

Transition to Independence Learning Cluster

This project seeks to improve outcomes for culturally and ethnically youth that are transitioning out of the child welfare system and into adulthood.

Purpose

This project seeks to improve outcomes for youth in foster care as they prepare to transition out of the system and into adulthood. In particular, the to improve outcomes for culturally and racially diverse youth by developing strategies at the policy and practice level for implementing culturally competent services and case planning for all youth, regardless of their background.

Population Addressed

Young adults of transition age who have been involved or are involved in the child welfare system of all major racial/ethnic populations, genders, and sexual minorities.

Time Frame

The project period is 12-18 months.

Rationale and Relevance

- Youth who have been in foster care experience mental health and substance abuse problems as well as co-occurring disorders at a higher rate than their peers.
- Youth aging out of the child welfare system fare worse than their peers on all counts including employment, education, and income.
- While in care youth often do not receive services to prepare them for transitioning out of care and their services from the child serving system are cut off.
- There is an over-representation of minorities (racial and ethnic, sexual and gender) in the child welfare system nationally.
- There are a lack of culturally appropriate, youth centered behavioral health care services nation-wide.
- There are no clearly defined best practices for culturally competent behavioral health services for youth.

Role of NNED

- Identify potential participants in the Learning Cluster (including community-based providers, consumers, and state governments).
- Convene the Learning Cluster to develop the tools, resources and strategies for connecting

youth to culturally competent behavioral health care services.

- Disseminate LC products via the NNED structure.

Learning Cluster Development

- Develop a Learning Cluster of round-table participants including grass-roots advocacy organizations, transition-age youth, behavioral health care providers, DHS workers, and other government employees.
- Convene an initial meeting to develop consensus around population, need and promising programs
- Host an online virtual space for on-going collaboration, communication, information dissemination and product development.
- Support quarterly web conferences.

Projected Outcome

- Identify keys to success for youth to transition into adulthood out of foster care
- Identify key risk factors that are at the root of the problem
- Disseminate models of collaboration to support transition
- Highlight pockets of excellence for this population – especially those that are culturally and linguistically competent
- Increase knowledge of the strengths and challenges faced by youth transitioning out of care
- Identify and promote culturally competent services and supports for youth transitioning out of care and into adulthood
- The development of a network of experts and youth who are working to improve outcomes for this population

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