



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Andrea Jackson Building, 9<sup>th</sup>  
Floor 502 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800  
(615) 741-2633 (FAX) 741-5956  
1-800-264-0904

**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

April 29, 2021  
12:30 pm – 3:00 p.m. Central  
WebEx

**Meeting Summary**

**Participants**

Richard Kennedy	Jessica Mullins	Courtney Matthews
Rose Naccarato	Jolene	Danielle Rochelle
Rosalyn Leavell-Rice	Julia Barlar	Emily Hardin
Russette Marcum-Embry	Karen Nichols	Erica Tate
Sarah Elghalban	Kendra Mitchell	Heather Tribble
Tiffany Turnage	Kim Peer	Jama Mohamed
Toni Lawal	Latricia Hood	Jane Fleishman
Toni Shaw	Jules Wilson	Jason Woolfolk
Tristine Nguyen	Kylie Burns	Megan Easterling
Steve Petty	Christie Morris	Anessia Smith
Brent Robinson	Carrie Mason	

**Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements**  
***Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY)***  
**Richard Kennedy Executive Director**

Kennedy welcomed the group at 12:31 p.m. He expressed appreciation for those

attending, asked attendees to put name in chat box and gave recording notification. He apologized to the group because the previous meeting summary is temporarily misplaced due to having an executive assistant leave the commission. Kennedy said the meeting summary would be voted on at the next meeting.

Kennedy introduced Toni Shaw.

***Tennessee Housing and Development Agency***  
**Toni Shaw, THDA**

Shaw thanked everyone and began with description of the summer round of the Tennessee Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grants Program. There will be approximately \$2 million available for the current round of grant funding. THDA will accept applications from cities, counties, development districts, public housing authorities, other state departments, and private, non-profit organizations. Funding is only available for rentals and to address the housing needs of households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI). Projects serving the rental housing needs of households with incomes at or below 50% or 30% of AMI are encouraged. Shaw said additional points may be awarded to applicants meeting the housing needs of youth aging out of the State's foster care system, ex-offenders, and homeless veterans as well as to projects located in rural or distressed counties. To access the grant, visit [thda.org](http://thda.org), applications are due by June 17<sup>th</sup>. Shaw asked for everyone to share information about the grant with other non-profits.

Shaw provided information on the Covid-19 Rent Relief Program and said individuals can receive assistance with past due rent or for some with future rent. THDA is offering in all counties except for Davidson, Knox, Rutherford, and Shelby. Individuals should apply on covid rent relief page, landlords and tenants can apply.

Kennedy thanked Shaw and apologized to Steve Petty for not giving him an opportunity to speak at the beginning. Petty thanked everyone and apologized about the temporarily missing minutes from the last meeting. Petty tells everyone legislature is voting on budget today.

Kennedy introduces Courtney Matthews.

## ***Department of Children's Services***

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

Matthews thanked everyone and provided a brief overview of the Office of Independent Living. The office prepares youth in foster care and young adults who age out of foster care for a successful transition to adulthood. For ages 14 -16 custodial youth there is independent living plan, for age 17+ custodial youth there is a transition plan, and for 18-21 year old aged-out youth there is extension of foster care. The program is housed through DCS' Central Office with three new coordinators whose focus has been on the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act. The act includes the suspension of aging out and permitting re-entry and allows youth to remain in foster care, regardless of age, it waives the education conditions of EFC until September 30, 2021, and permits re-entry into EFC for youth who have age out after January 27, 2020. The legislation also extends services for Chafee and ETV by expanding the age of eligibility to 27 until September 30, providing direct stimulus one-time payments to eligible young adults, assistance with meeting immediate living expense needs, and increases the maximum ETV award to \$12,000 until September 30, 2022. Office staff have spent a lot of time understanding the federal guidance, attending town halls, and webinars on the topic. Matthews is excited about the legislation and feels the staff are prepared to enter the second phase of distributing the financial assistance. Matthews participated in a CASA conference to help spread the word about extended services. Matthews asked for everyone's help getting the word out when the time comes.

Kennedy thanked Matthews and offers to support in any way he can. Kennedy asked for anyone with questions to put them in the chat box.

## ***Update from Resource Centers***

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

Morris said the pandemic has been difficult but also great in some ways because many youth like and appreciate the virtual option. Project Now continues to offer both in person and virtual services, including tutoring as well as emphasizing self-care. Morris said they are getting many referrals and attendance is up and down. There are three seniors currently in the program. Morris said they are hoping to start outdoor service projects soon.

Kennedy thanked Morris and introduced Karen Nichols and John Bruce.

## **River City Youth Collective, Karen Nichols and John Bruce**

Nichols announced several changes in Hamilton County at RCYC. Sarah Elghalban was promoted and John Bruce was hired, with Nichols now serving as director. They have moved to a new building in an easier to access location, along the bus route and they can now service walk ins, have a food pantry and washer/dryer. The new space has five independent, full decorated living rooms. Nichols announced their upcoming fundraiser Rise, being held May 4<sup>th</sup> with Jimmy Wayne as special guest. There will be both an in person and virtual option and will include a recently filmed a video honoring one of their youth. They will e-mail out link to fundraiser. Nichols ended with saying they are working on Camp Hope as well.

Kennedy thanked Nichols and welcomed Bruce and asked if he would like to speak. Bruce said he is excited to be here and is very excited about the Matching Fund program.

