



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**COUNCIL ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH and YOUTH TRANSITIONS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

June 17, 2021  
1 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
WebEx Virtual Meeting

**Meeting Minutes**

***Welcome, Introductions and Announcements***

**Richard Kennedy, Executive Director, TCCY**

Kennedy thanked everyone for joining the Council on Children's Mental Health and Youth Transitions Advisory Council joint meeting today. Kennedy reminded meeting attendees of housekeeping issues and shared meeting minutes will be sent out for approval in the next few weeks. Kennedy welcomed Senator Page Walley and gives his background information. Kennedy welcomed Senator Walley to speak. Senator Walley thanked everyone for having him and he is excited to participate in these groups. He recently toured the Wilder Detention facility and wants to learn how he can best advocate for children in Tennessee.

Kennedy informs everyone that the CCMH is up for Sunset renewal and went before the Health, Education and General Welfare Joint Subcommittee of the Government Operations Committee. The council was given a recommendation for continuation of six years in this first step of the process to be continued through the 2022 legislative season.

**Matt Yancey, Deputy Commissioner, TDMHSAS**

Yancey welcomed and thanked everyone for attending today's meeting. Yancey stressed the knowledge of the impact of the pandemic on mental health is something continuing to be understood and addressed for a long time. Yancy shared data on drug overdoses increasing and an uptick in emergency department visits for children dealing with mental health issues. Good news, TDMHSAS is receiving new funding from federal grant funds, with Tennessee receiving over \$53 million. Federal funds are coming in addition to the generous funding from the State Assembly over the past year. The department's fiscal budget is increasing by over \$44 million. TDMHSAS is expanding our mobile crisis team. And there is excitement about new additions to the Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (CPRS) program. TDMHSAS has opened a new certification program for youth and young adults with lived experience of addressing mental health or substance use issues. The Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist (CYAPPS) program allows youth with lived experience to become certified to support other youth and young adults addressing their own mental health and substance use issues. The department has launched state wide media campaign

to increase awareness of the state wide crisis line. New funding has now made available services to uninsured children receiving community based mental health care. In partnership with TennCare, TDMHSAS has launched a work group to address behavioral health workforce shortage and needs in the state. Yancy thanked everyone again for coming today.

### ***Department of Children's Services – Young Adult Advisory Council***

#### **Courtney Matthews, Director of Independent Living, DCS**

Matthews began with an overview of the Office of Independent Living within DCS. This office prepares youth in foster care and young adults who age out of foster care for a successful transition into adulthood to become confident and productive individuals in society. Matthews shared information about legislation, Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act, which includes additional funding for programs to support youth that are transitioning out of foster care and was signed at the end of 2020. In January 2021, DCS held a meeting to identify ways to provide immediate support to youth with this funding. The legislation states that youth may not be required to leave foster care due to age, waived the education conditions of Extension of Foster Care (EFC) until September 30, 2021, and permits re-entry into EFC for youth who aged out after January 27, 2020. The legislation extends the age of eligibility to 27 until September 30, 2021, provides direct one-time stimulus payments to eligible participants, provides assistance with meeting immediate living expense needs, and increases the maximum ETV scholarships to \$12,000 until September 30, 2022. At present, DCS IL is waiting on final approval for the funds to be used, with plans in place and ready for implementation as soon as approval occurs. There will be a public awareness campaign around informing youth of the available sources.

#### **Dave Aguzzi, Assistant Director of Independent Living, DCS**

Aguzzi provides the data on the extension of foster care that occurred July 2020 through May 31, 2021. In 2020, 750 EFCS episodes and 744 young adults served. In 2021, there were 799 EFCS episodes and 739 served. DCS IL is seeing a large increase between 2020 and 2021 due to the ability to serve more youth with the flexibilities in the criteria. From January – May 2021, there were 145 episodes and met removing barriers or employed 80 plus hours per month upon entry for 77. There were 46 who were of active age 21 or older on May 31, 2021. DCS IL partners with Youth Villages to provide services for long term before expansion of criteria ends. Matthews states they have wanted to utilize this time to collect data on this population of young people in foster care and capture how many of them fall into other categories. September 30, 2021 is a big date because eligibility ends for many. Housing and Urban Development also released a housing voucher program for foster youth. DCS IL have made some strides partnering with housing authorities around the state to connect youth with these vouchers. The priority at present is ensure come September 30<sup>th</sup> that youth are prepared long term and have a plan once eligibility ends.

