



STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council

July 31, 2014

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time
Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants:

Phil Acord	Timothy Hickman	Steve Petty
Dave Aguzzi	Briana Johnson	Clayton Ramsey
Don Alexander	Jacqueline Johnson	Toni Shaw
Julia Barlar	Mary Jones	Keisha Shervington
Liz Blasbery	Dustin Keller	Shawn Smith
Pamela Cash	James Kelley	Sherry Smith
April Carthom	Richard Kennedy	Ned Solomon
Tameka Daniel	Kristy Leach	Erica Spencer
Emma Davis	Mike Leach	Tawny Spinelli
Donna Duarte	Melanie Malabanan	April Tanguay
Karin Freyer	James Martin	Amy Thomas
Joseph Goldsmith	Melissa McGee	Keri Virgo
Darci Halfman	Mary Meador	Winona Yellowhammer
Ashley Harrington	Linda O'Neal	
Ginger Harris	Jack Parks	

Welcome and Introductions (Linda O'Neal)

- O'Neal welcomed the group, expressed her appreciation for those attending, and asked for introductions.
- She thanked Dustin for completing the meeting summary and Steve for his work on the report to the legislature and meeting coordination.

Acceptance of May Meeting Summary (O'Neal)

- O'Neal asked members to review the May Meeting summary and asked for revisions or edits.
- **IT WAS MOVED (SPINELLI) AND SECONDED (HARRINGTON) TO ACCEPT THE MAY 2014 MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Department of Children's Services and Office of Independent and Transitional Living Update (Mike Leach)

- Leach stated the office has served 624 youth in fiscal year 2014 compared to 564 youth in 2013. There were 282 active youth at the time of the meeting. Average time for retention of youth is 232 days or the average equivalent of two semesters in college. Leach plans to review the reasons for this shorter retention average by region.
- Data for the 2014 fiscal year will be available for the next meeting.
- Leach discussed the new website featuring a video by Genesis Hardin and a foster parent video.
- DCS is working on a teachable moments foster parent training. The department hopes to have this available at the foster parent conference.
- Leach is working with the University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS) to revise the foster parent handbook.
- The federal grant-funded Teen Outreach Program about personal responsibility is expanding into Omni foster care continuum and G4S. This program has been available in congregate care settings.
- There will be a "Walk to Beautiful" event in Chattanooga on October 24 featuring Jimmy Wayne. Wayne will serve on a panel and talk about his journey.
- Ginger Harris discussed her efforts in reaching out to youth who did not accept the extension of foster care services. She has spoken with 397 youth to let them know about available services. Some students have returned to receive the educational voucher and others have been connected to community resources such as housing and insurance. She is continuing to reach out to homeless shelters.
- Leach mentioned Harris also contacts youth who are 21 to 25 about getting expanded Medicaid through TennCare.
- O'Neal thanked Leach and Harris for their reports. She looks forward to data to help with the October report.

Update from Resource Centers

- Monroe Harding (Pam Cash)
 - Cash stated the program has completed its move to the third floor at McKendree United Methodist Church. The new space is a great fit for the program as it is downtown near the bus depot and the church is very supportive.
 - *The Contributor* (Nashville's Newspaper published and sold by individuals who are homeless) is on the fourth floor of this building. Cash is working on a partnership with them to hire several of the young adults.
 - The thrift store has been merged with the church's clothing closet. The center still has hygiene items for the youth as the church does not have those items.
 - There are currently 80 active participants in the Opportunity Passport program. Twelve people have completed the High School Equivalency (HSE) Degree and 22 are currently in classes.

- Cash discussed new funding for the Stepping Stones program designed to be a seamless transition for HSE to college or employment. The program will take youth to job fairs and college tours.
- Helen Ross McNabb (Keisha Shervington)
 - Shervington has been in her position for about two months. The program currently has 30 interested and 18 attended a recent meeting about Opportunity Passport.
 - K-Town youth in action and Youth Circle are working with the program. The Youth 4 Youth Board has stable participation and is working on a foster care handbook.
 - The program has 93 youth enrolled overall and 61 active.
 - Leach mentioned Shervington has been very successful in a short period of time.
- Independent Center for Achievement and Mastery (Jack Parks)
 - Parks introduced himself and his agency, Partnership for Children and Families, as the newest contracted Resource Center, in Chattanooga. He is attempting to create a one-stop shop for youth, including leadership, job development, literacy programs, and involvement with other programs such as LIHEAP or energy assistance.
 - The contract began June 15 and youth participation will begin in August.
 - O’Neal welcomed Parks to the group and stated she looks forward to future reports about their ongoing progress.
- South Memphis Alliance (Tameka Daniel)
 - Daniel stated the program is beginning a partnership with the youth board to enhance youth engagement. Youth will go with staff to local agencies to learn about their services. This will help better prepare youth to understand the issues they may face independently.
 - The program has partnered with Meritan and Omni to have classes around the city and decrease transportation issues. They have also applied for federal IDEA funding to help youth.
- O’Neal thanked all the presenters for the resource centers for their work and being here at YTAC. She looks forward to their reports and other information for the October Report to the Legislature.

