



STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council

August 8, 2019

12:30 pm – 3:30 p.m. Central Time

Goodwill Industries

937 Herman Street, Nashville, TN 37211

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants:

Dave Aguzzi
John Berestecky
Jane Fleishman
Tameka Greer
Quincy Harris
Crystal Hutchins
Chris Jowers
Diana Kirby
Gina Lynette
Pam Madison
Kevin McCarthy
Melissa McGee

Teresa Moore
Jessica Mullins
Brandi Osborne
Alexandra Payne
Kim Peer
Steve Petty
Rosemary Ramsey
Danielle Rochelle
Christina Scott
Toni Shaw
Russette Sloan
Shelley Smith

Garrett Spurlin
Ned Andrew Solomon
Jacqueline Talley
Jerresha Tinker
Tiffany Turnage
Eric Valinor
Joseph Valinor
Laruen Vedros
Megan Vickers
Diana Webb
Jules Wilson

Welcome, Introductions, Announcements and Acceptance of May 2nd and June 20th Meeting Summaries – Steve Petty, Youth Policy Advocate, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY)

Petty welcomed the group at 12:41 p.m. He expressed his appreciation for those attending and asked for introductions and announcements.

IT WAS MOVED (SOLOMON) AND SECONDED (LYNETTE) TO ACCEPT THE MAY 2ND MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

IT WAS MOVED (MCGEE) AND SECONDED (FLEISHMAN) TO ACCEPT THE JUNE 20TH MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Department of Children's Services, Office of Independent Living Update – Dave Aguzzi, Assistant Director and Jerresha Tinker, Youth Engagement Coordinator, Office of Independent Living, Department of Children Services

Aguzzi provided an overview of the Office of Independent Living and an update of activities within the agency since the June meeting.

Aguzzi reported on the on the Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) data for FY 2019. There were fewer episodes in 2019 than in 2018. Aguzzi reported on EFCS episodes by region and said Shelby County saw the most decreases in episodes for this time period. Aguzzi said the Department of Children's Services (DCS) plans to focus on that region to see what occurred. The Upper Cumberland, Northwest, and East Regions saw decreases as well. Several factors contribute.

An attendee asked for clarification regarding the number of episodes displayed in the data versus the number of youth served. Aguzzi confirmed that the number of episodes and number of youth served are not the same. When children leave and then return, it is tracked as separate episodes. She then asked how many youth aged out of the system on average per year. Aguzzi said the number of youth who age out per year is usually right under 1,000. The number who age out that are eligible for EFCS is around 750. The number of youth who age out eligible who elect to receive the services is around 350.

In talking about factors that could contribute to decrease in EFCS episodes, Aguzzi said he would like to look at a few different things. He would like to look at the data on young adults who enter EFCS because they are waiting to transition to services like EFC Choices for young adults for special needs. DCS has improved the process with partnerships to transition these young adults to adult programs and services providing long-term support. Aguzzi said that if we have fewer young people entering ECFS because DCS did a better job of transitioning them to long-term supports that is not a negative thing. Data from Shelby County indicates that there may be more runaways this year. Young people that turn 18 while in runaway status, do not have the opportunity to apply for ECFS. There also may be more young people opting to work rather than going to school. DCS wants to implement ways to serve young people who choose to work rather than pursue education. He said as we look at recommendations, the Council is advocating for additional eligibility requirements so we can serve young people who are working or involved in programs helping them to find employment. He asked anyone to feel free to send suggestions regarding things we want to look at.

Jerresha Tinker gave the Youth Engagement update. On July 30-31, 2019, the Department hosted the second Glam Camp with about 30 girls in attendance. The camp was a success and the youth in attendance had a great time.

Jane Fleishman presented on the TOP Learning Collaborative at the Oasis Center in Nashville. Oasis has operated this project since 2012, as part of Independent Living efforts to prepare young people in foster care for transitioning to adulthood. The project uses federal dollars from the Office of Adolescent Health to support the replication of evidence based teen pregnancy and prevention models in the state. The Oasis Center project, TOP (Teen Outreach Program), is for adolescents in foster care during a time when they are

having to stay in residential treatment. The project reaches over 1,000 young people each year. While this is a pregnancy prevention model, it takes a broad youth development approach with an emphasis on social and emotional learning.

