



**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**  
**Annual Report – October 2014**

**Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth**  
**Linda O’Neal, Executive Director**



Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth authorization number 316103. October 2014. 200 copies. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$3.83 each.



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
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TO: Members of the Tennessee General Assembly  
FROM: Linda O'Neal, Executive Director  
DATE: October 31, 2014  
RE: *Youth Transitions Advisory Council 2014 Report*

In accordance with T.C.A. 37-2-601 – 37-2-606 and included in this report as Appendix D, attached please find the Youth Transitions Advisory Council 2014 Report. The Youth Transitions Advisory Council brings dedicated child advocates together from all across the state who are developing and implementing new strategies to meet the challenges of engaging former foster youth as they make the critical transition from adolescence to adulthood.

As we all know from experiences with the young adults in our lives, and as a growing body of research confirms, the human brain continues to grow and develop well past the age of majority. Brain executive functions of good judgment and maturity are among the last to develop in the mid-twenties. For good or bad, the choices we make and the goals we set regarding education, career, and interpersonal relationships shape the opportunities and outcomes available to us later in life. For former foster youth, the challenge of that transition is even greater because they often lack the important emotional and financial support nurturing parents provide their adult children.

Too often limited financial resources, job opportunities and housing options reduce the potential of these young adults for completing their education and becoming engaged and productive citizens. Many former foster youth experience homelessness or have encountered the criminal justice system because they lack the strong role models and community connections a stable family can provide. Assistance for youth aging out of state custody can play an important role in achieving the goals Tennessee has set for improving graduation rates, increasing educational attainment, building stronger families and creating safer communities.

The Youth Transitions Advisory Council and the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth express appreciation to the members of the General Assembly for the opportunity to improve the lives of these young people, and for appropriating much needed funding to the Department of Children's Services to assist these youth at this critical time in their lives. This report outlines the work of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council as we continue to develop strategies to assist these young adults as they prepare for success in the lives ahead of them. Included in this report are the ACCOMPLISHMENTS of the Council in 2014 and a number of recommendations for continued improvement in providing services for former foster youth. We hope you will find the resources necessary to continue to fund essential services so all Tennessee youth have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

*“I appreciate the program and its services, especially the education services. The caseworkers were awesome and very passionate about making sure I got the services I needed such as housing, transportation, an education plan. I would like to sincerely thank the entire Department of Children’s Services.”*

*~Marquez.*

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The preparers also thank the members of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council for their review of the draft report and recommendations for improvement.

*“When we began there was a lot of drama around me and my situation. Mindy being there for me, even at 3 a.m., was the biggest thing. Without Youth Villages, I’d probably still be in the same place I was before. I wasn’t sure what to do and didn’t have anyone to talk to. But now, I’ve got my own apartment and a job. I’m going to college this fall. It’s going pretty good.” Savannah*

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
2014**

In the 2014 session of the Tennessee General Assembly, Public Chapter 508 was enacted changing the term “post custody” services to “extension of foster care” services providing a more accurate and user friendly description of the program.

Extension of Foster Care (EFC) Services was provided to a total of 623 youth in Fiscal Year 2014. This reflects the total youth participation, regardless of which year they accepted services.

The rate of participation of those eligible to participate in Extension of Foster Care Services doubled from the first year, and grew to 40 percent in FY 2014.

	<b>Total Aged Out</b>	<b>Total Aged Out Eligible for EFCS</b>	<b>Eligible Population Accepting EFCS</b>	<b>Percent Accepting EFCS</b>
<b>FY 2008-09</b>	1209			
<b>FY 2009-10</b>	1162			
<b>FY 2010-11</b>	1131	813	163	20%
<b>FY 2011-12</b>	1084	748	201	27%
<b>FY 2012-13</b>	1017	768	301	39%
<b>FY 2013-14</b>	984	779	312	40%

DCS Office of Independent and Transitional Living has provided Extension of Foster Care Services training to 2418 participants during fiscal year 2014:

<b>Training Group</b>	<b>Number of Participants Trained</b>
DCS Staff	880
Provider Agency	66
Foster Parents	85
Court Affiliated	23
Mixed Group	1364
<b>Total</b>	<b>2418</b>

Four resource centers are funded for Fiscal Year 2015. The “I AM READY Resource Center” opened in Chattanooga in Spring 2014. It joins existing Resource Centers, Youth Connections in Nashville, South Memphis Alliance in Memphis and Helen Ross McNabb in Knoxville, providing transitional services and assistance to the four largest population centers in Tennessee.