Update from Youth Villages (YV) Transitional Living Program (Joseph Goldsmith)

- Because of the partnership with DCS, YV served 1,304 youth in fiscal year 2014 representing the most served by YV in a single year. Of these youth, 185 graduated or received HSE and two graduated from college
- YV surveyed 661 youth and completed 548 NTYD surveys. This represents 48 percent and the state is in compliance.
- Goldsmith mentioned the YV scholars program. This program provides extra support for youth in a four-year college program. These youth must have a job and complete community service.

YV provides a mentor from the leadership staff. There are 16 new YV scholars and 40 total scholars in the program. Thirty of these youth are from Tennessee.

- YV hosted the final morning of the National Policy Tour recently visiting Tennessee. All participants toured YV programs.
- Leach described how they met with a TL program participant who discussed how budgeting was an issue for her but she has many goals. Leach mentioned she had applied for insurance in January but had not heard a response. Leach was able to get her insurance in two days. He said it was great to watch the YV staff discuss this with her.
- Petty said Natalie, the YV staff person leading the tour, was fantastic. The youth had a large car payment that made her budget challenging.
- Aguzzi provided some recent data about the YV program. These youth exited custody at 17 or older up to 21. YV had 779 episodes of care representing 773 youth. This is significantly higher than prior years.
- Of all youth in DCS extension of foster care, 52 percent (364) received YV TL services. Of all youth receiving YV TL, 43 percent were extension of foster care participants. YV has private funding to help serve non-DCS extension youth.
- Aguzzi is hoping to have more regionally based data about participants and a follow up to the baseline surveys conducted in 2011 to see progress.

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

See "Youth Recovery" handout

- Tanguay gave a brief overview for those who were not present at the last meeting. The program started September 1, 2013. The grant funding is \$950,000 a year for four years to deliver an evidence-based practice (EBP) to transition-age youth. TDMHSAS chose Adolescent – Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA) as the evidenced-based practice. The program has sites in Maury County at Centerstone and Madison County at Pathways. The goal is to reach out to 2,000 professionals. TRY focuses on a harm reduction model, not an abstinence model.
- A new brochure has been created and available for outreach distribution.
- Staff attended the Georgetown Training Institutes in July. The grantees were encouraged to collaborate with their System of Care grantees. TRY has already begun meeting with SOC staff and working with the TA Center. Total enrollment in the initiative nationwide is 128, and Tennessee has 48 enrolled.
- The federal project officer stated Tennessee is the best project nationally and other sites should follow the state's lead.
- TRY staff are working on suicide prevention training and LGBTQ trainings for staff and youth.
- Tanguay has been working with TCCY on a resource map to see where funding overlaps with other departments. Because of the resource mapping project at TCCY, this has been an easy process, unlike the experience in other states.
- She hopes to have outcomes and evaluation data at the next meeting.

- Harrington stated that Centerstone, the Maury county site, has 23 of 25 enrolled and plans to expand to surrounding counties. The other two have been referred and are waiting to be enrolled. Considering Centerstone's program is community-based, expansion just increases travel related costs for clinicians.
- Centerstone has hired all the clinicians and three of five are almost complete with A-CRA training.
- Harrington stated the program is working with the community anti-drug coalitions in the area. She is willing to provide presentations about the project. If you are from an agency in the area and would like to know more about the project, please let her know.
- Ramsey said Pathways has 16 of the 25 enrolled and is exploring options for a community-based model similar to Centerstone to expand to surrounding counties.
- He has been working with juvenile court officers, guidance counselors and principals. Pathways would like to intervene with these youth prior to court system involvement.
- Pathways is partnering with the Aspell Recovery Center. The Center is using A-CRA with youth in the appropriate age range. All clients have shown a reduction in drug use from baseline.
- Those youth transitioning from A-CRA to ACC have been doing well. This takes the youth from a treatment model to a community model.
- O'Neal reminded participants that YTAC is serving as the state level advisory group for the grant. A goal for YTAC and other similar groups is to be open to all who have an interest in working on issues impacting transition-age youth.
- O'Neal also expressed her appreciation to the presenters for sharing this information with the group.

Youth Housing (Toni Shaw, Donna Duarte, Sherry Smith and Don Alexander)

Refer to PowerPoint entitled "Tennessee Housing Development Agency"

- O'Neal welcomed those presenting about housing for transitioning youth. She explained at past meetings participants had asked for topical meetings around some of the common issues with transitioning.
- Shaw, who works with the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA), provided an overview of THDA and the Community Programs Division. She walked participants through the PowerPoint. More information about THDA and its programs can be found on the website at www.thda.org
- THDA is holding a housing summit on September 3-4, 2014.
- Duarte passed out cards about rental housing and how to locate rental housing. She encouraged participants to email her at dduarte@thda.org for more information.
- Youth should be eligible and should be encouraged to live in housing tax credit properties. She discussed the market for transitioning youth housing. Contractors do not typically want to build one-bedroom units for these youth. Program is for anyone meeting the criteria. Youth currently attending college are now encouraged to live in these properties.

