



STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council

May 7, 2015

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time

Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants:

Phil Acord	Betsy Holmes	Heidi Moseley
Dave Aguzzi	Kimberly Jeffries	Linda O’Neal
Liz Blasbery	Briana Johnson	Steve Petty
Tameka Daniel	Mary T. Jones	April Rosete
Jennifer Davis	Nyasha Justice	Keisha Shervington
Joseph Goldsmith	Kristy Leach	Natasha Smith
Darci Halfman	Anna Claire Lowder	Sherry Smith
Genesis Hardin	James Martin	Wendy Spence
Ashley Harrington	Melissa McGee	April Tanguay
Ginger Harris	Quatrece McKinney	
Timothy Hickman	Diana Miller	

Welcome and Introductions (Petty)

- Petty welcomed the group and expressed his appreciation for those attending. Petty introduced Natasha Smith, the newest employee at Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. The attendees introduced themselves.

Acceptance of November Meeting Summary (Petty)

- Petty asked members to review the November Meeting summary and asked for revisions or edits.
- **IT WAS MOVED (HARRINGTON) AND SECONDED (MARTIN) TO ACCEPT THE NOVEMBER 2014 MEETING SUMMARY. S. SMITH MADE A CORRECTION TO PAGE FIVE NOTING THDA DID FUND OASIS. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Presentation from Disability Rights TN (April Rosete)

- Rosete explained the Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee, the state's federally mandated legal protection & advocacy agency (P&A) for people with disabilities, officially changed its name September 2014 to Disability Rights Tennessee (DRT) to align itself more closely to other federally mandated P&As across the country and connect more fully with the communities they serve.
- As similar name changes are being made by other state P&As across the country, Tennessee wanted to follow suit and better align themselves with the larger National Disability Rights Network, the nonprofit membership organization for federally mandated P&As and client assistance programs. Collectively, this network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services provided to people with disabilities in the United States and Tennessee is proud to be a member.
- Although the agency's name has changed, DRT's mission remains the same as it was at its inception in 1978 — to protect the rights of Tennesseans with disabilities.
- This name change was just the first step in the agency's plan to expand the reach of advocacy services across the state. After 35 years of service, Disability Rights Tennessee is taking this opportunity to introduce more people to the diverse services being provided.
- DRT has represented—at no cost—more than 40,000 clients with disabilities.
- DRT oversees the vocational rehabilitation program.
- They have a grant through Social Security where they help those with Social Security benefits with assistance to cut through the various barriers.
- DRT assists individuals with effective communication help like a deaf individual who needs an interpreter when visiting the doctor. They also work with businesses to educate them on alternate identification and the individual's rights.
- DRT works with the election commission on poll site accessibility. They go out to the polling stations on election days and do surveys of voters with disabilities.
- DRT conducts education on work issues where an IP or behavioral intervention plans are not being implemented or followed.
- DRT's direct services include: investigating abuse and neglect in mental health hospitals, group homes, developmental disability centers, nursing homes and other community facilities; advocating for issues that are approved by the Review Team; providing legal representation for issues that are approved by the Review Team; providing education and outreach opportunities for self-advocates, family members, service providers and other community groups on topics related to the legal rights of Tennesseans with disabilities; and advocating public policy to educate and inform policy makers about issues that impact people with disabilities.
- They are limited in monitoring because they do not have access to records and monitoring is for a 3-month period. In an investigation, they have more authority. There is a probable cause clause so they do not need a release in investigations.
- Complaints out of Woodland Hills have been lack of activities and food, boredom, and the nurse will only give them an ice pack for headaches. There have been significant changes made in the last few months.

- DRT takes a much broader perspective when investigating by looking at staff training - if outside scope of rules and appropriate placement because there is no prescribed timeline.
- DRT also advocates for individuals related to issues arising during investigations.
- Since DRT is a legal-based agency, all work is overseen by an attorney. They ask people making referrals to either call with clients or call DRT ahead of time to explain the situation.
- The only authority they really have in the end is a lawsuit. They try to play nice and work together to fix problems since most do not rise to the level of a lawsuit.
- One of the hardest things is letting families know that Disability Rights TN exists because the calls never come from youth or patients at nursing homes. Most calls come from workers, family, friends, etc. They created a new abuse and neglect poster for distribution at all youth facilities and nursing homes.

