

Department of Human Services
Addictions and Mental Health Division

Oregon's Young Adults in Transitions:
Progress Report: May 2009

In July 2007, the Addictions and Mental health Division finalized a White Paper entitled *Transition Age Youth in Oregon: Considerations for a Statewide Model of Care*. The original document identified multiple system barriers that make it difficult for transition age youth to seek and continue in mental and physical health services. This report provides an update to that paper. It identifies positive movement toward remediating these issues, with a look forward to next steps, as well as barriers that continue to interfere with our progress in serving this population.

In the two years since the original white paper was written, Oregon has made significant progress in making positive changes in the service delivery system for young adults in transition. Yet, there is much more to be done. With a strong advocacy of the Policy Academy Advisory Committee and the cross agency agreement on shared values and principles, Oregon is in a great position to move forward. There is strong advocacy from Youth M.O.V.E.(Motivating Others through Voice of Experience), Oregon Family Support Network (OFSN), the Children's System Advisory Committee (CSAC), and the Adult System Advisory Committee (ASAC) to realize a system of care for young adults in transition that is youth driven, coordinated, developmentally appropriate and effective.

Nationally the average transition age client is defined as between the ages of 16 and 24. Oregon has decided to adopt the age 14 to 25 to more closely align with Child Welfare who begins transition planning at age 14, and the Oregon Youth Authority who can have custody of young adults to age 25.

Through our efforts to engage young adults in Oregon with the development of services, they have informed us that the term "transition age youth" does not adequately fit for them. Instead, they decided that Young Adults in Transition is a better term as it describes movement through a transition as a process as opposed to a single intervention, and is more active, not static, in its meaning. Young Adults in Transition (YAT) will be used to describe this group of young adults instead of transition age youth or transition-aged youth and young adults.

A number of forces are converging in Oregon to make this an opportune time for progress in addressing both policy challenges and service delivery needs for young

adults in transition. The Children System Change Initiative enacted in 2005 moved the state to a more family driven, youth-guided and wraparound/community based approach to service delivery. Building on this initiative the Governor signed an Executive Order that directs all state agencies to work collaboratively to implement wraparound principles into a comprehensive service delivery system. House Bill 2144, the Statewide Wraparound bill is moving through the legislature at this time. This bill requires specified state agencies and commissions to participate in a wraparound initiative for provision of youth services. It establishes core values and principles in the initiative, places requirements on state agencies to implement and sustain the initiative, establishes requirements to ensure cultural competence in the provision of services, and requires agencies to collect and evaluate data based on identifies outcomes. This bill also authorizes the blending of resources from these agencies. Both the statewide Children System Advisory Committee (CSAC) and the Adult System Advisory Committee (ASAC), part of the federally required Mental Health Planning and Management Council, have identified YAT services as a prioritized area of need in Oregon. Both of these committees are comprised of 51 percent family, youth, consumers, and advocates. There is a strong youth organization and family organization that is involved with the Addictions and Mental Health Division (AMH) and take active roles in directing service delivery in Oregon.

In August 2008 a YouthSpeak conference was held in Salem, Oregon. This conference was designed by young adults to provide policymakers with information about what youth and young adults want to see in a comprehensive service delivery system. This information was a starting point in identifying barriers that young adults in transition find in obtaining the services and supports that they need, as well as identifying what is currently in the system that is working, from their perspective.

Youth in Oregon have been supporting each other, working to improve mental health services, reduce stigma, and educate their communities. This work has gone on across the state with many different organizations and programs. At a recent Governor's Wraparound Initiative Youth Workgroup meeting, youth from across the state met and decided that it was time to join together and be formally recognized as Youth M.O.V.E. (Motivating Others through Voice of experience) Oregon. Youth M.O.V.E. Oregon has as its goal to unite groups across the state and establish a strong youth voice for improving all youth systems in Oregon. The group is organizing under the Oregon Family Support network (OFSN), a

statewide family driven organization, until they are ready to branch out on their own.

