



Emerging From the Pandemic: New Policy, Practice & Resources for Adolescent Foster Youth

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Presented by the Center for Children's Advocacy
and the CT Division of Public Defender Services

Emerging From the Pandemic: New Policy, Practice & Resources for Adolescent Foster Youth

Webinar Discussion Objectives

- Identify issues of transition-age youth and how to respond
- Advocacy tips for engaging with and assisting transition-age youth to meet their goals
- Provide a rundown of changes to the DCF policies
- Highlight programs available to transition age youth

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Questions for Today's Presenters

- Biggest changes from pre-pandemic policy/operations to now?
- What are the obstacles to engaging with transition age youth?
- How are DCF staff and other service providers trained on the new policies?
- What happens when youth don't receive the support they need?

Today's Speakers:

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Federal Overview and Advocacy Tips
Jenny Pokempner, Youth Law Center



Data Summary

- Number of transition aged youth in the child welfare system nationally
 - Total: 171,162
 - Percentage of child welfare population: 25%
- Extended Care Facts:
 - 45 states have some form of extended care.
 - 32 states and 6 tribes--IV-E Funded
 - 3 states include youth from the jj system.
 - Time in extended care improves outcomes and connection with services.
 - Outcomes for youth who age out of care without permanency continue to poor.
- Percentage of older youth who discharge to permanency: 43%
- Percentage of older youth who age out to non-permanency: 56%.



The Transition to Adulthood: A Time of Great Potential

- The transition lasts until a young person's mid-20s (24-26)
- The brains of young adults are still developing in their late teens and early 20s. They continue to need a mixture of support, guidance, and freedom to optimally develop.
- This time period is characterized by risk-taking, seeking greater independence, developing decision-making and coping skills, and exploring their sense of identity.
- Trauma impacts the ability of young people to feel safe, learn and connect with others.



Family Support and the Transition to Adulthood

- Most youth rely on parents for a significant amount of material and non-material support as they make the transition to adulthood, amounting to,
 - on average, \$38,000 between the time a young person is 18 and 34 and
 - about 367 hours of family help per year.



Family Connections and the Transition to Adulthood

- Young people need caring and consistent adults who provide safety, guidance, and support while they try new things, take risks, and develop their identity and goals.
- They need adults who support them in safely exploring their various identities and planning a future that gives them hope and satisfaction.
- Family support is essential to provide the safety net all young people need well into their 20s.



What does this mean for your advocacy?

Attorneys can make a huge difference in the trajectory of a young person's life. Your advocacy can:

- help youth reach developmental milestones,
- ensure they have the support to do address trauma,
- remove the barriers that are impeding their progress and exclude them from opportunities, and
- help stakeholders, including judges, understand the importance of learning through experience and mistakes and the need for support.



Experiences from the Pandemic


- Nearly 65% who were working before the pandemic had lost employment.
- 50% of those who applied for unemployment benefits did not receive assistance.
- 52% reported they did not receive the stimulus check.
- 19% reported they had run out of food.
- 23% reported that they are being forced to move or fear being forced to leave their current living situation.
- 37% reported having family members (legal or chosen) to rely on during the crisis.
- 20 % reported that they were entirely on their own.

See a collection of the 6 polls/surveys here:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/11CSPZArMqEf2D_RxF63EwVz0XEpqLxM5UqsZUgOkV5c/edit




Lessons from the Pandemic

- The focus on permanency and connecting youth with family and community must happen as early as possible.
- Youth must be connected with services to address trauma.
- Transition planning must begin as early as possible, with a special focus on housing.




Tip: Be Pro-Active in Counseling Youth

- Check in often (even if they act like they do not want you to).
- Communicate in ways they like to communicate. (Text, email, etc)
- Ask how they are doing and about their interests.
- Respect the wishes and views of clients, but counsel, question, and engage. (Unpack the nos and resistance.)
- Do not take things personally.



Tip: Advocate for Access to All Child Welfare Programs and Benefits

- Extended Foster Care.
- Chafee services, including aftercare.
- ETV and state higher education supports
- Medicaid for Former Foster Youth to Age 26.
- FYI and FUP.