In Fiscal Year 2014, Tennessee became the first state in the nation to make comprehensive transition services available to all youth aging out of the state’s child welfare and juvenile justice

system custody. Youth Villages Transitional Living program contract has been continued and expanded make services available to more youth, with criteria revised to target those youth who need services the most and to require Youth Villages to complete the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) baseline surveys for youth served. Tennessee matched \$3 million in private funding from Youth Villages to allow all youth exiting state custody to participate in Youth Villages' nationally recognized Transition Living Program. Youth Villages uses private funds to provide transitional services for youth adjudicated delinquent who are not eligible for services provided with Federal IV-E funding.

Former foster youth are categorically eligible for TennCare under age 21, and effective January 2014 became categorically eligible until age 26. Unfortunately, there is no data available to verify the number of former foster youth who have been able to access TennCare.

The Department of Children's Services continued to engage in extensive collaborative work with colleges and universities to build relationships that encourage strengthened support for youth participating in Extension of Foster Services and increase their retention within post-secondary education. In addition to the supportive services at colleges and universities, five youth receiving Extension of Foster Care Services benefitted from those relationships by being moved to up the waiting list to enter Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology.

DCS has continued efforts to implement strategies to conduct credit checks on 16- and 17-year-olds to determine if any youth is a victim of identity theft or credit fraud and clear the records, if necessary, before age 18. DCS is still struggling with the mechanisms required to accomplish this goal.

During Fiscal Year 2014, nine peer advocates provided advocacy at foster care review board reviews for 1,273 foster youth. In Fiscal Year 2013, DCS entered into a five-year \$55,500 per year contract with the Administrative Office of the Court to train, monitor and supervise peer advocates to work with Specialized Foster Care Review Boards. The contract establishes training requirements for peer advocates and includes provisions to pay travel, per diem and stipends for the peer advocates.

Tennessee CASA has received a grant from the National CASA Association to bring the National CASA Fostering Futures curriculum to more local CASA programs across the state. The grant funds will be used to increase the number of CASA volunteers trained to work with older youth and young adults.

In 2014, DCS and the Department of Safety developed and implemented a procedure to provide free state photo IDs for foster youth ages 16 and older.

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services was awarded a 4 year, \$3.8 million Federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to improve access to alcohol and drug treatment services for adolescents and transition age youth.

DCS developed an RFP for step down services for youth exiting youth development centers and released the RFP during the first quarter of fiscal year 2015.

Tennessee was chosen to host the American Youth Policy Forum study tour that came to Nashville to learn about the success of extension of foster care services. Participants toured Monroe Harding, Youth Connections and Youth Villages Transitional Living Programs. Representatives from California, Michigan and Texas shared their successes in working with transition age youth. Department of Children's Services, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth and Youth Villages staff were participants and speakers for the event.

The Clinton Foundation builds partnerships between businesses, governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals to transform lives and communities from what they are today to what they can be, tomorrow. This year Tennessee had two commitments related to services and supports for foster youth.

- **“Preparing Foster Youth in Tennessee for Success as Adults”** – Youth Villages attended the 2014 Clinton Global Initiatives America meeting to give an update on the continuing commitment to serve all young adults aging out of care in Tennessee.
- **“Creating a Pathway to Success for Youth in Foster Care”** – In 2014, Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) committed to partner with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the PENCIL Foundation to expand education, training and employment pathways for foster youth. MNPS, DCS, and PENCIL work collaboratively to identify, recruit, and serve an estimated 69 foster youth, over a three year period, in the MNPS system and foster meaningful relationships between the youth and local businesses.

DCS has implemented informal procedures to facilitate the licensing/certification of former foster youth for state-licensed professions when the initial fee is a barrier to licensing/certification.

In April, 2014, the Department of Children's Services (Tennessee Valley Region), Hamilton County Citizen Review Panel, Hamilton County Community Advisory Board, Hamilton County Chamber of Commerce and Chambliss Center collaborated to give youth life skills experiences through a second annual simulation activity entitled *Reality Check*. Approximately 65 youth participated in the event, compared to 39 in 2013. The two hour hands on simulation gives young people a taste of the real world. It provides each youth with a career, family scenario and

monthly expenses in order to increase youth awareness of the connection between education, career and income. DCS hopes *Reality Check* can be experienced by all youth in care.

