Preparing Youth for Successful Transition out of the Children’s Mental Health System

“LEEP” into Adulthood

Agenda

- Introductions
- Overview
- Life Skills Across the Life Domains
- Empowerment Opportunities
- Evidence Based Therapies
- Preventive and Crisis Planning
- Q&A

Today’s presenters

- **Heather Altman**, MA, LPC, is the Clinical Supervisor of four New Jersey YAP counties.

- **Jennifer Rodríguez**, MSW, is the Director of the Gloucester-Salem Counties Youth Advocate Programs.
Approximately 6.5% (156,000) of young adults aged 18-26 had a serious mental illness in 2006.

Youth aging out of the Children’s MH system tend to have poorer long-term outcomes:

- Interrupted Education
- Unemployment
- Homelessness
- Likelihood of Suicide
- Criminal Activities
- Unplanned Pregnancy

Availability and accessibility of services to this population is largely lacking:

- In a study across 41 states and DC, **transitional services** were lacking in:
  - Over 50% of Adult Services
  - More than 25% of Children’s Services

- Hospital Admissions and Utilization of MH Services decline in 16-25 year olds
- More referrals come directly from criminal justice system
- More Medicaid referrals with age

Pottik et al, 2008
Clark and Unruh (2009)

- Evidence-supported practices
- Consistent and coordinated services and supports
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate and relevant services
- Address system fragmentation
- Focus on employment, education, training
- Peer supports to reach, engage and coach
- Reduce risk behaviors through prevention planning
- Fund and sustain services and supports
- Continuous Quality Improvement process

LEEP

- Life Skill Development
- Empowerment Strategies
- Evidence-based Therapies
- Preventive and Crisis Planning

Life Skills
Ansell Casey Life Skills Curriculum

• Communication
• Daily Living
• Housing and Money Management
• Self Care
• Social Relationships
• Work and Study Skills

Education and Employment

• Job Training
• College Courses
• Supported Work
• Employment
Program Types

- WIA Employment Benchmark
- MERGE
  - Atlantic County, NJ
- Supported Work

WIA Employment Benchmark

- Career Planning
- Work Maturity
- Academic Instruction
- Employment/Training
- Job Experience
- Education/Job Attainment

WIA Employment Partners

- Vineland Public Schools
- Vineland School Technology Department
- YMCA
- Bridgeton Public Works Department
- Friendly’s
- Zelphy’s Day Care/Food Bank
- YMCA
- Tri-County Day Care Centers
- Police Athletic League (PAL)
- Libraries
- County Summer Camp Programs
- South Jersey Hospital
- Police Athletic League (PAL)
MERGE
Males Engaged in Reducing Violence
Through Gainful Employment

Opportunities
- Life Skills
- GGI (Guided Group Interaction)
- Drug & Alcohol Assessment
- Drivers Education
- Health Workshops
- Mock Job Interviews

Partners
- ACCC: Atlantic–Cape Community College
- JSJA Consultant
- Parent Resource Center
- Southern NJ Family Medical Center
- Harrah’s Entertainment

ACCC Courses
- Electronic Equipment Technician
- Work Readiness
- Financial Services Training
- Customer Services Training
Supported Work

- Form of Subsidized employment
- Provides a unique opportunity for entry into the work force while receiving support and supervision.
- Provides an opportunity for structure and stability to our clients in an environment that may have been previously unavailable.

Supported Work Partners

- Law Offices
- Restaurants
- Bakeries
- Tire Shops
- Beauty Parlors
- Pet Shops
- Florists
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Administrative Offices

Clients work anywhere between 5–20 hours depending on approval by their referring authority.
What is a Youth Advisory Board (YAB)?

- Youth organized, Youth Run
- Input from adult supporters
- Provide feedback to inform policy and practice
- Facilitates personal leadership development and positive youth development
- Acquire and enhance skills in youth advocacy
- Acquire independent living skills

Members

- Between the ages of 14-22
- WANT to participate in the YAB
- From a variety of placements
  - Foster Homes
  - Group Homes
  - Transitional Living Programs
  - Supported Housing Programs
  - Independent Living Programs
  - In College or Aged-Out of Foster Care
  - Homeless/runaway youth
Structure

- By County
- Meet at least twice a month
- Keep regular updates via email, and other electronic means like Facebook
- Complete a minimum of 4 projects each year

Structure

- Executive Board (at minimum, a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer)
- Are governed through By-Laws (youth established)
- Adults are supporters and can offer technical assistance
- Meetings last between 1-2.5 hours
- Must submit action-plans, agendas, meeting minutes, sign-in sheets, and monthly budgets

Activities\Accomplishments
2010–2013

- Reviewed DYFS Aftercare policies
- Participated in a variety of charity events/service projects
- Planned and participated in Career\Education Expo.
- Planned and participated in Statewide Aging Into Adulthood Conference
- Youth Summit with DCF Commissioner, Allison Blake
New Component– YAC

- The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) meets every quarter to discuss system changes within DCF
- This is a youth run group
- Ages 14-22
- Include youth from JJC, CSOC, DDD and substance abuse programs

What is a Youth Partnership?

