



TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH

STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council

August 6, 2020
1:00 pm – 3:00 p.m. Central
WebEx

Meeting Summary

Participants

- Brad Edwards, Johnathan Berestecky, Brandi Osborne, Christie Morris, Amanda Thomas, Jules Wilson, Jolene Sharp, Sarah Elghalban, Pamela Madison, Carla Garrett, Kendra Mitchell, Dave Aguzzi, Heather Tribble, Leslie Kinkead, Jennifer Jones, Cory Bradfield, Susan Cope, Richard Kennedy, Steve Petty, Sumita Keller, Christie Morris, Amanda Thomas, Crystal Hutchins, Sara Mays, Wendy Spence, Melissa McGee

Welcome, Introductions, Announcements and Acceptance of October 3rd, 2019 Meeting Summary – Richard Kennedy Executive Director, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY)

Kennedy welcomed the group at 1:05 p.m. He expressed his appreciation for those attending and asked for introductions and announcements.

IT WAS MOVED (Garrett) AND SECONDED (Osborne) TO ACCEPT THE OCTOBER 3RD, 2019 MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Department of Children's Services, Office of Independent Living Update

Dave Aguzzi, Assistant Director

Aguzzi reported to the council on the extension on foster care services. EFCS data category for the number served for FY20 were stated. The total EFCS episodes were 781, total young adults served were 773 and the total number active in EFCS was 354. The numbers from last year have increased. Basically, young people are remaining in the EFCS program for longer periods of times. They are choosing to stay in the program for as long as they can.

Questions

Jolene Sharp asked Aguzzi to describe what they consider an episode and the other data markers on the chart?

Aguzzi explained that an episode describes the time frame in which a young adult is receiving EFCS. An individual, one young adult may receive services for more than one time in a year. For example, they may have started at the beginning of the year and for whatever reason, drop out of school or another loss of eligibility criterion was not met, they are removed from the program. Later in the year, if they can show where they have regained their eligibility, for example, enrolled into school again, they can pick back up and receive the services. That is the reason for the difference between EFCS episodes and the total number of young adults served. We would like to see the total number of young adults served becomes more stable. We don't like to see gaps in services where they may not have access to vital services that they may need.

Petty asked Aguzzi if he could attribute the increase in totals to COVID-19?

Aguzzi stated that he was not sure yet. They have been looking at ways to help young adults find and maintain services the best way they can. Early in the beginning of the pandemic we did give the young adults grace to get adjusted to the new normal and that may be a reason, but we are looking at a lot of other factors as well.

Kennedy asked Aguzzi if they had any type of data that would show how many of the young

adults within the EFCS have tested positive to COVID-19 since the pandemic began? Aguzzi stated that they are tracking that, he did not have the data in front of him at the moment. Off the top of his head he knows that one of the young adults within the program has tested positive and recovered from COVID-19. But they are tracking that data as well. We have been providing additional information to our young adults to educate/inform them on how to maintain safety measures.

Update from Resource Centers

Christie Morris, Project Now!

Morris stated that once the pandemic started, they have not had any face to face classes except for June and July. We have had other trainings in first aid and CPR and self-awareness/self-defense courses face to face as well. They do plan on providing a few more opportunities to include goal setting and bring your own lunch to school day. Several students are getting access to computers and other technology for schools. A lot of the children that they service are now back in school or working back in the school industry. As far as they know, all of their children have housing and if not are eligible for housing if needed onsite and offsite.

Questions

Kennedy asked Morris is she sees any trends or needs that they are finding challenges with? Morris stated they are having issues with finding transportation. They are going fully virtual this month, and we are aware of the technical issues that they may have as far as not having any, but we hope that will work out better for the children.

Sarah Elghalban -River City Youth Collective

Elghalban announced that there has been staff turnover at the resource center, Catherine has moved on to another role, and Constance is now running the resource center. Since COVID-19 she stated that it has been a difficult time, the youth that they serve currently need and needed a lot of extra support to include mental health support and providing food and how to keep everyone safe. They had a 91% survey rate for the month of April that they are really proud of. They are now offering 3 weekly virtual calls to include sex education classes, financial literacy or a mindset class via zoom. They are ramping up for a 2-week enrollment for opportunity passport. They had one graduate this semester, he is going off to college this fall. They are also opening 2 more slots in a different location in SIL in fall.

Questions

Kennedy asked Elghalban if they are seeing any trends for concrete services for the youth? Elghalban stated that mental health has been a big trend for them, as well as transportation and food. They have recently partnered with DoorDash, to order food for members a week in advance and DoorDash will deliver the food for free. That has been a huge help for them. But mainly trying to maintain the balance between mental health and educations.

Pamila Madison, Youth Connections

Madison stated that they are still working remotely. Since April they have had 3 graduates which they are very proud of. They have roughly 30 students enrolled; they have been able to loan out Chromebooks. Many of the students do not have access to computers. They were not able to host their graduation in person this spring due to COVID-19. They were able to celebrate them, with gifts but did not get to have a face to face meeting. They have enrolled 25 new people in Opportunity Passport. With access to the Chromebooks, they have had a lot of people log in virtually due to the lack of transportation. It has allowed more people to attend the meetings. The owner of the Pucket restaurant chain was able to speak and it was a great success. He was able to speak with the students about how to run a business, how he is weathering since COVID-19 and life tips that the young adults can use one day. They have had several virtual cooking classes and movie nights trying to keep the youth engaged. Their re-engagement hub is up and running, they have 4-5 families that are in the program at this time. As well as mental health services still available. They are going to be remote up until the end of August, they have had some challenges, but they are working through those challenges as they go.