Tip: Help Young People Access Non- Child Welfare Federal Benefits

- Pandemic Specific Benefits:
 - Child Tax Credit
 - Economic Impact Payments (EIPS)
 - Earned Income Tax Credit
 - Emergency Rental Assistance
 - Emergency Housing Vouchers
- Non-Pandemic Benefits/Supports:
 - Housing assistance
 - SSI if disabled (and related disability supports)
 - TANF and Child Care Assistance
 - SNAP
 - LIHEAP



Tip: Advocate
for High Quality
Transition Plans
and Oppose
Improper
Discharges

- Utilize the transition to adulthood planning and discharge guarantee to ensure early planning and to prevent discharges without a proper plan.
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(1)(D).
 - 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(5)(H) & (I).



Federal Updates

1. States have until September 30, 2022 to spend their Chafee increase from Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act.
 - CT can spend these funds on youth 23 and under.
2. HR 5167 proposes to extend the time lines of Division X until September 30, 2022.
 - Moratorium on aging out.
 - Chafee until age 27.
 - Chafee and ETV flexibilities.
3. Congressional leaders and stakeholders are gearing up for more permanent changes for older youth services and supports in 2022.



Materials

- Older Youth Data Summary
- Summary of Federal Laws Impacting Older Youth
- TAY Pandemic Funds Maximization Grid
- Practice Tips for Working with Older Youth




Contact Information

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CHR TSEA LIFESET

PRESENTED BY: JOANNE KNIGHT
IMPLEMENTING TRANSITIONAL
SUPPORTS FOR EMERGING ADULTS





PROGRAM HISTORY AND OVERVIEW



Areas of Service

Specialists help emerging adults with:

- ❖ Education
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Life Skills
- ❖ Health
- ❖ Document Attainment
- ❖ Healthy relationships- lifelong connections with caring adults



Model Elements

- Voluntary, young adult-driven services that last 7-9 months on average
- Minimum of one face-to-face session per week wherever is best for the young adult; 24/7 on-call services
- Small caseloads of 8-10 young adults
- Weekly consultation from YVLifeSet program staff to ensure best practices to meet goals for individual youth
- Structured program model and annual fidelity reviews
- Outcome data collection at 6, 12, and 24 months

Philosophy and Principles



**Systemic
Assessment**



Safety



**Education/
Vocation**



**Maximizing
Outcomes**



**Youth
Driven**



**Comprehensive
Support Networks**



Team



**Intensity of
Engagement**

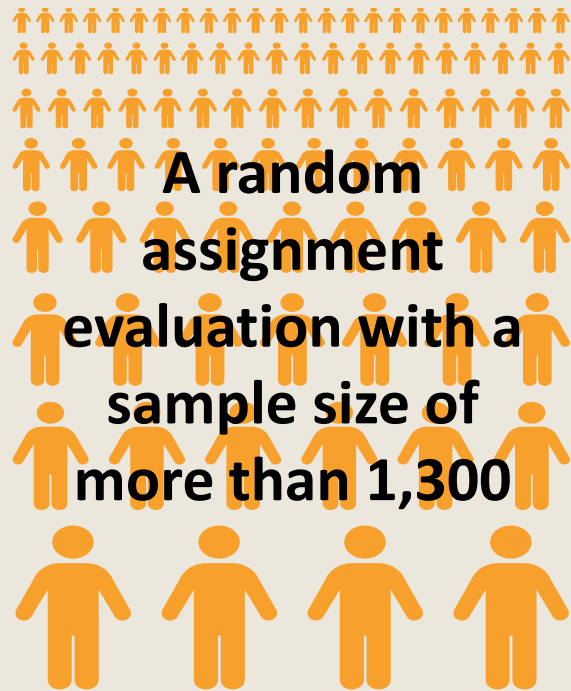
Service Components

- Pre-Enrollment/Psychosocial Assessment
- Service Planning: Plans are completed and reviewed monthly
 - *Staff utilize the clinical portal to aid in conceptualization and plan completion*
- Assessments to determine clinical necessity for evidence-based interventions
- Structured Treatment Design & Clinical Protocols
- On-Line Clinical Manual

Evidence-based and best practices

- Evidence-Based Practices:
 - CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)
 - Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- Best Practices:
 - Sexual Health Modules
 - Learning Inventory of Skills Training (L.I.S.T.)
 - Additional independent living skills-based interventions (PAYA)