### ***Nashville Connections***

#### **Pam Madison, Senior Director of Young Adult Engagement & Opportunities**

Madison thanked everyone for the opportunity to share in today's meeting. Nashville Connections is migrating back into the center slowly with staff at the center daily, recently adding an education coordinator, but classes are still virtual. Virtual classes have allowed them to serve more youth who could not attend because of transportation or childcare. The program has had many guest speakers over the past year, recently football player Michael Oher spoke about his new app. Other new

developments include a partnership with Nashville State, and held a in person graduation, outside on a rooftop, first event in person in a year. The program had our largest graduating class of 28, they all participated in virtual classes. Four graduates are residents of the independent living program. Some graduates received out scholarships from the program to be used for everything from tuition to gas. In addition, the workforce development program served over 60 youth and are partnering with businesses to secure more internships with an ultimate goal is to connect them all with long term employment. Madison shared a video of one youth in the work development program who shared how he had a lack of trust and was experiencing homelessness when he became involved with Monroe Harding. He has gained so much support and feels like they are family. He gained the tools to prepare for life and has a plan for his future. As the video ended, Madison provided an update on the youth, who currently has an A average and a job.

### **Karen Nelson, River City Youth Collective**

Nelson thanks everyone and shared excitement to have recently hired one of their former youth. RCYC is still doing virtual classes but will return to in person learning in July. They are planning a backyard barbecue bash to celebrate being back in person.

### **Amber Price, Program Representative for LifeSet, Youth Villages**

Price says that LifeSet is a program to support young adults who are aging out of foster care. The program is voluntary and they meet once a week for one-hour sessions. They are transitioning back to in person right now. There is no set time frame for participation and it is completely free. LifeSet was created in 1999 for ages 16-23. Their goal is by 2026 to support all youth aging out of foster care. LifeSet outcomes, one-year post-discharge is that 93% are living independently. LifeSet serves as the bridge from foster care to adulthood, including supporting them in finding housing, life skills, education, and employment. LifeSet did a 5-year MDRC study and found that it reduces hardships on youth. Specialists help the young adults access scholarships and inform them of education programs they may be interested in. They help them through the application process. Specialists help young adults build their resume, mock interviews, and connect them to employment opportunities. LifeSet helps them obtain housing and prepare for independent living. They also connect young adults with local mental health providers, strengthen coping skills, assisting them with incorporating healthy eating. LifeSet supports young adults in money management such as creating a budget, credit cards, and loans. There is also a focus on life skills such as car insurance, health insurance, filing taxes, parenting skills, and community resources. LifeSet utilizes social supports by connecting them with community support. Specialists make sure the youth have their essential documents such as a social security card and birth certificate. Price goes through the referral process if anyone knows a young adult that would be a good fit for the program and gives her contact information. LifeSet does have some elimination criteria such as a history of severe violence. If a young adult does have elimination criteria it does not mean they cannot be in the program, it is a case-by-case basis. There is a two-part assessment process. The first part goes over their strengths and protective factors. The second part focuses on the elimination criteria. There is a decision made within a week. Price thanks everyone and asks for questions.

### **Dr. Mark Loftis, Professor Tennessee Tech, Disconnected Youth**

Loftis thanks everyone and says that he was not very familiar with the term disconnected youth until he began his research several years ago. Disconnected youth are identified as youth ages 16-24 that are not in education, employment, or training. There is not a lot of access to this group because they are not in areas to be identified such as school. Risk of being a disconnected youth are limited

education, social exclusion, lack of work experience, fewer opportunities to develop mentors and connection, and lifetime poor earnings. Measure of America is a searchable website to find data on disconnected youth. In 2017, there was an estimated 4.9 million disconnect youth in the U.S. African American and Latino youth are typically are high percentage of representation. In Tennessee, 13.7% of youth are disconnected. There are 107,900 youth that met NEET criteria. Rural areas often have higher rates than urban areas. Good news, rates of disconnected youth has been dropping for 8 consecutive years, dropping from 14% in 2010 to 11% in 2018. Bad news is that the pandemic has erased all gains made in the last 8 years. Community supports are needed to help youth get back on track and get help navigating school, work, and community. Work experience can help build skills and open up opportunities. Community support ideas are academic tutoring, leadership development, mentoring, financial aid, housing aid, social networks, prevention programs, career counseling, enrollment assistance, and mental/physical health services. Loftis asks for any questions or comments.