The Department of Children's Services coordinated Youth Leadership Academies and Youth 4 Youth Board meetings in collaboration with community based partners in all three Grand Regions.

- East – 11 meetings, 202 total attendance, 17 average attendance
- Middle – 1 meeting, 8 total attendance
- West – 11 meetings, 161 total attendance, 12 average attendance

In FY 2014, approximately 389 youth in custody obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, 126 young adults in EFCS obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, and 9 young adults completed post-secondary goals.

YDCs and Provider Operated In-House Schools have appropriate DOE approval enabling all credits to transfer back to the public school. YDCs have now shifted to a semester school schedule allowing students to receive credits at semester breaks that are comparable to public schools rather than at the completion of seat time hours.

DCS created a Youth Engagement Specialist position to reach out to former foster youth to provide information about eligibility for Extension of Foster Care services and eligibility for TennCare up to age 26 under the Affordable Care Act.

In Spring 2014, Tennessee Housing and Development agency awarded funding to Crossville Housing Authority for a four-unit apartment complex intended for use by transitioning youth in the Upper Cumberland region. The Crossville Housing Authority broke ground on the apartment complex in early fiscal year 2015

#### EARLY FY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

Tennessee Housing and Development Agency set aside funding in the Emergency Solutions grant and promoted their Housing Trust Fund grant program to transition age service providers to stimulate housing proposals for transition age youth.

The TennCare Select Behavioral Health Advisory Committee presented a series of webinars in September 2014 on transition age youth needs and service availability.

With funding provided by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, [kidcentraltn.com](http://kidcentraltn.com), an online resource for parents sponsored by the Tennessee Children's Cabinet, is enhancing its content for school-age youth and adding content for young people

transitioning to adulthood. Under the Development Section of kidcentraltn.com, the 14-18 year old category will be broken down into two categories, consisting of 14-16 years and 17 years and older. To add depth to these new categories, kidcentraltn.com is developing new articles on college preparation and other options after high school (i.e., Military, employment, etc); driver's license preparation; daily living skills, such as grocery shopping, laundry, cooking, and housekeeping; and personal care issues like hygiene, oral health, body image, health and nutrition, and cleanliness.

To support transitioning youth as well as caregivers, a new folder called "Life Skills" will be added to the Support Section. "Life Skills" will include content such as employment and interviewing skills, navigating insurance, financial literacy, housing, family planning, and other specific resources relevant to transitioning youth. As this new content is published, kidcentraltn.com will also roll out new header images and sub-section icons that reflect increased content for older youth. Information about higher education, Tennessee's graduated driver's license program, and entering the workforce is also being added to age-specific developmental milestones content in the My Profile section.

*“In the beginning, at end of custody, I don’t know where I’d been if things had started out differently. The past times in custody, have saved my life. At first I was overweight and had no home. I am starting college now, my life has been saved.”~TJ*

*“No one in my family graduated high school, let alone went to college. My workers helped me with the support I needed to succeed. You cannot do this on your own; you need someone to support you. I did not have foster parents after I was 18 years old, so my workers were very important. Don’t give up!” ~ Mary*

**YOUTH TRANSITIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
2014**

As described in this report, the Youth Transitions Advisory Council has received reports from the Department of Children’s Services regarding the provision of services for youth transitioning to adulthood, representatives from the Resource Centers and other organizations that currently provide services to these youth, advocates for transitioning youth, and most importantly, young adults who have transitioned from state custody. The combined conversations of all interested parties has resulted in the identification of the infrastructure, and the kinds of services and supports, needed to help young people successfully transition to adulthood. While this infrastructure is primarily focused on young adults who were formerly in state custody, many of the same resources are also needed by young adults who are transitioning from the children’s services systems for individuals with disabilities or mental health and substance abuse treatment needs to the adult service delivery systems.

Though much work has been done by the many stakeholders involved in this process to fulfill past recommendations, much more work is needed on several of the recommendations before they are accomplished, and some will be ongoing over the course of several years. The following items have been identified as issues yet to be resolved and serve as the recommendations of the Council for 2015.

**NEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **The Department of Children’s Services, foster parents and contract agencies should focus on earlier interventions with adolescents ages 14-16 year olds to help them prepare for adulthood.** Development of many of the skills needed for successful transition to adulthood should begin with younger adolescents. Decisions made during this time, especially related to education, have a long-term impact on educational opportunities and success.
- **If the immigration status for youth in foster care is in question, there is a need to clearly establish immigration status for youth before they turn 18.** The immigration status of young adults is important in determining their eligibility for certain services. There are also legal differences that relate to minors that are important, so DCS should assist youth in clarifying their status before they transition to adulthood. Improvements in practice and assistance for these youth can greatly improve their potential and prospects for being productive members of society and contributing to the overall economy.

- **An expansion in the service array is needed to assist youth with special needs in the successful transition to adulthood.** Youth who have an IEP yet do not qualify for Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disability services (for example, because they have an IQ above 70), often still need assistance. Special services for this group of transitioning youth include enhanced independent living skills, peer transitional support, support for college accommodations, access to vocational rehabilitation, Labor and Workforce Development programs, community colleges, etc. There is a need to strengthen the connections between and among DCS and other state departments.
- **Transition age youth who have never been in state custody need services and supports in much the same way former foster youth do.** As efforts have increased to facilitate access to services for adolescents to avoid state custody, many more youth who are very similar to those in foster care transition to adulthood without a stable, supportive and nurturing family. It is in the best interests of those young adults and the Tennessee community for services and supports to be provided to help them become productive, successful adults.
- **DCS should identify and implement strategies to provide bridge assistance for young people during the initial period of transition.** When transitioning youth experience a gap in assistance that leaves them dependent of unstable and unsupportive families or friends, it can result in loss of opportunities to establish a path toward success. Strategies should be in place to ensure they have access to essential supports, including housing and basic needs, until time for college enrollment, move into campus housing, etc.
- **DCS should implement best practices services for pregnancy prevention and for pregnant and parenting adolescents statewide.** These practices should especially be implemented in residential programs, through resource centers and other programs/providers. Access to long acting reversible contraceptives should be available for young women to avoid pregnancy. For those who are pregnant and parenting, best practices assistance should be provided to help them have a healthy, successful pregnancy and become nurturing, supportive parents.
- **Transitioning youth need assistance resolving legal issues they may become embroiled in related to their lack of adult experiences and poor decision making.** Transitioning youth become involved in legal issues related to housing such as leases and evictions, family legal issues such as the custody of a child or divorce, and sometimes criminal activities. The Tennessee Bar Association and Access to Justice should establish a pro bono legal services program geared toward the 18-24 year old young adults who need assistance. The Law School Clinics should be encouraged to consider this as an area where they might provide assistance.

- **DCS should identify and implement best practices for addressing the unique needs of youth who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered or Questioning (LGBTQ).** The increasing awareness of special issues related to LGBTQ youth highlights the need to improve practice for these youth. LGBTQ youth experience special challenges in custody and in transitioning to adulthood. Identification and implementation of best practices for dealing with these challenges should improve outcomes for these youth and young adults.
- **The Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) should enhance and expand housing assistance opportunities for transitioning youth.** Housing continues to be a major need for transitioning youth. THDA has taken important steps to address this issue. DCS and THDA should collaborate on strategies to further expand housing options for this population, including consideration of identifying and implementing a dedicated funding stream to meet this need.

## CONTINUING RECOMMENDATIONS

### Essential Documentation Recommendation

- **Young adults often need assistance with essential documents (birth certificate, Social Security card, education records, etc.) required for many aspects of adult living.** Essential Documents are listed on page seven of the current Department of Children’s Services’ “Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide,” which can be found at <http://www.tn.gov/youth/dcsguide/manuals/ILTranPlanGuide.pdf>. Current DCS policy calls for all youth ages 17 or older exiting foster care to be provided with one complete set of essential documents required for participating in many of the adult educational, employment, public benefits and other systems. Youth should also receive one set of copies to serve as backup information. Youth also need to be provided with information regarding how to safeguard the documents and procedures for obtaining replacement documents, if needed, and provided assistance when necessary to obtain replacement documents.

More work is needed to identify and implement best strategies for securing the documents. Potential strategies include having a mentor or other trusted advisor keep a copy or keeping a copy on a password protected flash drive or “*Drop Box*” website. Information suggests providing essential documents is improving in some regions, and DCS will continue to monitor this. In spite of challenges, discussions and exploration of the potential to use of “*Drop Box*,” Jump Vault or other technologies under development to provide youth access to essential documents.