In December 2008 Oregon was chosen as one of six states to attend a Policy Academy at Georgetown University titled **Developing Systems of Care for Youth and Young Adults with Mental Health Needs who are Transitioning to Adulthood and their Families**. Oregon sent 11 delegates to that Policy Academy including three young adults. The application was developed by a work group that included individuals from several state agencies, as well as youth and family members, providers and a researcher. Many members of that group were also delegation members.

The delegation that attended the Policy Academy developed a work plan that will be used as a framework to move the state forward in developing a comprehensive range of services that are developmentally appropriate and accessible to young adults with mental health challenges. This action plan is based on the shared vision that Young Adults in Transition will have access to a system of services and supports that are youth directed, developmentally appropriate and offer choice, Effectively bridge adolescent and adult systems and provide youth and young adults with opportunities to realize their full potential and have healthy, productive lives.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drafted by the Policy Academy Advisory Committee that outlines the vision for the state as: developing and enhancing the collaborative relationship between the Department of Human Services, the Oregon Youth Authority, the Department of Education, the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, in collaboration with Young Adults in Transition who require specialized and coordinated services through multiple agencies. The purpose of this MOU is to promote access to services and supports that are young adult directed, developmentally appropriate and offer choice to provide young adults with opportunities to realize their full potential and have healthy and productive lives, to create smoother transitions and improve integration of services and supports across both adolescent and adult systems, eliminate fragmentation of funding while effectively utilizing current resources and enhance the provision of services and supports that promote independence.

The initial White Paper (July 2007) addressed the need for Addictions and Mental Health Division to develop internal policies and procedures for YAT that will serve as a guideline for case level decision making and future program

development. As part of the Integrated Service Support Rule Revision (ISSR), AMH has written a new section regarding services for Young Adults in Transition. There is a subgroup of the ISSR that is dedicated to looking at administrative rules for Young Adults in Transition. This group is making recommendations to the Policy Academy Advisory Committee who must approve the recommendations and pass them back to the ISSR Committee. Child Welfare has already reviewed and rewritten administrative rules regarding YAT, and the Oregon Youth Authority is in the process of looking at their administrative rules and will recommend changes as necessary. The goal is to have young adult transition services that meet the core values and statewide mission as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Memorandum of Understanding is the first step in creating a shared vision between state agencies and local providers who serve YAT. By starting at the level of state agencies, it is hoped that local agreements will be developed to structure collaboration between all relevant parties. Formalized partnerships on behalf of, and in collaboration with, young adults that are jointly served through specialized and coordinated statewide and locally based services are needed.

The agencies involved to date have identified the following core values for system development:

- CULTURALLY COMPETENT
 - Services provided to young adults in transition will honor identified cultural values and norms.
 - Young adults age 14 to 25 represent a unique developmental group and services will be tailored to meet targeted population characteristics, attitudes and values.
 - Services will be sensitive to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans-gendered, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQQ) populations and gender specific needs.
- YOUNG ADULT DRIVEN
 - All parties will ensure that services are collaboratively designed with young adults to enhance the relevance to their lives while ensuring

that they are offered in a manner young adults find meaningful.

- Services and supports and functional expectations or goals will be matched to each individual's stage of development which will not be uniform across all areas of adult life skills.
- **COMMUNITY BASED**
 - Services will utilize existing support systems, such as peers, family and community based services and programs.
 - Services will be delivered in the most natural environment possible.
 - All parties will work collaboratively to explore and establish eligibility guidelines for all elements of the service system that are uniform and defined by developmental need versus age.
 - Services will be delivered with the least possible disruption of existing supports.
- **LOCALLY DEVELOPED**
 - Through the braiding of services, all parties will work toward maximizing service delivery while reducing duplication and increasing access to services and support.
 - In collaboration with local child and adult serving partners, the principle parties will develop collaborative working relationships, so as to maximize our current strengths and enhance our ability to provide support from both the monetary and logistical standpoint.

