



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council

October 1, 2020
1:00 pm – 3:00 p.m. Central
WebEx

Meeting Summary

Participants

Richard Kennedy	Janet Jenkins	Jane Fleishman
Steve Petty	Courtney Matthews	Brandi Osborne
Sumita Keller	Dave Aguzzi	Tiffany Turnage
Jolene Sharp	Nisha Chetri	Crystal Hutchins
Kendra Mitchell	Teresa Moore	Will Voss
Toni Shaw	Leslie Kinhead	Tyra Copas
Jykajah Wilks	Nathan Hermening	Taurean Haynes
Carrie Mason	Wendy Spence	Courtney Blakemore
Sarah Mays	Russette Marcum-Embry	Danielle Rochelle
Luke Bishop	Laura Draughn	
Jon Berestecky	Christie Morris	
Pam Madison	Carla Garrett	
Jessica Mullins	Melissa McGee	

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

Kennedy welcomed the group and expressed his appreciation for those attending. He asked for attendees to put name in chat box and gave recording notification. If you called in, please e-mail Steve Petty at steve.petty@tn.gov with notification of attendance. Kennedy said we need to approve the June and August meeting summary. Garret made motion to approve, Madison seconds the motion. Meeting summary approved.

Tennessee Housing and Development Agency

Toni Shaw, THDA

Shaw thanked everyone. Shaw began with describing the first Winter round of the Tennessee Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grants Program. There will be an application workshop on October 22nd from 9-11am. I will send Steve a copy of the application announcement to Steve. The grant is for the development of rental housing, it can be permanent or transitional. It offers up to \$500,000 for the development of the housing. There is a priority in the grant for anyone developing housing for youth transitioning out of foster care. If 100% of the units developed are designated for youth transitioning out of foster care then you are given a 7-point advantage in the application. This grant is competitive so a 7-point advantage is a big difference. The eligible activities under the grant are for new construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition. If there is a house your agency has been looking at buying or developing housing from the ground up then this grant opportunity is for you. We are receiving all applications electronically due to Covid. We have all moved to a geographic award distribution, this means the highest scoring applicants in each region will receive the grant first. We have done this to try to ensure that applicants all across the state receive a grant reward. Eligible applicants are 5013C non-profits, local governments, and public housing authorities.

THDA is launching the tenet based rental assistance pilot program through the HOME program. It is funded through HUD and will be offered in every region of the state. The three agencies that have been selected to participate in this program are Omni Vision in the west, Monroe Harding in middle Tennessee, and Knoxville Leadership Foundation in the east. We are thinking each agency will serve approximately 15 young people each, it will depend on the fair market value in each region. Our hope is that once we work out the kinks of the program, we will be able to launch it state wide so more participation can

happen. If you have any questions about this pilot program or the application workshop, please e-mail me at tshaw@thda.org. Shaw encouraged agencies to apply for the grant and is proud to say every year since the grant began, they have awarded at least one agency serving youth transitioning out of foster care. Shaw thanked everyone.

Department of Children's Services

Courtney Matthews, Director of Office of Independent Living

Matthews thanked everyone and said she is very interested in the tenet rental pilot program that Shaw described. Matthews is excited and thinks it is a great opportunity for the state. Matthews shared about another housing option for young people being offered through HUD called the Fostering Youth to Independence (FYI) program. It is a tenet based; voucher program that is targeted to youth that have had foster experience. There are certain housing authorities that are eligible to participate and receive the vouchers. I have a list of those that I can get out to you all through Steve and put in the chat box. FYI program is for 36 months and for young people up to 24. There is some flexibility due to covid with age. FYI is for youth that left foster care at 16 or older and are at a risk for homelessness. We have gained some momentum with housing authorities in both Johnson City and Morristown. A representative from HUD said last week that the housing authorities that authorize the family unification program will soon also be able to give vouchers through FYI. This would expand FYI greatly throughout the state. We have options for youth housing here in Tennessee and need to utilize them.