Fleishman gave an overview of Wyman's TOP Program:

- The program addresses the "Opportunity Gap" for teenagers in care by looking at socialization, relationships, finances, and other important areas.
- The program is an evidence-based, 4-month adaptation for use in residential placements.
- Two times per week, there is a curriculum-guided group discussion and one hour per week of service learning.
- The curriculum is active, engaging, and supports social emotional learning.

Fleishman asked the attendees what they think teenagers would really like to talk over with a safe knowledgeable adult or peer. The group offered subjects such as professional skills, sexual health, depression or suicidal ideation (mental health issues).

Participants in the Oasis TOP program have the ability to discuss a wide range of topics in a safe, healthy environment. Topics include:

- Problem solving
- Understanding emotions in others
- How to ask for what you want
- What is love and how to navigate romantic relationships
- Body image and messages that impact body image
- Family values and my values
- Social media positives and negatives
- Sexual development and health
- Gender roles and gender stereotypes
- Communication
- Empathy
- Stress management

Fleishman then asked what things would benefit teenagers in custody. Teens in this program:

- Have a successful experience working with peers to get something done
- An experience that causes you to see yourself in a more positive light
- A chance to be recognized for positive leadership
- An opportunity to take on a positive role in the community
- A chance to feel that you made a difference.

In fiscal year 2019, youth in TOP gave 2,519 hours of volunteer time to communities in Tennessee. Teens had the opportunity to volunteer at an animal shelter in Lebanon. In the Upper Cumberland, they made homeless hygiene bags at Upper Cumberland Human Resource Association (UCHRA). Teens also had the

chance to be part of something bigger through the Project Linus and the Red Sand Project at Florence Crittenton Agency. Although youth do not leave this campus, they have great service learning opportunities. The Linus Project is making blankets for people who experienced natural disaster or babies and children in the hospital. The Red Sand project raises awareness around human trafficking.

Fleishman listed the TOP implementation sites:

- Porter-Leath
- Wilder Youth Development Center
- Oaks Residential & Behavioral
- Youth Villages (3 sites)
- Volunteer Youth Academy
- TrueCore (3 sites)
- Metro Nashville Juvenile Court
- Youth Opportunity Investments (5 sites)
- UCHRA (2 sites)
- Florence Crittenton Agency
- Holston Home
- Frontier Health (3 sites)
- Oasis Center

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

Mullins provided updates on Youth and Young adult Initiatives. There are several ongoing programs with a few new ones in the past year. Healthy Transitions is a SAMSHA grant that has been ongoing since 2014. The grant ends in September of this year. However, the Department was awarded a new grant that began in March, so the two rounds are overlapping for a few months. There are two sites under the 2014 grant implementing a wraparound approach to services offering care coordination, peer support, as well as connections to therapy. One of these sites, Carey Counseling in Northwest Tennessee, was awarded a juvenile justice grant through the Department and will continue utilizing a service delivery model they having been using with Healthy Transitions. The Department will also have five site-based trainers in the Transition to Independence Process Model at the end of the current round of Healthy Transitions. This is essentially a framework for how to best engage youth and young adults within their services at the systems level.

Mullins said the Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC), supported by Tennessee Voices for Children, would continue through new round of Healthy Transitions funding. The Council participated in the recent youth summit. They also present regularly at the Council on Children’s Mental Health (CCMH). They have ten or more youth attending monthly. They have created subcommittees and are looking at educating providers and leaders in the communities. The Department continues to work on the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialists Program. There have been a few obstacles, with last minute edits being made. Mullins said they are waiting on sign-off from Commissioner and this program will be available soon.