In looking at developing a statewide system for Young Adults in Transition, the parties involved in the Memorandum of Understanding have agreed to collaborate on the following:

- *Data and information system collaboration.* All agencies are collecting data regarding YAT being served in their system. This data and information will be available to interested parties.
- *Asset mapping.* Agencies are looking at what services currently exist that address the needs of young adults in transition. AMH, as part of the Policy Academy work plan, is taking the lead on collecting information on statewide resources for YAT.
- *System oversight in monitoring.* The Policy Academy Advisory Committee will be the repository of information regarding the YAT. This committee will provide guidance and monitoring of the system as it develops.
- *Technical assistance to young adults in transition.* Georgetown University will provide technical assistance to the Policy Academy Advisory Committee through December 2009 as we shape the service delivery system for young adults. They have provided the committee with experts in the area of policy, planning, service design, and eligibility. There is a monthly conference call, as well as a community of practice quarterly conference call (which includes all 50 states and territories) where we are able to receive information necessary to continue developing the system.

WHAT WE HAVE

- Currently Addictions and Mental Health Division has dedicated 1.5 FTE to help establish a service delivery system for Young Adults in Transition. This includes a full-time young adult transition specialist from the Housing and Development Unit and a .5 FTE from the Children's Mental Health Unit. These two people are members of the Policy Academy Advisory Committee to create a focused intent and necessary policies and procedures for a successful system.
- There are currently two group homes in the state that specifically serve young adults, age 14 to 25 who have a history of institutional care and need independent living skills and supports to live in the community. These homes, a five-bed home in Oregon City and a four-bed home in Albany, have been successful in creating the opportunity for several young adults to move to independent living situations. The data for these programs is in the

process of being compiled and will be available in September 2009.

- Early Assessment and Support Team (EAST) and Early Assessment and Support Alliance (EASA) Programs operate in 12 out of 36 counties in Oregon. This model works with YAT who experience their first psychotic break. This program provides intensive wrap around services to the young adult and their family to assist the person to remain in the community.
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams have been recently established to work specifically with young adults.
- Project ACCESS (Accelerated Career Counseling and Employment Support Services) through the Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services uses the coordinated service delivery model to promote training and education for high school youths with disabilities.
- Project STAYOUT (Strategies Teaching Adolescent Youth Offenders to Use Transition Skills) is a joint endeavor between the Oregon Youth Authority and the Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the University of Oregon to encourage collaboration among agencies to help youths with disabilities coming out of correctional institutions become connected to job training and education.
- Youth Transition Program (YTP) are services through the Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to prepare high school youths with Disabilities for employment, career or post-secondary education. YTP has been operating for 15 years and is offered in 120 high schools in Oregon.
- The Casey Family Program has a model called *It's My Life* that assists youth transitioning out of foster care.
- Child Welfare has an independent living program that provides education, life skills, training, help with college search and financing and works to create a comprehensive transition plan for each youth and young adult in foster care between the ages of 14 and 21. Chafee funds are federal funds available for independent living, education and training for foster care youths to allow the flexibility to extend the Medicaid coverage for former foster children up to age 21.

- The Oregon Youth Authority is developing an Independent Living Curriculum to address the informational and practical application skills for youth and young adults moving toward independence. This curriculum is currently being piloted in several facilities, and will be offered system-wide for OYA youth upon its completion.
- Some counties that have identified this age group as an underserved population and are actively working to develop services for them. Specifically, Lane County has worked on a plan to serve YAT and Washington County has a committee formed to staff cases where young adults need extra services and supports.
- Youth M.O.V.E. has a chapter that has recently formed to give young adults a voice in policy development and advocacy for themselves. This year's events for Children's Mental Health Awareness Day was organized and planned by young adults and Youth M.O.V.E.
- Service Element Code. Addictions and Mental Health has written a service element code to be able to support billing as a distinct service for young adults in transition. This code is currently being reviewed at the Justice Department. Having the service element code will enable the oversight committee to monitor and track the number of services that are being provided to YAT.
- Addictions and Mental Health in collaboration with Lane County is applying for the SAMHSA Grant titled **Cooperative Agreements for State/Community Partnerships to Integrate Services and Supports for Youths and Young Adults 16 to 25 with Serious Mental Health Conditions and Their Families**. This grant would provide funding for Lane County to move forward with its plan for services for Young Adults in Transition by serving 202 young adults over a 5 year period. The goal is to generalize the model to the entire state as the grant site proves effective. The Policy Academy Advisory Committee will monitor the outcomes and work toward making the data available to the rest of the state for purposes of sharing best practices.