The MDRC Study



60%

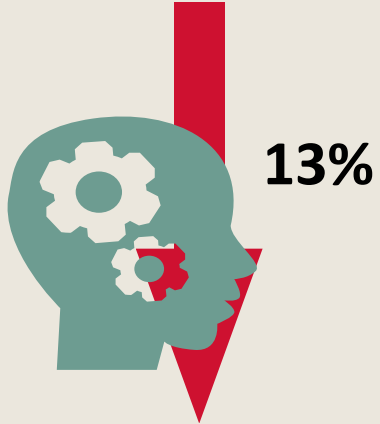
received LifeSet services

40%

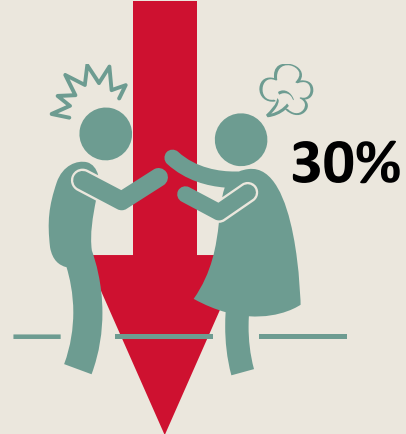
had access to usual community services

Study Results

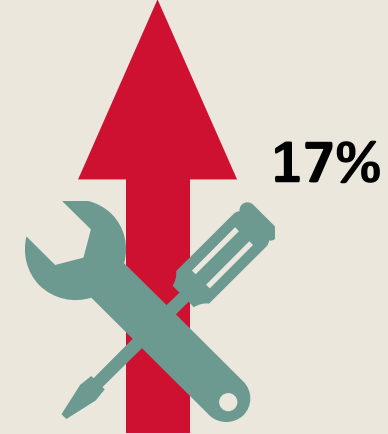
Mental health problems



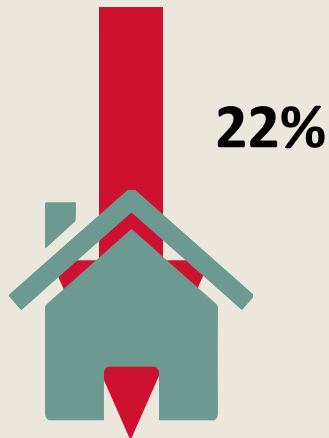
Violent relationships



Increase in employment



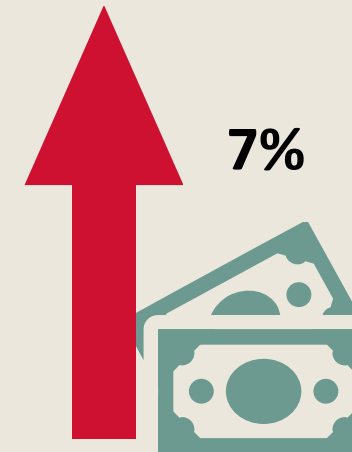
Decrease in homelessness



Decrease in hardship, lack of food, etc.



Increase in earnings



Outcomes at Discharge Current Data (FY 17 – FY 19)



93% of young adults were satisfied with LifeSet™ services.

Living Situations at Discharge*



Living at Home
or Independently
85%



Correctional Facility
1%



Lost to Contact
6%



Foster Care
3%

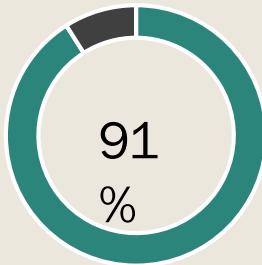


Residential
Treatment
1%

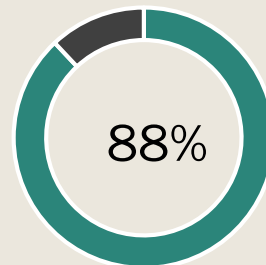
*Only includes youth who received at least 60 days of service; 11.5% of youth (570 out of 4,384) discharged before receiving at least 60 days of service.

4% were in other living situations, such as emergency shelter, hospitalization, group home, or runaway, or were deceased.

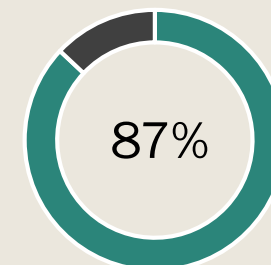
Outcomes at 1 Year Post-Discharge Current Data (FY 17 – FY 19)



Living with family
or independently



In school,
graduated, or
employed



No trouble with
the law

Only includes youth who received at least 60 days
of service.