Mullins said with the new round of Healthy Transitions funding, youth have to have a diagnosis. There is also a hyper focus on youth who may have a co-occurring intellectual and developmental disability. There will be two new sites that will be implementing the same service delivery with peer support and care coordination. The sites are in Davidson (Mental Health Cooperative) and Greene County (Frontier Health). Tennessee Voices will continue to support the Young Adult Leadership Council along with the Department. Mullins said there would also be a young adult peer stabilizer who will be embedded in the mobile crisis system in Davidson County. That will be a collaboration between Tennessee Voices for Children and Mental Health Cooperative.

Mullins announced there is new project director for Healthy Transitions, Diana Kirby. The Department will have a half-time position available in coordination with Department of Education (DOE) and Project Aware. The position will be posted next week.

Mullins gave a brief update on the Clinical High Risk for Psychosis Initiative, a four-year grant awarded in October of last year. This initiative uses a similar service model to that used in Healthy Transitions, but focuses on youth age 12-25 who are at clinical high risk for developing psychosis. The goal is either to delay psychosis or prevent it altogether. This initiative is based in Shelby County and is working closely with the first episode psychosis team. They have not started serving youth yet, but all positions are hired except for one. This service component will have not only a young adult peer but a family peer as well. Services have been delayed due to contract issues, but they should be serving youth soon. The team has been engaged in extensive training while contract details are finalized.

Mullins also reported on the First Episode Psychosis Initiative. This program is for people age 15-30 who have already experienced their first episode of psychosis. There are five sites across the state following the coordinated specialty care model. Knox and Hamilton Counties were added this year. OnTrackNY recently provided training for staff.

An attendee asked who would be heading up the initiative focusing on mental health and co-occurring intellectual or developmental disabilities. Mullins said the Department would be developing a state transition team who will guide the work of the new round of Healthy Transitions funding.

McGee asked if the half time position Mullins talked about was half time for Department and half time with DOE. Mullins clarified that it was a true half time position, and not a full time position. McGee also asked who the provider was in Shelby County for the Clinical High Risk for Psychosis Initiative. Mullins said it was CMI Health Care Services. The

Wilson gave a brief report on the Youth Summit. The Youth Health Summit held July 26th – 27th was the first collaborative multi-department summit. Department of Health, Family Voices for Tennessee, Tennessee Voices for Children, and Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services led the charge in planning for the summit. Other partners also collaborated to host youth ages 14 – 24. Wilson said most of the YALC attended. There were 76 registered with around 55 in attendance. Many vendors were represented so

the youth could find out about resources for transitioning into adult systems and what steps are necessary. The team hopes to host the summit again next year.

Update from Resource Centers

Youth Connections - Pamela Madison

Madison provided a brief report on things going on at Monroe Harding Youth Connections. Youth Connections has a HiSET/GED program and hold graduations twice a year. The spring graduation was in May and 15 young people were celebrated. They earned either their HiSET or Penn Foster Diploma. There was one young man in an independent living home who earned his college degree.

The Opportunity Passport twice-monthly classes average about 30 young people. They are matching successfully. Madison said in the last three weeks she has written checks to youth who are saving money. Two of the checks were for transportation, and one was for housing.

Madison said they have finally started their male sexual health education program. The program for females has been going on for about five years. They were able to secure funding and began the male program in January. The participants chose to name their program “Journey to Manhood.”

Monroe Harding is in the process of selling property in Green Hills. Open House for the new facility at Metro Center is August 22nd at 4:00 p.m. with an official ribbon cutting. Madison said all are invited.

Madison said she is excited about a few larger initiatives coming up soon. She hopes to provide information about these program enhancements at the next meeting.

Dream Seekers/South Memphis Alliance (SMA) – Tiffany Turnage

Turnage talked briefly about the “Sisters to Sisters” class. This class has been ongoing for the last five years. The class is very successful. Many of the young women return for other activities and talk about how the class has had a positive impact on their lives. The facilitator is very animated and connects with the young people. The program for young men, which they will call “Brothers to Brothers”, has not started yet as they are still seeking funding.

