, and business owner. She has been named Billboard's Woman of the Year, and her beauty company is valued at over \$2 billion.



John Nash
John Nash, a brilliant mathematician, lived with schizophrenia and made groundbreaking contributions to his field. In 1994, he won a Nobel Prize, proving that mental illness does not define one's potential.

Where Can I Learn More?

Early Psychosis Care Center
<https://epcmassouri.org>

US Department of Labor
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>



Navigating Psychosis in the Workplace



Goals Workbook

- Workbook for young adults with a recent FEP diagnosis with a focus on setting goals in all areas of life.
- Empowers youth to **take control of their lives outside of their diagnosis and design a future which feels fulfilling and meaningful.**

What Are SMART Goals?

Setting goals is an important step in building the life you want, but not all goals are created equal. A well-defined goal gives you a clear direction and helps you stay motivated. One way to make goals more achievable is to use the SMART framework, which ensures your goals are:

S	M	A	R	T
Specific Clearly define what you intend to accomplish	Measurable Measure your progress and success	Achievable Be realistic about your needs and capacities	Relevant Ensure alignment with your values and other goals	Time-Bound Create a deadline or timeline to stay on track

Here's an Example:

Vague Goal: I want to get healthier.	SMART Goal: I will exercise for 20 minutes, three times a week, for the next month.
--	---

Specific
The goal clearly defines what is being done—exercising—and specifies the duration and frequency. It's not just about getting healthier; it's about a concrete action.

Measurable
This goal can be tracked and measured. You can count the number of times you exercise each week and track the total minutes to ensure you're meeting your goal.

Achievable
The goal is realistic. It's not too ambitious (like aiming to exercise for two hours daily). Exercising for 20 minutes three times a week is a manageable amount of physical activity for most people.

Relevant
This goal supports the broader objective of improving your health, which can positively impact other areas of your life, such as energy, mood, and overall well-being. Because it is manageable, you can balance it with goals in multiple areas of your life without requiring an excessive or unbalanced time commitment.

Time-Bound
The goal has a clear deadline: for the next month. This creates focus and allows for a review after the month to determine if the goal was achieved and whether it needs to be adjusted moving forward.

Create Your Own SMART Goals

Now it's your turn. You can use the template below to set a SMART goal for each of the domains of your life. You can start small and set more goals after you achieve these ones. Perhaps not all of these domains are priorities for you right now—make this tool your own and set goals for the areas which are most important to you.

Recreation

My Goal...

Is It...	Consider...	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Achievable	Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

Relationships

My Goal...

Is It...	Consider...	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Achievable	Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

Wellness Toolbox

- New resource coming soon
- Actionable tools and activities to support mental wellness in a variety of ways



Meetings



- Virtual meetings
- Second Monday of each month
- 6-7PM CST
- Open to all youth and young adults aged 15-35 with personal lived experience with psychosis





Youth-Friendly Interventions

The average age of onset of psychosis
hovers between 15 and 30

What were you doing at 15? At 20? At 25?

What mattered to you?



To Explore

To Love

To Have Fun

**To Have
Friendships**

To Learn

To Find Meaning

How Does Psychosis Impact These?

Psychosis can be an extremely isolating experience.

Meeting others who have shared it (such as through groups or peer support) has potential to heal.



A sense of hopelessness after initial diagnosis of a psychotic disorder is common. Individuals living with psychosis are at highest risk of suicide in the first 10 years after diagnosis
(Berardelli et al., 2021)

Introduction to mental health services commonly occurs in times of crisis (such as through an ER, hospital, or the criminal justice system).

This can be coercive and traumatic.

Understandably, many disengage.



As a teen, I believed accepting psychosis as an experience I'd had meant...

I am to blame for the problems in my family

I am crazy

My perspectives are not credible

I will not be able to go to college or live on my own

I will be in and out of the hospital forever

We have to show youth
these things are not true.

While Gen Z has shown more acceptance toward mental health in general, psychosis remains stigmatized.



We can help by...

- Normalizing experiences
- Sharing stories of recovery
- Including peer support



Youth-friendly supports
must acknowledge
youths' self-determination,
empowering them to take back
the reins on their life



A study of youth involved in early psychosis care found that those who participated in employment and education aspects reported that these services led to a sense of belonging and freedom
(Menn et al., 2024)



How can we make treatment relevant?