### Educational Issues Recommendations

- As school systems in the state have scheduling autonomy, including whether they have a block or period system, **options should be available to foster youth who change schools and/or systems to ensure they are able to maintain acquisition of credits and do not lose the hours required to acquire credits for graduation.** Transportation to the previous school system or other educational options should be provided by the Department of Children’s Services. Opportunities for success in school, especially including class scheduling, should be a consideration in placement decisions. The Administrative Office of the Courts Court Improvement Project Work Group is considering proposing legislation during the 2015 Regular Legislative Session to improve high school graduation among transitioning youth in custody. Such legislation should be supported.
- Department of Children’s Services staff and staff at the Department of Education, State Board of Education and Local Education Agencies should work together to facilitate successful transition of youth between and among schools.** This should include minimizing placement in alternative classes except in cases where such placement is required for school or child safety, primarily when youth have been adjudicated for the serious offenses that require notification to the school, or when placement is clearly linked to increasing the prospects for earning credit or participating in credit recovery/accelerated credit programs. **In any case, including when school notification is required, there should be an individual determination whether placement in an alternative school is necessary and appropriate.** Providing youth with an opportunity for a “fresh start” may facilitate their future educational and behavioral success and reduce the chances of them connecting/reconnecting with “negative” peers in alternative school. This would be consistent with efforts to ensure services are provided in the least restrictive and most appropriate educational environment.
- Staff with the juvenile courts and Department of Children’s Services and members of foster care review boards and specialized foster care review boards should acknowledge the importance of educational services in permanency plans.** Educational services should be recognized as the therapeutic services they are for child well-being. **Plans for placement change/return should consider school timetables whenever possible.** Examples include expediting return home or a planned placement change so children can begin a new school year/semester/grading period back in their home school or in their new placement. In contrast, return home or placement changes should be coordinated to accommodate the end of a grading period, semester or end of course testing. Plans should include strategies to ensure youth have sufficient “seat time” to be eligible to take end-of-course examinations.

The Court Improvement Program is having quarterly meetings with DCS and juvenile court facilitators to address some of the educational barriers most commonly observed during foster care review boards. One of the recommendations is for the FSW to disenroll the child from the current school prior to enrolling the child in the new school. This will allow for the timely transmission of education records, as well as ensure the child is enrolled in the proper classes and will receive additional services, such as IEP or 504 Plan. Another recommendation is to identify a method to ensure children in high school are accumulating credits. Finally, prior to placement changes there should be a discussion as to what, if any, impact a change will have on the child's educational progress.

### **Higher Education Recommendations**

- **Strategies should be developed and implemented to ensure the necessary steps are taken so youth in custody are eligible to participate in Tennessee Promise.** DCS staff and other providers should assist transitioning youth and information on how to do this should be communicated clearly, in writing and through training by webinar or in person. The Oasis College Connections and other programs across the state, including Tennessee College Access and Success Network, should support youth in establishing eligibility for Tennessee Promise. Tennessee Promise should develop a pool of mentors for children who have been in foster care and young adults with other special needs (mental health, substance abuse, etc.), and those mentors should receive special training to equip them to support these students.
- **When youth transition plans include attending post-secondary education in Tennessee, the plans should include implementation of strategies for applying for financial aid (scholarships/loans/grants) and connecting youth with student life, disabilities and financial aid coordinators or other appropriate resources at higher education institutions to establish a support network for success at the institution.** While this is outlined in DCS policy, there are opportunities to improve its implementation. Youth should be advised of the need for caution in applying for student loans in many circumstances, and the importance of actually utilizing financial opportunities to advance their education. Youth should also be advised to apply for minority scholarships based on their experience in foster care. Need for additional help to maintain grade point averages and ongoing eligibility for EFC, etc.
- **State-funded higher education programs should explore the feasibility of providing a bus pass as a part of tuition costs, especially for youth transitioning from state custody.** Transportation is a major challenge for foster youth/former foster youth in terms of work and college. Some private institutions in Tennessee already include a local bus pass in their tuition costs. Transportation is an ongoing issue for transitioning youth, and a bus pass could have a major impact on their ability to attend and succeed in higher education. Efforts should be made to focus on transportation providers to enlist their

assistance and guidance in identifying strategies to help with transportation options for former foster youth and other transitioning youth.