Department of Children’s Services, Office of Independent Living Update (Dave Aguzzi and Ginger Harris)

- Aguzzi, Assistant Director, gave an update on achievements made since the last meeting.
- There has been an ongoing decrease in youth emancipating from foster care and an increase in young adults accepting Extension of Foster Care Services.
- The ability to serve 17-22 year olds through Youth Villages LifeSet with positive outcomes has improved.
- There has been an increase in authentic youth engagement and Youth for Youth Boards across the state; an increase in utilization of the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and Bright Futures Scholarship and Independent Living Allowances; an increase in the number of college graduates in FY15; and increase in Independent Living wrap around services.
- They are conducting ongoing outreach to young adults who have exited the system through emancipation, Subsidized Permanent Guardianship (SPG) or adoption, to ensure connection to services.
- Life skill development survey for youth and development of training for foster parents around “Creating Teachable Moments” were conducted. They surveyed 949 youth about life skills development in custody in FY15.
- Over 1,000 youth in congregate care received the Wyman Teen Outreach Program (TOP) in FY14.
- Youth developed the Independent Living (IL) Toolkit for Success Manual and Guide for Teenagers in Care, and have been involved in policy and practice development.
- Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) for July 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015:

Total EFCS Episodes to March 31, 2015	636
Total Young Adults Served to March 31, 2015	625
Total Active in EFCS as of March 31, 2015	342

- The following conveys the number of young adults who received EFCS during the same time frame last year:

Total EFCS Episodes to March 31, 2014	544
Total Young Adults Served to March 31, 2014	528
Total Active in EFCS as of March 31, 2014	257

- Scholarships were reported as follows:
 Hope Foster care scholarship by year graduated from High School:
 - 2014.....52
 - 2013.....40
 - 2012.....47
 - 2011.....45
 - 2010.....49

- FY15 ETV-331; Bright Futures- 117 =448 (Through March 31st 2015).
- FY14 ETV- 262; Bright Futures- 139 = 401
- FY13 ETV- 282; Bright Futures-126 = 408

- Harris, Youth Engagement Lead, invited Genesis Hardin to discuss the Statewide Youth Ambassador Board Meeting held March 26-27. They had 20 young adults participate. Youth discussed issues surrounding normalcy policies and met those providers who can help with legal needs for young adults. The youth had concerns of being labeled as a “level” and labeled in general after coming into the system. The youth wanted foster parents to have high expectations from them and to believe in them.
- Hardin spoke about her experience and the outreach opportunities to let the community know they are not bad kids. They talked about experiences with Guardians ad litem (GAL) and how some of the youth never met GAL until court.
- Harris announced the Middle Tennessee Youth for Youth monthly meeting will be on Wednesday, May 27th. For more information, contact Ginger Harris, Youth Engagement Lead at 615-532-9447.

Update from Resource Centers

- Youth Connections at Monroe Harding (Quatrece McKinney in for Pam Cash)
 - Seven youth earned their HiSET and they will have a graduation celebration for those who have participated in their programs on May 19. The students will wear cap and gowns and speakers will be there to make it a real celebration. Providers in the room are invited to attend.
 - McKinney shared a success story of a young man who aged-out of the system, but stayed connected with DCS. He received a football scholarship to a school in Arkansas.
 - Received funds from THDA and hired a part-time housing assistant, Phyllis Sutton, in Davidson County to oversee the housing program. She will be an excellent resource for young people who are looking for housing even if they do not qualify for their program. These resources can help with rent, utilities, deposits, etc.