- Mental health treatment may be made relevant to re-engaging with the music of youth and young adulthood through...
 - Community Engagement
 - Employment
 - Education

Rarely do youth express a life goal of
being
“treatment compliant”

An engagement protocol in early psychosis care that focused primarily on shared decision making showed a significant decrease in the number of individuals who disengaged from services early (14.5% in the protocol group disengaged as opposed to 24% in standard coordinated specialty care)
(Greenwood et al., 2024)





Meet Gen Z



**More Likely to Attend
College Than Earlier
Generations**

Technology is Life

**Often Appreciate
Flexibility, Work-Life
Balance, and
Accessibility**

**Tend to Value
Individualism
and Uniqueness**

A Digital World

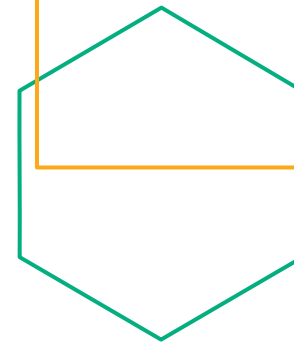
- Teletherapy and digital tools like mental health apps (such as mood trackers) or use of technology in reality-checking can improve accessibility
- Emerging research is exploring use of VR technology to improve social cognition in early psychosis (*Bell et al., 2022*) as well as early psychosis specific apps (*Eisner et al., 2023*)
- Research suggests that young people with psychotic disorders are generally comfortable with use of technology in treatment (*Eisner et al., 2023*)



LifeLaunch

EPC Partnership

Since the end of MO-TAYLER, the Early Psychosis Care Center (EPC) has assumed stewardship of the LifeLaunch project. For more information, please visit www.epcmissouri.org

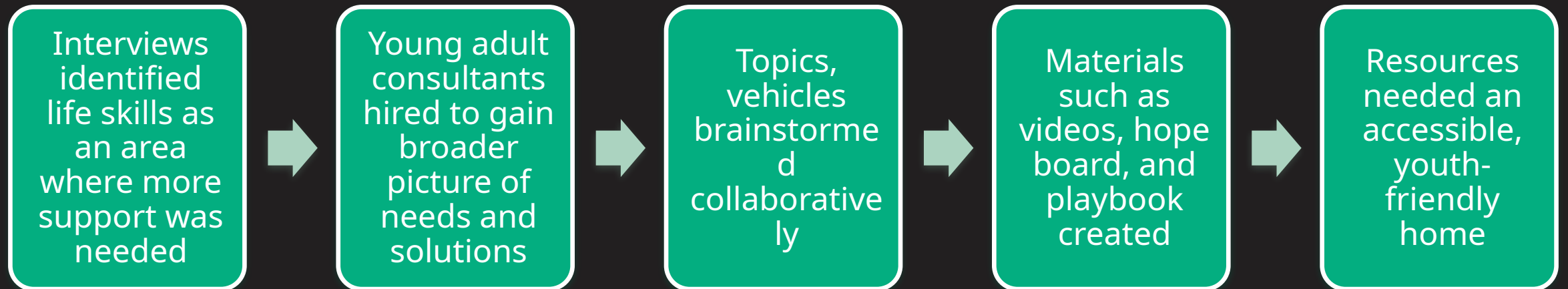


What is LifeLaunch?

- Centralized resource hub dedicated to addressing and facilitating the essential aspects of the transformative journey to adulthood
- Celebrates those who face the uncertainties of grown-up life with courage and a touch of humor
- Unites young adults through shared experiences, offering support, wisdom, and a comforting shoulder to lean on
- Community ready to walk the unpredictable path of adulthood together