- Participation in higher education is a major pathway to success for young adults, and especially important for youth who are/have been in state custody. **YTAC needs active participation by representatives of the higher education system in Tennessee to facilitate better understanding and implementation of strategies to address related issues experienced by these young adults.** Efforts should be made to engage representatives of the public higher education system (Tennessee Higher Education Commission/Board of Regents/University of Tennessee System) and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association to participate with YTAC. DCS has met with the Chancellor of the State Board of Regents and the President of the Independent Colleges and requested representatives.

### **Services and Supports Recommendations**

- **Youth who are unable to achieve permanency by age 18 should be encouraged to utilize extended foster care services.** Permanency is the primary goal for all children in state custody. When they are unable to achieve permanency, all stakeholders who come in contact with these youth should encourage them to participate in extended foster care services. All eligible youth should be encouraged to enroll in EFC Services, and DCS should explore the opportunity to add other categories of eligibility allowed by Federal law. This would enable the state to draw down additional Federal funds to provide assistance for vulnerable young adults and provide opportunities to increase participation.
- **Funding for resource centers for transitioning youth should be continued and there should be analysis to determine the need for expansion.** Resource centers are important infrastructure for transitioning youth. Ongoing funding provides stability and serves as core funding around which other community dollars can be generated. As described in Tennessee Code Annotated 37-2-603, the resource centers that currently exist in Chattanooga (new in 2014), Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville should provide a “one-stop shop” for foster youth and former foster youth. Youth often come for assistance in acquiring a GED, and then explore other needs. Optimally, assistance with financial management, job search and other related needs should be provided in one place to facilitate keeping youth engaged, ensuring all their needs are met. Resource Centers may be needed in other areas in Tennessee as well, so there should be a review and analysis to determine if needs in other/rural areas justify expansion. In the absence of resource centers, other strategies are needed to provide core supports and services. Accessing resource centers on-line is an option to explore. Continuation funding for Resource Centers is essential.

- **The Youth Villages Transitional Living (TL) Program should be continued and funded on an ongoing basis.** Through a combination of state funds and matching funds, the Youth Villages contract was continued in Fiscal Year 2014, a major accomplishment. The Youth Villages Transitional Living Program is highly effective at ensuring youth aging out of care have the necessary skills and supports to be successful adults. Since the program started in 1999, it has served more than 5,000 youth across the state of Tennessee with a success rate of over 80 percent. Youth Villages’ commitment to the aging-out population is well documented. More information about this program is presented later in this report.
- **Various options to overcome transportation barriers are needed as this continues to be a great need for transitioning youth.** The bus pass option identified under “Higher Education Recommendations” and the provision of one-stop-shop resource centers discussed above to facilitate access to the broad range of needed services would both help address transportation barriers. Youth Villages has had a few automobiles donated to their program for youth. Youth at some Resource Centers have used matching funds in Opportunity Passports to purchase automobiles. Other creative strategies should also be identified and implemented.
- **CASA programs should continue to educate both volunteers and youth about extended foster care services and challenges transitioning foster youth experience, and CASA volunteers should serve youth between ages 18 and 21.** CASA volunteers are important resources to help youth make successful transitions to adulthood. CASA volunteers and others who are working with transitioning youth should know the importance of linking them with appropriate educational, legal and other services and supports, and including those items in permanency and transitional living plans. DCS has met with CASA to encourage this emphasis on transitioning youth, and CASA has facilitated training to begin to provide support for these youth. The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth should encourage CASA programs to serve youth who are participating in Extension of Foster Care Services. CASA has received grant funding to address this recommendation, and this is an important accomplishment. More information is provided in this report.
- **The Department of Children’s Services has made great strides to facilitate continuing TennCare eligibility for all foster youth who transition from state custody to adulthood, and these efforts should continue.** The Department of Children’s Services has developed an arrangement with TennCare to permit application for TennCare services 30 days prior to the youth’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to ensure continuity of health care coverage. This facilitates ongoing access to needed health services and minimizes the likelihood there is a gap in or loss of coverage because paperwork is not completed timely. Clinical practice guidelines should be developed to focus on the needs

of young people transitioning to the adult service systems, and health care providers should be aware of transition needs. DCS should monitor the process to ensure EFC youth are appropriately and timely enrolled as provided by the ACA. TennCare needs to be an active partner in facilitating ongoing eligibility.