Dave Aguzzi, Assistant Director

Aguzzi provides an update to the Extension of Foster Care population. We served 27 more young people this year compared to last year and 19 more episodes. At the end of last year, we were serving 371 young people, which was very high. Between April and August of this year, we went from 365 to 320 young people. This is likely due to young people not reenrolling in school due to the pandemic. We had 30 fewer training applications for the fall semester than last year. We are looking closely at what we can do to keep young people involved in the program. While many are no longer receiving ETS, there is a high number still receiving LifeSet services.

Update from Resource Centers

Christie Morris, Project Now!

Morris said they have been virtual for August and September; which has been challenging technology wise. They have received many referrals, especially from Youth Villages. They have done 4 Opportunity Passports in the past week. They have 7 new youth coming in and have found two issues. One when they fill out the application, they have to give a contact and the youth are struggling to give a contact. The youth have been having a difficult time and emotions are running high. We are working with them on boundaries and respect for time. Once youth are referred, we want them to take responsibility for their involvement in the program. We are working on activities that allow them to feel connected and express their emotions. We are working on increasing supports and connecting them with others. DCS is supposed to provide youth with \$25 a month to attend the program but some are not receiving the money so they are not attending. We give gift cards to those that do not receive ETS. It has been hard but we are coming along.

River City Youth Collective, Constance Shazier

Shazier began with saying they have struggled transitioning to virtual but things seem to be getting better. The youth and staff have adjusted to the new platforms and participation has risen recently. Things are starting to open back up in Chattanooga so we have done a few face-to-face meetings. We have paired up with Launch Chattanooga for our youth to run business ideas through. We have restructured our staff positions to best support the youth during this time. We now have a Youth Engagement Specialist, that acts as a house parent in the home and provides support to our youth. We are moving into a larger space now that will allow staff and residents to be in the same building. We are excited for the future.

Youth Connections, Pam Madison

Madison said the physical building remains closed and all classes are virtual. We are meeting in person by appointment only with clients that need one on one assistance. Our closet remains open by appointment only for youth to obtain clothing and hygiene products. We will be working remotely until further notice; it is being evaluated monthly. We have served more young people than we did last year. We are actively trying to reach out to youth that we have lost touch with through social media. Our education program initially increased in participation at the start of Covid and has held steady. During this time, we have had 6 youth graduate from our program and obtain GEDs. We set up a space at Youth Connections for youth that need to use a computer to take a test. It has been difficult to help connect our

youth with internship because of the restrictions. We have had a few get internships and several participate in informational interviews. We are trying to keep our young people engaged through our art club and cooking classes virtually. Monroe Harding has the engagement hub that has given us the opportunity to connect with young people who are at risk of becoming disengaged. We are currently serving over 50 youth through this program. We are helping several homeless youth get connected to community resources. We recently partnered with Piedmont Natural Gas to house 3 young people in a house that they purchased. We are looking for preferably 2 young ladies looking for housing that are currently enrolled in college.

Dream Seekers, Tiffany Turnage

Turnage began with that they are hosting virtual classes but do have their conference room set up for social distance learning for those in need. We are providing masks for our young people. We have not received many referrals since Covid began. We will offer zoom classes if we have over 10 youth in need. We are hosting our 2nd community distribution to give out food/produce boxes in those in need in the community. It is a drive thru and we notify our clients to give boxes to them first. We are also giving our hygiene and school supplies. It will be on Saturday, October, 17th. We applied and received sponsorship with AmeriCorps for \$3,000 to assist our youth with utility assistance. We will give out no more than \$300 per person. Our surveys started today and have already had several complete it online. Clients can come use the computers 3 at a time to complete school work or apply for jobs. We are working hard to keep our young people connected and encouraged during this time.

Youth Villages,

Heather Tribble, State Coordinator for LifeSets

Tribble said the program has started seeing clients in person with covid precautions in place. Our young people are appreciative of being face to face. We are educating the youth on precautions and supporting them with virtual learning. We want to do everything we can to prevent youth from dropping out. We are also helping them create a back up plan if dorms close again due to Covid. There are 122 youth in our program that have lost employment since Covid began. As of right now, roughly 50% of our youth have found new employment or been brought back to their past job. We have supported those in need with completing the unemployment application. Many of our young people did not have technology to do virtual school so we have been able to connect them to technology devices. Tribble shared the story of one of their youth who just turned 18 and was recently released from rehab. She had a challenging childhood and became addicted to drugs. She has now been sober for 6 months and is in extension to foster care. She is in school for cosmetology and working as a server.