- Youth Organized, Youth Run
- Input from adult supporters
- Educate communities about mental health issues facing young people
- Facilitate personal leadership development and positive youth development
- Eliminate stigma by advocating for one another in the community
- Empower youth as self-advocates
- Foster connections between youth to support, educate, and advocate for and with one another

Members

- Between the ages of 12-21
- WANT to participate in the Youth Partnership
- Have to identify themselves as having mental/emotional/behavioral challenges
- Are a family member of the CMO
- Have participated in the NJ “Children’s System of Care”
- Have been a family member of one or more partner organizations
Structure

- By County
- Each Counties formal structures vary
- Meet weekly or bi weekly
- Meetings last between 1.5-2 hours
- Executive Boards (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer)
- Group goals\by-laws are developed by youth
- Boards set the agenda, calendar, and activity schedule for the group

Activities/Accomplishments 2010–2011

- Youth Partnerships have conducted workshops
- Engaged in public speaking and education
- Community Services Projects
- Trips to Historical Locations
- Attended State Conferences
- Fundraising
- Self Expression through artwork\poetry
- Talent Shows

What are Focus Groups?

- Listen and gather information
- Understand how people feel
- Permissive environment that encourages participation without pressure
- Multiple focus groups per locality
Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Promote self-disclosure
- Allow individuals to respond without setting boundaries
- Moderator is not in a position of power or influence
- Comfortable location
- 5-10 people max
- Participants are similar to each other, but do not know each other

Focus Group Questions

- Pre-determined
- Phases of questions that are sequenced
- Most are open-ended
- Move from general to more specific

Speakers Bureaus

- Engaging and Mobilizing Youth to share their stories with others to:
  - Improve Systems and Policies
  - Train the staff working with other youth with MH Sisters
  - Support other youth in a similar situation
Speaker’s Bureaus

Some Places We Have Presented at:

- Child Welfare League of America
- Racial Justice Initiative - TBUSA
- Coalition for Juvenile Justice
- Families Together - NYS
- Search Institute
- Office of Children and Family Services
- YAP Staff Meetings
Evidence-Based Therapies

- Expertise of practitioner
- Evidence from research
- Needs and preferences of those affected
- Decisions

Trauma-Focused CBT

- Psychosocial treatment model
- PTSD
- Initially developed for sexual abuse treatment
- Adapted for a wide array of traumatic experiences

Parent Management Therapy (PMT)

- Trains parents to manage behavioral problems
- Corrects maladaptive parent-child interactions related to discipline
- Uses social techniques
- Goal is to alter both the parent’s and child’s behavior in order to decrease the child’s unwanted behavior patterns
**Parent Child–Interaction Therapy (PCIT)**

- Young children with conduct disorder
- Emphasizes parent-child interaction patterns
- Parents learn specific skills
- Goal is to establish nurturing and secure relationship
- Increase child’s pro-social behavior

**Dialectical Behavioral Therapy**

- CBT-oriented therapy
- Skills-training
- 4-6 week cycle
- Focus areas:
  - Mindfulness
  - Distress tolerance
  - Emotion regulation
  - Interpersonal effectiveness

**Coping CAT CBT\CAT Project for Anxiety**

- Children who participate in the Coping Cat Program learn how to:
  - Identify anxious feelings
  - Use relaxation techniques
  - Develop coping thoughts
  - Use problem solving skills
  - Self-monitor
  - Practice coping strategies
Taking ACTION CBT for Depression

- Independently apply coping skills
- Teach a problem-solving approach to life
- Profoundly change children’s perceptions of themselves, the world, and the future
- Make the treatment "real"
- Change within-family interactions and communications
- Practice coping skills through homework assignments

Preventive & Crisis Planning

- Individualized for youth/family
- What is a crisis to them?
- Tailor to family (based on their needs, strengths and supports)
- Integrate local resources
- Develop well in advance of discharge and continue to modify throughout service
- Incorporate prior to discharge changes in resources available post-discharge of children’s MH system
Questions

Thank you!
**Who We Are:**
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization committed to providing cost-effective, community-based alternatives to institutional placement. For almost 40 years, we have actualized our mission through advocacy, policy change, and the provision of cost-effective direct service programming. We serve over 12,000 families a year in more than 100 programs across 18 states in rural, suburban and urban areas. Since our beginning in 1975, 100% of our programming occurs in the home communities of the people we serve.

**What We Do:**
YAP specializes in serving the most high and complex need children, youth and families (those most at risk of or currently in institutional placement) by providing intensive, unconditional support through our YAP wraparound/advocate model. Our model is comprehensive and holistic, utilizing best practices and core principles found in the wraparound, mentoring, restorative justice and positive youth development fields. YAP has expertise in engaging system involved youth, ensuring compliance with all mandates and requirements while incorporating the youth and family’s needs and interests into the service plan.