**Danielle Rochell, Outreach and Support Programs Coordinator, Middle Tennessee State University**

Rochelle thanks everyone and says her program connects well with the previous presentation on disconnected youth. Rochelle is over the Next Step program that support foster and youth experiencing homelessness. Students get into the Next Stop program through self-reporting or homeless petition. Rochelle also runs the on-campus food pantry for students in need.

**Rachel Wilson, Youth Program Coordinator, NAMI TN**

Wilson thanks everyone and shares that she is nervous to tell her story virtually. She gets a lot of support from the group. Wilson says largest program at NAMI TN is Ending the Silence. It is a 45/50-minute presentation given to youth on mental health. There are two presenters, the first is someone that has experienced mental health struggles and then the second presenter gives facts on mental health in youth. They do this presentation for youth and professionals that work with youth. They also have a presentation that is geared towards families. Wilson says that she does the first part of the presentation and shares her mental health struggles. In her junior year of college, she began to struggle with depression. She was sleeping all the time and drinking heavily. She had an emotional breakdown one night and tried to cut herself. Her friend reached out to her to offer support and she got the mental health care is needed. She got on medication and learned coping skills. Wilson wishes there had been a program like Ending the Silence to teach her about mental health.

Wilson introduces Crystal Hutchins, who works with TN Voices presents for Ending the Silence. Hutchins has struggled with her mental health. She has learned that mental health struggles look different on everyone and it is okay to talk about. Jules Wilson thanks Hutchins for sharing her story and says that Ending the Silence helps young people be able to tell their story. Rachel Wilson asks people to reach out to her if they know any group that could benefit from this presentation or if you would like to be a presenter.

**Ashley Nunnally, Program Coordinator, MHA MidSouth**

Nunnally thanks everyone and says that their program Erase the Stigma goes well with the previous presentation. Erase the Stigma is a presentation for children and youth on mental health. They educate on bullying, depression, anxiety, managing stress, etc. Each presentation is customized for the specific age group.

## **Jules Wilson, CYAPSS**

Wilson says she is excited to share about the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program. There are 67% of young people have not received needed help for mental health needs. Typically, 8-10 years goes by between the first sign of symptoms and proper intervention for a young person. There is much confusion between child systems and adult systems. It can be extremely overwhelming. Peer support can bridge that gap between child and adult systems. Peers can more easily connect with one another. The Peer Support Specialist eligibility is for 18-30 years old and requires one year of recovery and healing. The population receiving services are youth and young adults under 30, who have lived experienced with mental illness, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorder. One hour out of 10 must be in cultural responsiveness and/or working with diverse populations. CYAPSS launched on May 21, 2021 on tn.gov. The program will target youth providers for our first training. They are utilizing their feedback loop with Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council for feedback. They are hoping to expand the peer support work force. Wilson asks for any questions.

## **Announcements**

Kennedy asks if there are any announcements anyone would like to make to the group. Kendra Mitchell shares that there will be a youth transition series next week covering independent living, healthcare, finances, etc. Participants will leave with a transition plan. Mitchell will put the link in the chat box.

## **Christie Morris, Project Now!**

Morris apologizes for the delay but she had to leave the meeting for a bit. Morris said things are going well in Knoxville. Numbers are still low of youth attending class. Most of the youth are working and regularly call to check in. They are offering a CPR class for youth over 14.

## **Announcements**

Melissa McGee says she will be sending out email in the coming weeks catching up on things. Kennedy asks for you to e-mail McGee if you came in late so that your attendance will be counted. Kennedy recognizes Steve Petty who leads YTAC. Petty says the next meeting will be August 5, 2021 and thanks everyone.

## **3:30 Closing**

2020 CCMH Meeting Dates:

Thursday, August 26, 2021

Thursday, October 21, 2021

2020 YTAC Meeting Dates:

August 5, 2021

### **Council on Children's Mental Health Purpose Statement**

*Design a comprehensive plan for a statewide System of Care for children and families that is family-driven, youth-guided, community-based, and culturally and linguistically competent.*