- Helen Ross McNabb – Project NOW! (Keisha Shervington and Genesis Hardin)
 - Using the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) Opportunity Passport, Child & Family Tennessee's Project Navigating Opportunities that Work (NOW) offers financial literacy courses for youth transitioning from foster care. Youth can attend courses, open a savings account and receive stipends and matched savings of up to \$1000/year for approved purchases.
 - Program participants develop a written plan for approved assets such as computers, vehicles and housing, medical or educational expense.
 - There are 91 active participants and 12 new enrollments in March
 - Since 2011, there have been 135 youth enrolled; ages 17-21 are the majority of the youth served.
 - Opportunity Passport surveys are complete.
 - Assets purchases were 16 versus four per quarter.
 - Life skills like obtaining employment as well as educational opportunities and financial aid assistance has been their focus.
 - They have had 62 referrals since January 2015.
 - Project NOW! promotes leadership development by giving youth an opportunity to speak and share their experiences.
 - Hardin, who has been a part of Project NOW! since 2011, shared her experience with Project NOW! Her biggest match was in education because she used her match money provided to get back in school and she is now attending the University of Tennessee.
 - Hardin also used her match money to help with her car.
 - There is a webpage where speaking engagements for the youth can be posted.

- South Memphis Alliance (Tameka Daniel)
 - South Memphis Alliance (SMA), a local non-profit dedicated to supporting young adults transitioning out of foster care, is launching a fundraising campaign after being the proud recipients of a \$15,000 leverage match grant from an anonymous donor. This grant will support SMA's Dream Seekers Program which offers life skills with an emphasis on financial educational programs.
 - SMA has set a goal of matching the grant donation through a combination of community and private donations, and they need your help to do so.
 - On May 30th, SMA will kick off their fundraising campaign at the SMA Community Fair which will feature service providers offering support for their cause.
 - They have an 80 percent goal and the retention rate did go down after survey because many of the youth only want the stipend of \$40 for taking the survey.
 - They are working on an internal plan to change the retention rate.
 - Housing is a problem nationwide. Finding a livable, low-cost housing unit for youth who have no job history is a major problem, especially in Memphis.
 - They had eight new enrollments for the Opportunity Passport program.

- The center conducted surveys of youth who have been active in the program. Staff has already made contact with 80 percent of the youth involved. The 80 percent are considered active as they have recently participated in events or used the center.
 - They have been attending Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) meetings to implement a pilot program to reduce reliance on local confinement of court-involved youth, dramatically reducing detention facility populations.
- Petty thanked all the presenters for the resource centers for their work and being here at YTAC.

Update from Youth Villages LifeSet Program (Joseph Goldsmith)

- Youth Villages' transitional living program provides at-risk youth and young adults leaving the foster care, juvenile justice and mental health systems the intensive in-home support and guidance they need to make a successful transition to adulthood.
- The transitional living program works not only with young adults who are "aging out" of state custody but also with the young person's family and support systems to help ensure a more successful transition.
- Youth Villages' outcome data show that the program significantly reduces the risk of homelessness, poverty and illegal behavior among the young adults served.
- Goldsmith talked about name change from Transitional Living because the name needed to pattern what they actually did. They are working with key stakeholders in different states to have them provide continued services to youth transitioning out. The name change makes the program more marketable to other states.
- Serving more youth this year; 670 across the state to date.
- Took youth to DC and were invited to a Grammy event. They also heard the Howard University Gospel Choir, toured the Capitol and met with Legislators.
- On May 20th, an event will take place to release the results of a study that will reveal Transitional Living participation leads to increase earnings and stability across mental health, living, relationships, with urban versus rural and juvenile justice versus non juvenile justice.

Updates from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant (April Tanguay and Ashley Harrington)

See "Youth Recovery" handout

- Tanguay reported using the carryover funding left from original grant to expand A-CRA training over next six months to a year. Chestnut Health will come out to train. Other trainings like cultural competency training, network providers with faith-based, SOC and wraparound training with clinicians will also be used with carryover funding.
- Regional councils are established. They are meeting and exceeding all federal government goals.
- They have to have a certain number of surveys completed various stages and they are at 90 percent for three month and six month. Still have four months to go until end of the year.