Kennedy introduced Tiffany Turnage

## **Dream Seekers, Tiffany Turnage**

Turnage reports excellent youth participation in the program through Zoom but expresses wishes for more referrals. Current activities include hosting one finance class a month and application for funding for a computer lab at both Dream Seekers and the Resource Center. Computer access will increase opportunity for participants to apply for jobs and for personal use. The facility has been undergoing extensive renovations, including floors, painting, and furniture. The Resource Center got new washer/dryers with proceeds used to help clients. Turnage said on April 24<sup>th</sup> they did a balloon release and put down state flags for all foster youth. May is Foster Care Month and they will be taking youth indoor rock climbing as well as doing a neighborhood clean-up. On June 5<sup>th</sup> Dream Seekers are hosting a virtual girl talk event and are starting a new program: Will Work to help young people get training and jobs in a range of areas such as welding, cosmetology, pharmacy tech, etc. Dream Seekers also received a \$5,000 grant to provide utility assistance to their clients.

Kennedy thanked Turnage and congratulated them on their upgrades. He reminded everyone to put questions in the chat box and introduces the Jessica Mullins.

## ***Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services***

### **Office of Children, Young Adults and Families**

#### **Jessica Mullins, Director, Youth & Young Adult Initiatives**

Mullins, the Director of Youth & Young Adult Initiatives, shares that Jules Wilson has been promoted to Project Director of Healthy Transitions Initiative. A new Youth Coordinator will

begin June 1<sup>st</sup> to fill Wilson's former position. Mullins reported on planning for an early psychosis conference for August, covering a wide range of issues. May is Children's Mental Health Awareness month and TDMHSAS will be focusing on a different demographic each week through social media posting and releasing three videos, one new and two older ones. Mullins reports sites have struggled with referrals and keeping clients engaged as the pandemic has continued. Clinical Psychosis program began in Shelby County right before the pandemic and has struggled to connect with young adults, asking for referrals. Other sites are about on average for other years and have seen a 75% reduction in ER visits for their clients

Mullins introduced Jules Wilson.

### **Jules Wilson – Director, Health Transitions Initiative**

Wilson shares the new early psychosis video - a cartoon about youth struggling and ultimately connecting to resources through Healthy Transitions. The video was made with carryover dollars from federal grant funding for HTI. Other carryover dollars were used to hold related trainings. Wilson gave an overview of Healthy Transitions, two sites, one in Davidson County through Mental Health Cooperative and another in Greene County through Frontier Health. Greene County has 14 clients and the program offer a life skills group and work closely with the courts to address any issues encountered by participants. Wilson says they are focused on bringing policy change that will support foster youth. Menta Health Coop in Davidson County has 22 clients and has unfortunately dealt with a lot of staff turnover. They have many referrals and have a Young Adult Leadership Council. Wilson said TN Voices has been a great partner and connected them with PsychHub. Wilson said Young Adult Leadership Council has struggled with virtual attendance but are optimistic because they are adding younger members. The next meeting of YALC is this Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Kennedy asked for any questions and thanked Wilson before introducing Jane Fleishman.

### ***Oasis Center***

#### **Jane Fleishman, Learning Collaborative Director**

Fleishman reported on three new sites in Memphis and five previous school-based sites. Other focus includes working with the juvenile justice systems and families and providing travel expenses to provide professional development through a series of workshops geared towards helping providers be more equitable and take a stand on racism. Fleishman said Davidson County Oasis Center has worked hard to get youth and young adults, ages 18-24, off streets and into housing. They have rehoused 77 youth and have 17 living in apartments. Fleishman

provided a number to call, 615-327- 4455, for crisis services.

Kennedy thanks Fleishman and introduces Tribble.

**Youth Villages, LifeSet**  
**Heather Tribble, State Coordinator**

Tribble reports good program growth, with 720 clients across the state. There are 201 graduates, 187 from high school and 14 from college or technical schools, and LifeSet will be hosting virtual and drive by celebrations for the graduates. Peer to Peer events have been going well, using raffles to incentivize attendance. The focus during the pandemic has also been on helping those who lost jobs with unemployment or to find new employment in creative ways. They also helped clients look for outdoor employment to stay safe during Covid. Tribble introduces Jason who is the Education Vocational Coordinator. Jason talked about helping youth find employment and conducting the Youth Science assessment, which tells their strengths and weaknesses for employment. He said they are the liaison between youth and any administration problems.

Tribble then introduces two clients of LifeSet.

The first client is a freshmen in college and entered foster care at age 16. She said LifeSet changed her life and helped her grow. She has been in LifeSet for two to three years and is thankful for their support and how they have helped her manage her money. Tate said they made her the person she is today.

Tribble introduces the second client, who is studying culinary arts at Chattanooga State. She went into foster care at age 17 because of neglect and her case worker at LifeSet helped her get extended foster care, housing, and mutual funds to buy a car. She also reported when she got in trouble, they helped her get a lawyer who got her case dropped. Through peer support she opened up and got the help she needed.

Tribble explained the Legal Pilot program that provided the second client with an attorney. Tribbles thanked both youth for sharing their story.

Kennedy thanked the youth and Tribble and opened the floor up for other business.

Petty spoke on how the legislature changed the age requirements to 17 and created five pilot programs that will be foster care liaisons. Petty said DCS did not have much involvement and he would like more information on the programs. Petty said the legislature also passed a bill on apprenticeships and he will learn more about it and cover in a future meeting.

Courtney Matthews said the DCS were not involved in the pilot programs but were consulted on the age requirement change.

Kennedy asked for any more announcements. He then reminds everyone that the next meeting will be jointly with CCMH on June 17, 2021.

Petty said the meeting will most likely still be virtual.

Kennedy thanked everyone and closed the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:26 p.m.