



TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH

STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council

August 5, 2021
1:00 pm – 3:30 p.m. Central
WebEx

Meeting Summary

Participants

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Dave Aguzzi | Courtney Matthews | Brent Robinson |
| Jon Berestecky | Sarah Mays | Jasmine Snell |
| Cory Bradfield | Melissa McGee | Jolene Sharp |
| Susan Cope | Jerri Moore | Brittany Stowers |
| Debra Granger | Christie Morris | Jackie Talley |
| Craig Hargrow | Morgan Morris | Sherry Taylor |
| Troy Jenkins | Karen Nichols | Heather Tribble |
| Richard Kennedy | Brandi Osborne | |
| Pamela Lowe | Kim Peer | |
| Bill Latimer | Danielle Rochelle | |

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

Kennedy welcomed the group at 1 p.m. He expressed appreciation for those in

attendance and asked participants to record their attendance by putting their name in chat box. Kennedy acknowledged Petty's absence today and thanked McGee for coordinating today's meeting. McGee gave notification that this meeting would be recorded in its entirety. Kennedy then congratulated Madison on her new position.

Kennedy proceed to request approval for recent meeting summaries – October 2020, April and June 2021. Motion to approve by Sharp and seconded by Berestecky.

Kennedy introduced Courtney Matthews.

Department of Children's Services

Courtney Matthews, Director, Office of Independent Living

Dave Aguzzi, Assistant Director, Office of Independent Living

Matthews thanked everyone and shared 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 at least one IL Specialist in every region, some housing two specialists. She reviewed the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act. This act is about two phases - 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. DCS IL was able to engage this very quickly in late January/early February. 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. The public campaign launched on June 25th after making these adjustments. Application deadline has been extended and language can be found on the DCS IL website. Matthews reports good response from young people. Matthews introduced Aguzzi.

Aguzzi reported on numbers of young adults in Extension of Foster Care, noting that the actual number did not change but the total active participants did increase, as well as an

increase in episodes of care. Allowing new and returning young adults to come back to EFC without being enrolled in school has increased numbers. This speaks to the desire to expand eligibility for EFC. Aguzzi also discussed DCS Pandemic Aid in various forms. The stimulus payments allow young people to apply on pandemic website and if meet requirements, they can receive one-time \$1200 payments from the state of Tennessee. DCS IL has received 2472 applications but may contain duplicates. DCS IL has already approved 1258 applications. Approved applications are processed weekly to distribute stimulus payments. DCS IL is also contracting with Youth Villages to provide direct financial assistance for particular needs, i.e. rental, utility, childcare, transportation costs.

Matthews thanks staff for dedication to reviewing and processing applications quickly. She also reports that young adults are leaving comments and all are read. Those applicants who are determined ineligible are provided assistance as can be identified. Matthews reports staff is excited to be able to help young people even more and the office is always looking for ways to expand EFC services. Aguzzi also thanked staff with Finance and Administration for their support in this efforts.

Kennedy thanked Matthews and Aguzzi and offers to support in any way he can. Kennedy asked for anyone with questions to put them in the chat box. Kennedy asked for clarification on the final date for application, how much money remains to be allocated and how much flexibility is available to use after the deadline for application passes. Matthews reports that deadline has already been extended for application until September 15th in effort to allow processing. After September 30th, ages 21-26 will not be eligible for assistance. September 30th is a key date for this additional assistance. Beyond that date, ages 18-20 can continue to be served through September 30, 2022, or while funds are still available. After September 30, 2021, DCS IL will continue to review processes and identify other ways to allocate money for support of young adults. Matthews encourages spreading the word about the pandemic assistance for young people and increasing numbers of applications. Total allocation for stimulus payment was \$4.5 million, \$2 million allocated to Youth Villages contract and they are close to providing \$1 million in stimulus payments. Total amount received was \$7.4 million.

Update from Resource Centers

Christie Morris, Project Now!

Morris reports that Helen Ross McNabb has officially changed the name to McNabb Center and has received new signage for their location. Since last meeting, the McNabb Center offers annual training for youth in CPR and First Aid, ten youth completed and are certified for two years. They also provide a matching program for financial assistance through the Jim Casey grant. Youth receive \$150 for joining Project Now! And then 90 days after, if still active, they can receive up to \$1000 for rent/car/etc. The partner bank is First Horizon who has returned to the partnership in July after a hiatus due to the pandemic. Morris teaches self-care, boundaries, prevention, among other topics to the youth. She also offers tutoring or space to hang out. Their building will be under construction over the next couple of months to better accommodate the programs housed within. She also reports increase in youth who experience homelessness over the age of 18 and trouble with good decision-making skills. She has been working to help improve those situations with those youth. Morris provides name of program and will leave her information in chat box.