Kennedy stated that it is very interesting to hear/learn how they are keeping the participants engaged during this time.

Thomas asked Madison if additional VOCA slots will be filled from the waiting list first? Madison stated that yes, they will get contacted first. Please if you have young people that are interested, please make the referrals as soon as possible. We do see a bit of turnover and slots can and do come open pretty frequently.

Youth Villages Life Set Program Update

Heather Tribble- Youth Villages Lifeset Coordinator

Tribble stated that currently under their DCS contract Youth Villages LifeSet are serving 281 youth across the state. Partnered with the EFCS, they serve roughly 160 youth out of the 281-

total youth serviced, and they assist them with case management. They make sure that they have their action plans together and on track before they appear before the court. They meet with roughly 190 youth per week across the state of TN. They have not seen a huge decrease due to COVID. They are still doing virtual engagement, so they have been working with staff and emphasizing how to keep the youth engaged virtually. In some cases, they have had to meet with some youth face to face due to geographical issues, lack of internet or other factors that may cause them not to be able to meet virtually. They do have procedures in process such as requiring staff and the youth member to wear appropriate/recommended PPE and transitioning meetings from indoors to outdoors in certain situations. However, in extreme instances face to face meetings still happen. They had 196 youth graduates from high school and college. 181 were high school seniors and 16 were technical college graduates. When the pandemic hit, they were concerned about keeping the youth focused. They encouraged all of the high school students to continue on their current paths to attend college in the fall. That was a huge concern for the staff, they knew how hard it would be to get those youth members back into school if they decided to take a semester off. They are happy to report that all are on track to attend college in the fall.

Jessica provided the council with an inspirational success story of how she has graduated from the program. She was in the Lifeset program and a participant in the EFCS program as well. She discussed how she entered into the foster care program and how her life has been since she has transitioned out.

Amanda Thomas- Oasis

We are currently supporting 18 TOPS implementation sites across the state. It is 4 less than before the pandemic. Other TOPS sites are continuing to operate as usual with safer accommodations. They are still meeting safely and have engaged 337 youth and 300 completed TOPS. Thomas stated that she is the manager for the outreach center. They serve youth ages 13-24. They did get a grant extension where they were able to expand their personnel and other operating expense budgets. They have been able to help 240 people since October 1, 2019. That means they were able to provide livable safe accommodations for those youth. They are still a resource for clothing, hygiene and food. They are now sending food through Shipt and meeting face to face outdoors six feet apart. If anyone needs a brochure, please reach out to Thomas via email. Or reach out on our hotline or the drop-in center.

athomas@oasiscenter.org

615 327 4455 option 1

1704 Charlotte Avenue

Nashville, TN 37203 (Fisk Street Side)

Kennedy asked if the housing accommodations or requests for housing been steady or increased since COVID-19?

Thomas stated that from about February to May it was pretty stable, but after May it has been a waterfall of youth requesting assistance. There have been some successes, we have had an outpouring of support from the community with funding for putting youth in hotels and other housing arrangements.

Kennedy asked if they have been getting creative with how we communicate with the families and children?

Thomas stated that the majority of the youth were dependent on the drop-in center. We had to find other ways to communicate to them for example, providing cell phones for some people and families. However, we have been very creative in how we have been meeting the needs to the youth.

Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Update

Jules Wilson-Office of Children, Young Adults and Families.

Wilson reported to the council that they are planning a virtual early psychosis conference for September 14-15th with their partners at TAMHO. The invitation will be sent out shortly, the theme will be Fueling the Flames of Recovery. A lot of the speakers are individuals who have lived experiences with psychosis. They have their First Episodes Psychosis Initiative (FEPI) but they also have a clinical high risk initiative in Memphis, Case Management Inc. They wanted to make sure the sessions within the conference cover the full scope of the psychosis initiatives including age. Our young adult teams have been able to provide help via telehealth. They have seen a drop off in referrals since COVID-19 but are optimistic that will increase over the next few months. Also, Diana Kirby has left the department. They are very sad to be losing her as a colleague and are in the process of posting her position to find her replacement. The Systems of Care Across Tennessee conference is still happening virtually. They are partnering with TAMHO September 22-23rd and that information will be sent out as soon as possible. The theme this year will be Bridging the Gap, Serving with Systems of Care Gaps during COVID-19. TAMHO has partnered with a company that is putting together a virtual conference setting that is very engaging and interactive. There will be some resource opportunities and networking opportunities for everyone. Everyone is invited that would like to join and this will hopefully be a more interactive meeting than before. They are very excited and can't wait to start.

Contact Jules Wilson jules.wilson@tn.gov to find out info about the YALC

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Update – Steve Petty

Annual Report Discussion – Steve Petty, TCCY

Petty thanked everyone for joining the meeting and for providing meaningful updates. I have sent the word version of the report to everyone in hopes of each person/department will update their sections. If you did not get the word document or would like to hop on a call to discuss the document, please email me or call. I am hoping to get this updated by October. I do plan on scheduling a few meetings to review the report, possibly will be held on Thursdays. The next YTAC meeting will be held on October 3rd via WebEx. If that changes, I will let you know.

Other business/comments-

"I am currently a Belmont U student and If anyone would like to connect with me about the experience there and surrounding universities I would love to connect and chat and be of any help that I can be for their college experience! My Email is chutchins@tnvoices.org and my cell is 615-992-5415!"

Proposed 2020 Meeting Dates

- October 1, 2020- WebEx

Future Meeting Topics

Petty asked people to let him know if anyone has ideas for meeting topics.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:45 p.m.