YAP works with families to increase their ability to self-manage and safely problem-solve their needs by developing their competencies and network of community support. Our approach is strength-based and seeks to (re-) connect families to community supports, with opportunities to contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. This community connection is critical to long-term success, as these supports are more sustainable than our relationship with them and more naturally occurring than the services often assigned to them.

**How We Do It:**
YAP provides youth and their families with intensive services in their homes and community that include case management, crisis intervention services available 24/7, skill development, educational and vocational work and connection with social and professional supports through the development of individual service plans.

YAP spends time with each youth and family and their team of professional and non-professional supports to develop a plan that identifies the youth and family’s strengths, interests, challenges and needs. The plan is then implemented with the support of paid, trained and weekly supervised “Advocates.”

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**Our Programs**

**Juvenile Justice**
- Alternatives to Detention
- Post-Adjudication Support
- Reintegration
- Gang Intervention
- Violence Prevention

**Child Welfare**
- Reunification
- Family Preservation
- Family Finding
- Infant and Toddler Services

**Behavioral/Mental Health**
- In-home, School & Community
- Outpatient
- Family-Based
- Respite

**Developmental Disabilities**
(including intellectual disabilities, TBI and Autism spectrum disorders)
- Respite
- In Home & Community

www.yapinc.org
YAP Advocates are caring adults who live in the same communities as the youth and families they serve. Advocates are positive role models to whom young people can easily relate. Their shared cultural identity is a natural bridge to developing the trusting relationship that is essential in engaging youth and families in a positive change process.

Advocates help implement the individual service plan that is developed with each family. Available 24/7, Advocates provide services at times and locations when they are most needed, allowing for highly individualized and effective intervention. During their assigned hours—up to 30 hours per week—advocates provide intensive supervision, mentoring, coaching, brokering and modeling through purposeful individual, family and, at times, group activities.

Advocates help youth and families meet their obligations to judges, probation officers, case managers and other referring entities, thus avoiding further penetration into the system. Advocacy services also include assistance with part-time employment, constructive use of leisure time, community service and connections with appropriate community resources. Advocates help young people and families expand their horizons and inspire them to set and achieve new goals.

The "how" of what we do will vary with each youth we work with because our plans are individualized. But overall, what we do is simple: **we do whatever it takes.**

### Research and Outcomes

The **University of Texas/San Antonio** received one of five OJJDP Mentoring Best Practices Research grants to evaluate YAP’s model.

Ten external evaluations conducted by respected organizations have led YAP to consistently being considered a **Best Practice Model.** YAP programs were shown to have high program completion rates; low rates of placement into residential foster care; low numbers of young people who are AWOL; and residential stability.

![View our documentary film “Safely Home” at www.yapinc.org or by scanning the QR code.](QR_code)

[yapinc.org](http://www.yapinc.org)
The YAP Network

Youth Advocate Programs has been working with youth and families in New Jersey for over 30 years, and provide services in over 18 NJ counties. Nationally, we have over 130 programs across 18 states. There are a number of ways that you can stay connected with YAP!

To learn more about YAP, our locations and activities, go to www.yapinc.org

Follow us on Twitter!

“Like” us on Facebook!

Or contact our New Jersey Leadership:

Lynette Connor, LSW, Vice-President of NJ: lconnor@yapinc.org
Child Welfare Services

Program Highlights:

- Family & Community Reunification
- Prevention of Placement
- Foster Parent Support
- Support for Aging-Out Youth in Transition
- Improving Families

Program Locations:

AL: Robertsdale
CO: Thornton
FL: Orlando
PA: Bethlehem, Everett, Lebanon, Kresgeville, Reading, York
NJ: Atlantic City, Camden, Eatontown, Lumberton, Lyndhurst, North Brunswick, Sparta, Vineland
NY: Canton, Elizabethtown, Glens Falls, Ithaca, Kingston, Monticello, Newark, Newburgh, Phoenix, Plattsburgh, Schenectady, Waterloo, Watertown
SC: Greenville
VA: Roanoke

Number of youth and families served:

4,528

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Krystina was removed from her biological mother at birth but was allowed visitation. She was in one foster home placement then adopted into a foster family permanently. Within the past year, Krystina was removed from her adoptive family and placed in the custody of her adopted family's adult daughter. She loves her sister very much and enjoys living with her and her family.

Krystina, now 17 years old, is the Youth Advisory Board President in Cape May and Atlantic Counties, New Jersey. She likes to keep herself active in school, her community and at home. As a Senior at Wildwood High School, she is involved in choir, music, glee club, cheerleading, Spring track, and ROOTS (a community service organization).

As she has done previous summers, Krystina plans to work as a life guard this summer. She is actively enrolled in the military and awaiting boot camp, reviewing which branch of the military she would like to join.

In the next 5-10 years, she sees herself as happy. She believes she will be comfortable in her career with the military. She would like to be trained in law enforcement in the military and plans on attending college in the future for criminal justice and social work. She would like to have a career in law enforcement and provide counseling, possibly for Youth Advocate Programs!

Krystina wants to give back to programs that have helped her throughout the years.