Kennedy thanked Morris for the information. No other Resource Centers were in attendance.

LifeSet

Youth Villages

Heather Tribble, State Coordinator

Tribble provided program update with 469 youth receiving LifeSet services. YV has 299 EFC only cases, providing the case management piece for EFC participants. This number has definitely grown during the pandemic. Youth Villages is assisting with distribution of the payments for enrolled youth. Kennedy asks Tribble about the biggest needs young adults have that is difficult to address and meet those needs. Tribble reports needs in rental assistance due to lost jobs during the pandemic. Berestecky asked if Tribble knew if young adults were accessing the THDA funds available, Tribble is unsure at present but will check. Matthews reports that during application processing, if identified, they will be presented with options available to that region. DCS is looking for housing authorities across the state to partner with them for the foster youth to independence initiative. Berestecky reminds all that individual organizations to reach out to local housing authorities to partner in meeting these needs and be able to access these vouchers. Matthews also reminded attendees to help young adults know that this is not a scam, it is a legitimate distribution of funds. Tribble then introduces a young adult currently receiving LifeSet support, enrolled in college and studying social work

Kennedy thanked Tribble and the young adult for their participation and conversation today.

Chambliss Center/Youth Advisory Board

Jon Berestecky

Jasmine Snell

Berestecky shared information about the Youth Housing Demonstration Program (YHDP) grant. He shared the journey of determining partners and providers to support young adults and the sometimes siloed world of social services. Two years ago, they started the Hamilton Area Transitional Living Coalition, an effort to bring people together to serve 18–25-year-old population with adverse childhood experiences, not necessarily just those who had been in foster care. This group polled workers on the biggest needs faced by this population, housing rose to the top. Partnered with Hamilton County Homeless Coalition and became aware of YHDP, a HUD initiative to fund Communities of Care (COC) to create homeless intervention programs for this age range and have submitted application, with notification of award in September. Nashville has one presently and Knoxville is seeking a second award for this purpose.

Snell reports on the Youth Advisory Board and that it has been in existence for about a year. Participants and leaders vary in identity and life experience and use that experience in advocacy in the community. Two Advisory Board members are outreach workers with local agencies that serve the young adult population. The Board meets monthly to plan outreach efforts and partner with other local entities to bring awareness to this issue. They are also exploring the idea of shared housing among young people and worked together with others in the application for the YHDP. Berestecky reports that they have recently been able to pay participants of the Youth Advisory Board. As part of their participation, they also were able to identify and vote on programs to receive \$6 million in funding during the pandemic.

Department of Health

Kendra Mitchell

Mitchell had a last-minute conflict and will be unable to join today.

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Jessica Mullins, Director, Youth & Young Adult Initiatives

(Melissa McGee, TCCY, reporting for Mullins)

McGee provided an update for Jessica Mullins and Morgan Morris with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Jules Wilson, Healthy Transitions Project Director, transitioned out of that position and Krystal Fortney will move into that position on

August 16th. Morris is the new Youth and Young Adult Coordinator and will be directing the Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) and the Certified Young Adult Specialist Program (CYAPS). The statewide YALC will meet on September 7th and all are welcome to join. The first CYAPS training will occur virtually during the week of September 27th. The First Episode Psychosis program is expanding and taking applications. The number of youth and young adults served for FY21 in First Episode Psychosis programs was 154, only three less than FY20. Healthy Transitions sites served 61 youth and young adults while CHIRP served 13 youth and young adults, with both increasing numbers served. There will also be a First Episode Psychosis conference on September 1st and 2nd.

Closing

Kennedy reminded attendees of the statutory responsibility to develop and submit an annual report to the members of the General Assembly around opportunity to reduce barriers to success for transition age youth and young adults. Last year's report and recommendations were attached to the meeting invite, Kennedy asked attendees to review that report and provide any feedback for developing this year's report, including things being done well and/or things to be addressed for future opportunities. Report is due October 31st and the October 7th meeting will be focused on content for this report and recommendations.

Kennedy reminds everyone that the next meeting will be on October 7th and most likely will remain in virtual format.

Kennedy asked for any announcements. McGee announced the next Council on Children's Mental Health meeting on August 26th. McGee also asked attendees to email her if they are not directly receiving YTAC meeting invites or information. No other announcements noted.

Kennedy thanked everyone and closed the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:30 p.m.