- Smith discussed options to paying for and building rental housing. THDA has emergency solutions grants providing temporary funds to pay deposits, rent, back rent or charges, legal mediation, case management, credit repair, etc.
- She also stated TDHA 2014 funds are expected to be released in January 2015 pending board approval. Fiscal year 2013 funds were just awarded. TDHA will have grants up to \$100,000, with no matching funds required, earmarked for youth transitioning out of foster care. The application will be available online and due October 3, 2014, depending on federal approval of the plan. There will also be \$2.7 million open for grants ranging from \$35,000 to \$100,000 with 50 percent in-kind or cash match required.
- Alexander, with the Crossville Housing Authority, discussed a program serving 1,150 families in Upper Cumberland. He stated public housing is less than 30 percent of his inventory. He has had past issues with unreported transitioning youth moving in with current renters. This is an issue because all adults must be reported on the lease agreement.
- He currently has 325 public housing units with 89 percent occupied by persons with a mental disability. He has 300 people on his waiting list and 75 percent want a one-bedroom unit. His program is working to tear down big units and repurpose them for smaller units. Some of these units will be set aside for transitioning youth.
- He encouraged participants to advocate for a continuous funding stream for the Housing Trust Fund operated by THDA.
- Kelley updated participants about the TennCare Select Behavioral Health Advisory Committee. The committee is working on a series of videos/webinars for youth transitioning from foster care. One of these videos will be about housing, so he asked for anyone willing to present to talk with him.
- Leach thanked all those for presenting about housing for transitioning youth, and mentioned a joint letter from HUD and HHS encouraging providers to serve this population.

Other Business

- Considering school is about to start, O'Neal asked if participants had questions for Mary Meador who directs education for DCS.
- Meador explained for the youth development centers and private providers, school is year round. DCS youth will be a part of the education electronic system similar to other youth, including attendance, report cards, transcripts and other records. This will make records easier to receive and send. Control over credits and other requirements will be locked into the system and the credit recovery system will be available to YDCs and private providers.
- YDCs have all new computers through a technology grant. DCS is now being treated equally and is considered a school system.
- Education specialists are required to attend foster care review boards to help youth in their final year. Specialists review all new foster youth for past IEPs and help review and update the IEP. The new system access will have these items and make it easier to navigate.
- She explained how the GED process is now called the High School Equivalency Test and the pass rate is higher. She can help students find a testing center if needed.

- She would like to see legislation requiring counties to graduate foster youth who meet minimum state requirements but not the county's higher requirements.
- DCS had over 400 high school graduates last year.
- O'Neal thanked Mary for her time and said ongoing challenges with record transactions have discussed by YTAC. She is glad to hear about possible changes.
- O'Neal mentioned a highlight of YTAC meetings has been when youth present about challenges they have had with the system. Emma Davis is here and will talk with us; O'Neal expressed thanks to Melissa McGee for inviting her to attend.
- Davis stated she is here to represent youth who do not qualify for extension services but still need support due to not having a stable home environment. She reported it is difficult to be on your own and support yourself. She would like to know about programs where she might be eligible. She is applying to start at Lipscomb this fall and currently works in a retail store. She is looking for a second job, and hopes to live off campus because it is cheaper.
- Goldsmith stated YV would be willing to help her with the TL program.
- James Martin asked what could we do to help youth like her from getting caught in the middle.
- Davis said services should be easier to find and should be promoted to students. Social media is one way, but in some cases service providers do not know about other available services.
- O'Neal thanked Davis for talking with the group, adding it is always inspiring when youth share their experiences.

Announcements

- Leach updated the group about Tennessee Promise, as not all youth qualify. He will send the requirements to the group.
- O'Neal reminded the group about the next two meetings dates of September 18 and November 20. The next meeting will be focused on recommendations for the October report to the legislature. We will also want to discuss successes that have occurred.
- McGee mentioned the System of Care Conference in September. The conference will feature a youth track and encouraged participants to bring youth. There will also be a presentation about A-CRA.
- Soloman appreciated the topical meeting about housing and inquired if transportation might be a major challenge and a possible topic for the next meeting.
- O'Neal stated this is a challenge and might not have as many options as housing. She asked for suggestions from participants for options in this area. She encouraged participants to email Petty (steve.petty@tn.gov) if they have additional options for meeting topics.
- O'Neal shared her appreciation for everyone attending and working to improve services and supports for youth in transition.