She would recommend LifeSet and said it has helped her a great deal. She has a bright future ahead of her.

Jessica Mullins – Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Office of Children, Youth, and Young Adults

Mullins began with they had a virtual conference in September on early psychosis. We had around 200 people actively engage with the conference. We had many presenters with lived experience psychosis present at the conference. Provided update on youth served in FY 2020. Through their 5 centers providing first psychosis episode treatment there were 157 youth served last year. This is the highest number since the program began. The sites have been creative in providing services virtually. Our Clinically High Risk for Psychosis program in Shelby County and our Healthy Transitions grant in Davidson County are both newer programs. The Clinically High-Risk program served 70 clients between March and June. They are also developing a Young Adult Leadership Council in Shelby County. We partnered with Psych Hub to create animated videos surrounding mental health symptoms and services. We are hoping to educate and bring awareness to psychosis with the videos. The Healthy Transitions Grant served 11 clients by the end of the FY. The statewide Youth and Young Adult Leadership Council meets this Saturday. Steve recently sent out the meeting information. Please reach out if you know of a youth that would be a good fit for the council. The council completed a PSA called Dare to Dream. The PSA focuses on bringing awareness to mental health and suicide risks in youth and young adults. The PSA was then showed to the group in the meeting.

Petty announces to join CCMH on October 20th to hear the whole story of the PSA from member to the council.

Tyra Copas, Apprenticeship TN, Labor and Work Force Development

Copas shares that Apprenticeship TN was established in July of 2019 through a U.S. Department of Labor grant. It provided us the means to build an infrastructure to support employers with having apprenticeship programs. An apprenticeship program provides someone with little skill and trains them in a specific occupation. At the end of the program, they receive a credential from the Dept. of Labor, many are also partnered with a college so they get both. These are full time positions and are long term career opportunity for a young adult. We operate under the TN Workforce Development System and the system is a 7-state agency collaboration team from around the state. Copas said her office focuses on outreach to those young adult that have dropped out of school or are high risk for dropout that are interested in employment. The employer will pay all the cost to train and educate the apprentice. We consult with employers and help them build apprenticeship programs. We help them find and recruit apprentices through programs. We help employers with the paperwork

and serve as a mediator between the employer and Dept. of Labor. There are 3 directors in the state covering the west, middle TN, and north east of the state. We all work together to make the program successful. Apprenticeships have expanded over the years to non-traditional occupations. Some of the careers we are working in are drones, linemen, health, trucking, cosmetology, etc. It is an on the job learning opportunity as well as an education in that field. The apprenticeship allows for young adults to enter the work force at a higher pay rate. Youth access the program by getting hired with an employer but we help connect them to an employer. It is valuable for youth to get involved in a pre-apprenticeship; it allows them to get a direct tie to an employer. We have a couple of apprenticeship programs that strive to mostly hire individuals with disabilities. Once we know an employer is open to hiring individuals with disabilities, we reach out to vocational rehabs to help fill those roles. There are 6,701 current apprentices in TN right now and 2,800 that are classified as youth. Copas said she would put her contact information in the chat for those that would like to reach out. If you know of employers you think might be interested, please connect them with us.

Steve Petty, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, Youth Policy Advocate

Petty said the next item on the agenda is the YTAC annual report that is due October 31st. Most of the report is complete but we need to discuss the recommendations. Petty said with all of the challenges facing all of us this year that it might be best to not add any new recommendations this year but he is open to comments/suggestions.

Meeting dates for 2021 are still undecided. Proposed dates are April 29th, June 17th with CCMH, August 5th, and October 7th.

Petty asked if there are any other items that need to be discussed or announcements. Petty thanks everyone.

Meeting Adjourned.