- Supported Housing. Supported housing is a limited resource that is available to help young adults live as independently as possible in the community.
- Supported Education. Many of the community colleges have supported education available for young adults who require support to continue their education.

NEXT STEPS:

- The Policy Academy Advisory Committee intends to be the central clearinghouse of information regarding Young Adults in Transition. Information should flow into and out of the Committee to be dispersed through the website as well as through the partner agencies.
- Web Site. One of the action plans from the Policy Academy was to create a web site that will have information regarding services for young adults in transition. The young adults from the Policy Academy are taking the lead on this.
- Asset Mapping. There is not currently a resource directory for transition services available across the state. AMH, as part of the Policy Academy Advisory Committee, is taking the lead in asking for state agencies to collect data and information regarding the services that are currently available. This information will be collected and put into a resource directory that will be available on the web.
- Video. The young adults are again taking the lead and producing a video about young adults and their hopes, dreams and needs and what the system and service policy makers can do to help them. They have written a grant to secure funding for this video and hope to hear soon that they have received the funding to proceed.
- Youth Advocacy. There needs to be a statewide coordinated youth advocacy movement to talk with legislators to educate them to support and encourage change. Youth MO.V.E. Now has a chapter in Oregon which has as its goal to organize the youth advocacy movement throughout the state.

- **Medicaid.** Eligibility for Medicaid continues to be a barrier for young adults to continue to receive mental health services. The state Medicaid plan will need to be reviewed to look at what changes need to be made in eligibility criteria, in order for YAT to be able to obtain and maintain the necessary services. There are also two bills currently going through the legislative process that, if passed, would expand Medicaid eligibility for young adults.
- **Housing.** One of the biggest barriers for successful transition is housing. There are two group homes for young adults in transition, but only nine spaces for the entire state. There is supported housing available but it is not specifically for young adults in transition. It is also a limited quantity. More age specific housing options will need to be available for young adults to support their move into independence.
- **Young Adults Involved at all Levels of Policy Making.** This is a value that all parties have agreed to. It will require everyone making a concerted effort To have young adults actively involved and empowered on committees, boards, work groups and commissions across the state. Their expertise has been a valuable asset for the Policy Academy Advisory Committee work that has been done to date.
- **Peer Delivered Services.** Peer delivered services need to be available for young adults. This was a primary need identified by the YouthSpeak Conference as well.
- **Outreach needs to be done to the rural and frontier counties, the homeless and runaway youth populations, and the LGBTQQ populations.**
- **Policy Academy Advisory Committee.** The Policy Academy Advisory Committee needs to expand to include communities of color, the homeless and runaway youth population, the LGBTQQ population, and other service providers, as well as alternative practitioners.
- **Workforce Training.** Policymakers need training in how to create and deliver services that are meaningful to young adults. This is a very distinct service delivery group who has very different needs from children or adults. Training on promising practices and evidence based practices as they are

identified, either through research or best practices through the various pilot projects currently underway, will be necessary.

As stated in Oregon's original document regarding the difficulties in providing services to young adults in transition, the long term outcomes upon entering adulthood are often dismal. This is especially true for those young adults who have experienced ongoing needs for psychiatric treatment or incarceration in juvenile correction facilities. Unemployment, poverty, incarceration, homelessness, substance abuse, violence, and impaired relationships are all too often the struggles that these young adults face. We are changing that. The sense of urgency, the support of guiding coalitions as demonstrated by our administrators, community mental health partners, justice systems, education systems, and youth guided advisory committees continue to provide the multiple factors critical for continued and successful change. Oregon has made a commitment to provide better outcomes for our young adults. We are on our way forward.