- Implementing locations:
 - Seattle, Washington
 - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
 - New York City
 - State of Louisiana
 - District of Columbia
 - Connecticut
- Youth Villages locations include:
 - Georgia
 - Massachusetts
 - Mississippi
 - North Carolina
 - Oklahoma
 - Oregon
 - Tennessee





COLLABORATION HISTORY



Collaboration History


- Connecticut DCF applied to Youth Villages for matching funds to implement LifeSet in Connecticut
- Connecticut DCF was awarded a matching grant from Youth Villages to bring TSEA/LifeSet to Regions 3,4,&6
- Through an RFP process, Community Health Resources and Wheeler Clinic were selected to implement TSEA

Regions 3&4 will be served by CHR



Region 6 will be served by Wheeler




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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff Roles – TSEA specialists

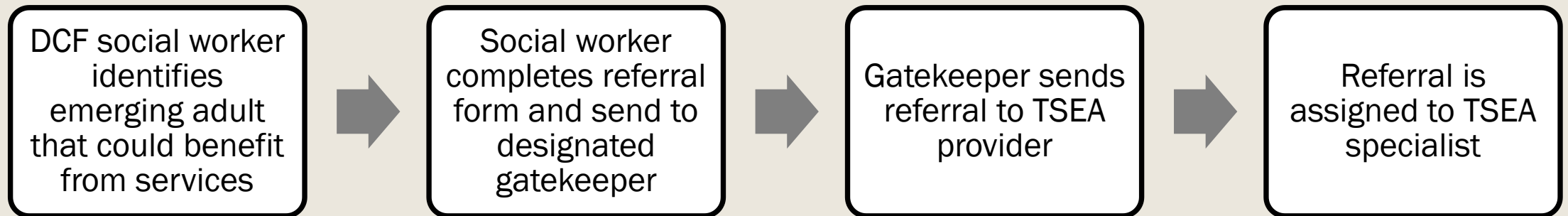
- Provide the direct services to the young adults
- Provide services to 8-10 young adults that are assigned to them
- Provide a minimum of one face-to-face session each week to each young adult
- Specialists are available 24/7 (Via an on-call rotation)
- Responsible for engaging the young adults in services as well as aligning them to working on goals that will increase their success with independence



REFERRAL AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS



TSEA referral process





ENGAGEMENT

Engagement

- This program recognizes the importance of:
 - *empowerment*
 - *engagement*
 - *the need of support*
 - *the opportunity for real life experiences*
- Unlike other independent living programs TSEA places the responsibility of engagement on the specialist
- Specialists work to engage emerging adults from the beginning of services and continue to build engagement over time

Engagement

Signs of Effective Engagement

- High rate of attendance at sessions
- Youth is forthright with information
- Follow-through with interventions
- Completion of homework assignments
- Youth is fully present and involved in sessions
- Youth is actively making progress toward treatment goals

Signs of Ineffective Engagement

- Difficulty scheduling appointments
- Missed appointments
- Youth conceals information about important issues
- Youth does not call in times of crisis
- Goals contain little substance
- Intervention Plans not being followed

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PROGRAM ENROLLMENTS

TSEA Target Population

- Emerging adults ages 17-21
- Long stay in care
- At risk of aging out of care
- May not achieve permanency despite best efforts
- Difficulty with figuring out or carrying out a successful educational or vocational pathway
- Able to live relatively independently but needs support and guidance

TSEA Target Population

Emerging adults with certain criteria might not be eligible for the program

- Gang involvement resulting in violent criminal behavior and/or no desire to disengage from gang activity
- Acute, untreated psychosis or significant mental health impairment
- Acute drug addiction requiring a higher level of care
- Active suicidal and homicidal ideations; suicidal attempt within last 30 days
- Intellectual disabilities that prevent young adult completion of independent living goals
- Young adults not willing to commit to weekly sessions with TSEA specialist

*Protective Factor assessment completed to determine risk mitigation. The presence of one or more of the above criteria does not automatically exclude an emerging adult from participating in the program



SESSIONS

Sessions

- Sessions should occur at least once per week, or more, depending on the needs of the participant
- Sessions typically last about an hour
- Sessions should take place in the home, community, or wherever is most convenient for the young person
- Sessions are purposefully used to process, practice, role-play and build real-life skills
- Timing of sessions vary – again this depends on the need of the participant
- Other individuals can participate in session, depending on appropriateness and emerging adult's preferences

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SUCCESS STORIES



INTERESTED IN SERVICES?

Submit a referral to your DCF Supervisor/ Gatekeeper