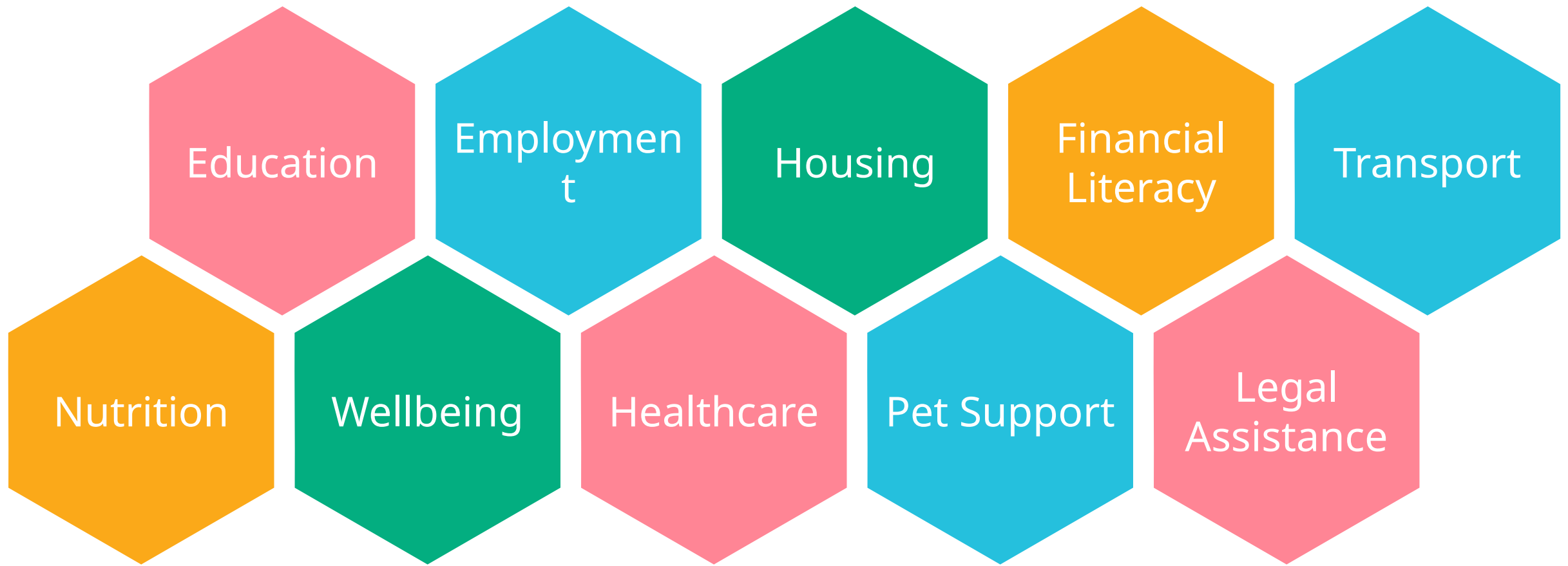
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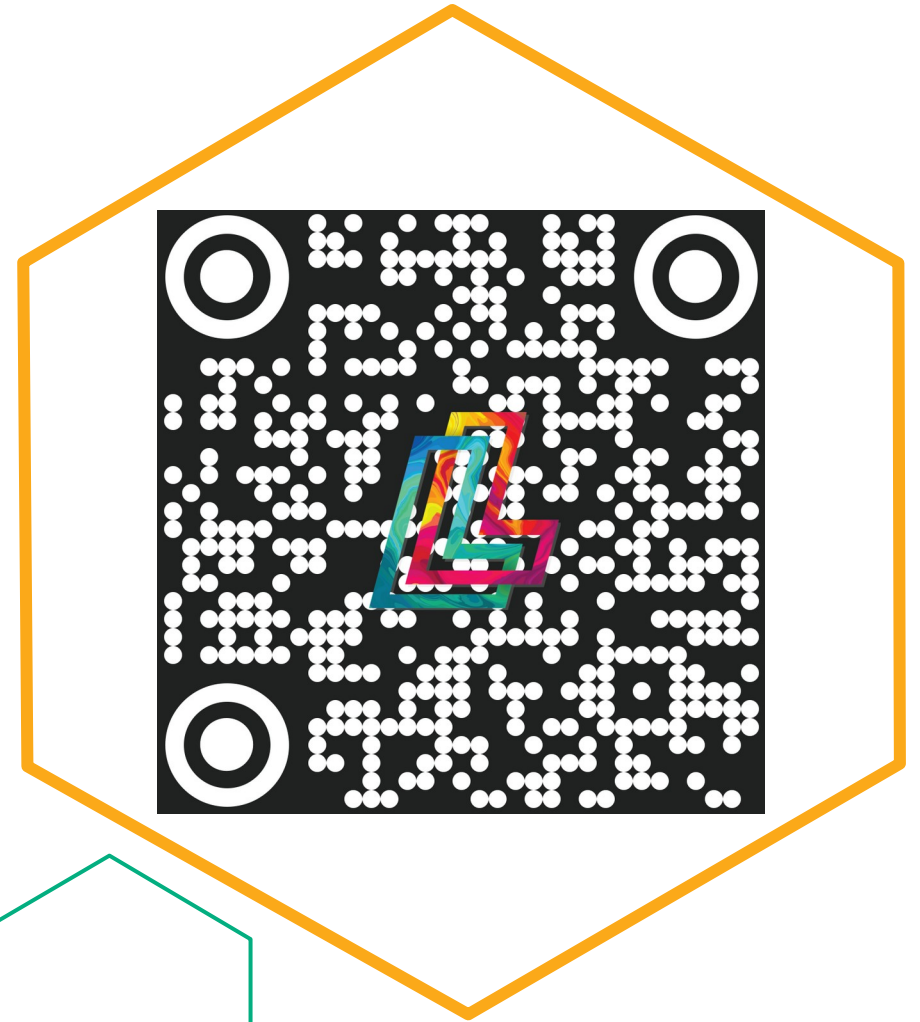
Features

- Tailor-made life skills resources
- Playbook for professionals
- Video interviews with young adults
- Hope board
- Connections to external resources for a variety of topics





Visit Now:



Questions?

Please contact yac@epcmissouri.org



Thank You!

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