- Harrington stated Centerstone is at 39 enrollments with 50 being their goal. She noticed more transitional age youth this year 12 compared to four last year.
- She confirmed local advisory councils established.
- They are working with In Home TN to develop an online juvenile guide and a Youth AA in the area. They are trying to find free service providers instead of those who will come in with insurance and a sliding scale.
- Outings for youth and their friends or families are in the works, like bowling and a trip to Sky Zone.
- Harrington happily reported ordering K2 and Spice test cups to test for synthetic marijuana.

Updates on Funding Opportunities from Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (Sherry Smith)

- Smith talked about emergency solutions grant and the awards to Oasis and Monroe Harding. She said it has been slow going and a difficult grant to administer and serve this demographic - a lot of obstacles for youth with no job history, no credit, foster care, etc.
- THDA is looking at Low Income Tax Credit program to see if they can make homeless youth a special population and see if they can build some of these apartment units around community colleges to give them a chance at a free education.
- Smith encouraged everyone to look at Health and Trust Fund to see if we can pay for acquisition, rehab, duplex and rental housing. The problem is the five-year requirement and some people are not sure if they want to deal with rental properties.
- Youth and Homeless programs are very popular. THDA wants to partner with SOC providers and welcomes ideas.
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides one-time, once a year assistance. Agencies that assist on the website.

Proposed Legislative Initiative (Nyasha Justice and Dave Aguzzi)

- Justice informed providers of a problem regarding procedures to be followed by juvenile courts during supervision of youth participating in Extension of Foster Care (EFC) Services. At present no laws have been written to provide guidance for courts and foster care review boards in their review of extension of foster care youth. Passage of legislation would provide guidance for the development of rules of procedure.
- She pointed out there is no judicial oversight if there is no permanency plan in most counties. She asked if permanency plans had to be ratified to serve 18-21 population?
- She would like the Council to make a recommendation for the laws to change to include 18-21 year olds and to push legislation geared specifically for 18-21 population.
- O'Neal stated that a report is due in October from YTAC. Justice would like the legislation to provide specific guidelines to judges during hearings and for those who will not even get a hearing unless something else triggers it.
- The counties with model boards will develop local rules requiring the 18-21 population to come in at the end of semesters and summer/holiday breaks.

- Justice does not believe the judges will push back for the most part. She believes they just need law to follow. AOC Director Tate should support this new initiative.
- O’Neal suggested writing a letter to start the process and including it in the report to go to the legislature in October. She advised it will not be a quick fix. O’Neal is on the board for the Court Improvement Program.
- Justice said having a guide will help train the judges as well especially because the law sees this demographic as adults.
- Juvenile Court Judges need more training on how to use CASA and other providers. These recommendations will need to be integrated into the Rules and Procedure.
- Petty asked the room if everyone felt okay with O’Neal drafting a letter. The consensus was to support initiating this effort.
- Justice announced there are openings for the Peer Advocate Model Foster Care Review Boards in various locations. These are paid positions with specific criteria.

Future Meeting Topics

- O’Neal announced YTAC will have a joint meeting with the Council on Children’s Mental Health (CCMH) on June 18 at Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee, room TBD. It will be 10 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. This will be an opportunity for resource centers to provide helpful information across different spectrums.
- August 13, 2015

Other Business

- Petty asked Kristy Leach, Director of Children and Youth Mental Health, to discuss Healthy Transitions, a new initiative to improve access to treatment and support services for youth and young adults ages 16 – 25 who either have, or are at risk of developing a serious mental health condition. This will be accomplished by increasing awareness, screening and detection, outreach and engagement, referrals to treatment, coordination of care and evidence-informed treatment for this age group. Leach oversees the merging of all Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services children’s programs under one umbrella. Leach stated Kisha Ledlow will be able to speak more about this new initiative at the joint meeting in June.

Announcements

- McGee talked about an upcoming SOC Conference in August 28-29. The conference is free of charge.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:44 p.m.