Turnage also reported on the Dream Seekers program. This grant period they have enrolled over thirty participants. The laundry mat is where much of this funding comes from. Turnage said they have had many events recently. In May, they took the youth to a rock climbing facility in Memphis called Memphis Rocks. The youth also participated in a community clean up in South Memphis. Thirty volunteers from DCS including staff, clients and other agencies gathered to pick up trash. The Artist Love painting party was an event where the young people painted self-portraits. The second annual free laundry day funded by BC/BS is coming up soon. The team movie and karaoke night was a success. She encouraged everyone to look at SMA’s Facebook page for pictures of the events.

Turnage said she was excited to announce they applied for a community development grant and received a \$30,000 grant.

SMA recently purchased a warehouse next to the laundry mat. They are calling it the SMA Urban Warehouse. The Health Department has secured space in the building for an 11-year lease. SMA continues to look for agencies or organizations to rent space.

Youth Villages LifeSet Program Update – Christina Scott, Youth Villages LifeSet

Scott provided a brief update on the Youth Villages LifeSet Program. They have been busy implementing the Extension of Foster Care Services program. Youth Villages is currently serving over 700 youth in Tennessee, with 327 of those receiving EFCS.

In the LifeSet Program, South Memphis Alliance hosted an event. Planned Parenthood did a safe sex peer-to-peer event. They held a hiring manager panel for the young people to hear managers talk about what they are looking for in prospective employees. LifeSet also recently hosted a Jeopardy-themed event, using driver's education questions. Youth Villages just collected school supplies for 1,156 backpacks all the children in their program.

Scott introduced Quincy Harris to attendees. He is currently in the LifeSet Program and came today to talk to the Council about some of his experiences. Harris said he is 19 and first entered the foster care system in Davidson County at age 3. He said throughout middle school and high school he experienced bullying, depression and suicidal thoughts. He was living with his friend's family since he was 13, but during his senior year in high school, the family received an eviction notice and they were forced to move. His senior year was very stressful, but he was determined to graduate. After graduation, he found LifeSet and is now learning about budgeting, and other important life skills. He participates in Journey to Manhood, Opportunity Passport, and other programs. Harris said he looks forward to the future and has goals for his life. He ultimately wants to travel, give back to the community, be financially stable, and have his own home. Harris said he is looking for employment opportunities and left his contact information in the event anyone has ideas or connections they want to share.

Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (THDA) Update – Toni Shaw

Shaw reported on the fall grant opportunity. She said THDA offers these competitive grants twice a year. Approximately \$1.8 million will be available for the fall round, with a maximum award amount of \$500,000. All housing funded through the program must be rental and address the needs of households at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income. Additional points may be awarded for projects meeting the needs of youth aging out of the State's foster care system. The funds can be used for new construction or renovations for existing construction. Workshops will begin Monday, August 12th. There will be workshops in Nashville and Memphis and a webinar will be available as well. Applications are due Thursday, September 26th.

Shaw announced that THDA has given a \$450,000 award to the Tennessee Education Building Foundation for a program called the Building Trades Initiative. They are using the funds to develop curriculum to train youth in Shelby County Schools in the various construction trades. The initiative will also work with at-risk youth 18-24. When they complete the curriculum, they will be licensed and ready to go to work, or on to an applied technology school.

Shaw said they are just learning about an opportunity HUD has just released called Foster Youth to Independence. It is essentially a housing voucher. This is an upcoming opportunity to aid transition age youth as they move into adulthood. Shaw will send the email announcement to Petty who will share with the YTAC email list.

Shaw introduced Kevin McCarthy who spoke to the Council about the Tennessee Fair Housing Survey, and the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. McCarthy said THDA and other partners are conducting a study of fair housing in Tennessee and would like input from all across the state. McCarthy passed out a flyer and asked attendees to complete the survey as individuals, not as representatives of the agencies for which they work. The analysis is prepared every five years in compliance with the federal Fair Housing Act. McCarthy said the analysis looks at impediments to housing based on membership in seven protected classes: race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. McCarthy said although there is a nexus between fair housing and affordability, you can also be well off but have membership in one of these protected class and not have access to fair housing. THDA has been holding focus groups across the state to prepare for the analysis. McCarthy said they wanted to meet with the Council to gather information about the population YTAC serves.

McCarthy asked the Council to list impediments to fair housing in the transition age youth population. The group offered the following list for consideration:

- Physical accessibility – inadequate supply of units accessible to those with physical disabilities.
- Loopholes for property owners to actively discriminate (example of overlooking an application of someone who has a service animal).
- Homeowner's associations have regulations that may inadvertently discriminate.
- There are not a lot of places who are open to rent to young adults
- Availability of housing where it is needed – the urban core where public transportation exists is not affordable to young people.

Shaw said complaints regarding discrimination could be made to the Tennessee Human Rights Commission.

Aguzzi asked about vendors who would accept vouchers. Private property owners have the ability to choose not to rent to people who hold vouchers. Tax credit properties cannot refuse vouchers.

An attendee asked what the hoped for outcomes of the analysis are. McCarthy said once impediments are identified, goals will be established.

McCarthy asked if there are there concerns/differences in the various parts of the state. Many attendees talked about affordability being an issue in Middle Tennessee.

The Victory Lap – Rosemary Ramsey

Ramsey gave an update on The Victory Lap, a program that coordinates living arrangements for transition-age youth in market-rate retirement communities. She talked about an 18 year old, John, who moved into a retirement community in Chattanooga. He says he is very much enjoying the freedom and activities in the community. He works in the dining room four to six nights a week so that he can attend college during the day. About a week ago, the community owner asked to be connected with two more youth. An attendee suggested Ramsey contact Volunteer Behavioral for youth who might be eligible for the program. This program is unique to Tennessee. Ramsey asked if there were other populations she could talk to other than EFCS. McGee suggested looking at the college population. Someone from the group also suggested schools like TCAT.

Report of the Annual Report Subcommittee – Dave Aguzzi, Jon Berestecky, Carla Garrett, Gina Lynette, Courtney Mathews, Christy Martin, Steve Petty, Ned Solomon

Petty said at the May meeting there was discussion about re-designing the annual report that is due at the end of October as well as looking at the YTAC recommendations to see how they can be more concise. A sub-group was formed and they met at Metro Center to discuss the recommendations. They reviewed the recommendations that were in last year's report, which were cumulative. Lynette facilitated the meeting. The result was a two-sided document down from a previous 20-page document.

Lynette gave an overview of the meeting. As the facilitator, she stepped out of the decision making process regarding the report. They looked at over 60 recommendations to see what could be eliminated or combined, using a colored dot system. If there were all green dots, the recommendation stayed. Recommendations that were give all red dots, were eliminated. Recommendations that received blue dots were combined with other recommendations. Every recommendation that had an outlying dot was discussed until the person who placed the dot either changed their opinion or swayed the group toward their opinion. At the end of the process, ten recommendations emerged. Solomon edited the recommendations and sent them back to the committee for further edits and changes.

The subcommittee also drafted a proposal for how to draft the document going forward. Anyone interested in being a part of the ad-hoc committee should let Petty know. The subcommittee focused on what is actionable.

Wilson asked that the language “those with behavioral health needs” be added to list the language in item 10.

IT WAS MOVED (SOLOMON) AND SECONDED (SPURLIN) TO ACCEPT THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE YOUTH TRANSITIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Next Meeting

The next YTAC meeting will be October 3, 2019 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Goodwill Industries, 937 Herman Street, Nashville, TN 37208.

McGee announced the next Council on Children's Mental Health (CCMH) would be on August 22nd, at the new Family and Children's Services. The meeting will focus on immigration.

Labor and Workforce Development is hosting a SNAP/Youth Conference September 3rd - 5th located at the Sheraton downtown.

Wilson said the next Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) meeting is September 7th from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm at TAADAS (Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug and other Addiction Services).

Other Business/Future Meeting Topics

Meeting Adjourned at 3:39 p.m.