- **All youth who are transitioning need to have a connection to a caring adult who is significant for them and who is available to provide support and guidance.** Mentors or coaches are needed for transitioning foster youth to provide a significant, ongoing supportive relationship, a kind of relational permanency. There should be consideration of the development and implementation of funding for a contract(s) for mentoring/coaching services for youth who are transitioning to adulthood. These mentors/coaches need special training regarding the needs of youth who are transitioning to adulthood and the services and supports that are available to guide them on that journey. If the young person does not already have a connection to a caring adult mentor, when possible, mentors who have personal experience with the foster care system should be identified. As an alternative to a relative or other caring adult, a mentor or coach might serve as a “permanent mailing address” for youth, provide a stable point of contact, or as a repository for copies of essential documents as discussed earlier.
- **The Department of Children’s Services should identify appropriate strategies for transition support services for children who are adjudicated delinquent and do not qualify for Fostering Connections because they are in a secure placement prior to exiting custody.** Many of these youth are also in need of services to increase their opportunities to become successful, productive adults. Current funding levels present challenges, so strategies should be developed to address this need in the future. In September 2014, DCS distributed requests for proposals for specialized foster care placements, including step down placements from Youth Development Centers. Hopefully these additional resources will help address this need.
- **Transition plans should be individualized to meet the needs of each young person and should contain the information needed for accessing the services and supports identified by and for the youth for a successful transition to adulthood.** It should function as an individualized “handbook” to facilitate successful transition to adulthood for each young adult and should be based on the young person’s goals, skills, needs and strengths. DCS needs to continue to monitor and train for timely and improved transition planning, and the Administrative Office of the Court should train foster care review boards regarding the importance of good transition planning.
- **Easily identifiable information regarding transitioning services should be available on a youth-friendly website.** DCS should contract for this activity to provide a user-friendly url for the site, but DCS should include language in the contract to ensure it “owns” the url in the event of contract changes in the future. The url for this site should

be shared with young people as part of transition planning, and state and community based organizations that serve former foster youth should share this site with young people. In addition to other information, the site should include information regarding how to access essential documents. DCS should also share a working phone number with the same group for young people who have no or limited access to the internet so they could contact DCS for service information, including how to replace essential documents, if needed. Discussions regarding the best strategies for development, funding and hosting of a website for youth is ongoing.

### **Legal System Issues Recommendations**

- **The Department of Children’s Services should** expand eligibility criteria for Extension of Foster Care to include other categories of youth eligible under the Federal Fostering Connections legislation. Those categories include youth who are working or participating in work activities 80 hours per month and need other assistance, including financial management, housing, transportation, etc.
- **Whenever safe and possible, youth in youth development centers should be stepped down to qualifying placements that make them eligible for extension of foster care services.** Appropriate transition plans should be made in sufficient time to facilitate such placements and connect youth with needed services and supports. Transition planning for youth in YDCs needs to begin early after admission as the average length of stay is about six months. In September 2014, DCS sent out requests for proposals for specialized foster care placements. This request included step down placements for youth in Youth Development Centers. The requests for proposals released in September 2014 and discussed above should help address this recommendation.
- **There is a need to increase the availability of model foster care review boards across the state where members have received special training regarding the needs of and resources for youth who are transitioning to adulthood.** Members of such foster care review boards can play a significant role in ensuring permanency and transition plans address the needs of youth who are transitioning to adulthood. Strategies used by model foster care review boards should be used by other foster care review boards to assist in their review of youth who are transitioning to adulthood. The AOC has an ongoing effort to develop model foster care review boards around the state. It is a lengthy process dependent solely on the cooperation and desire of the Juvenile Court Judge in that jurisdiction and availability of interested and qualified board members. . In an effort to aid rural areas that have struggled to recruit certain professionals as board members, the AOC is developing manuals specific to each wellbeing component (i.e., health, education, etc.) to assist the boards with identifying barriers in each area and to make quality recommendations to remove the barriers.

- **Peer advocates are important resources working with current and former foster youth and model foster care review boards. DCS and AOC currently have a five-year contract for the AOC to train, monitor and supervise peer advocates. Funding for peer advocates should be continued and their availability expanded.** Peer advocates help youth feel comfortable and supported in the foster care review process. DCS and the Administrative Office of the Courts should explore ways to increase the availability of peer advocates for foster youth and former foster youth and identify additional ways to adequately support peer advocates. In Fiscal Year 2013, DCS entered into a five-year \$55,500 per year contract with the Administrative Office of the Court to train, monitor and supervise peer advocates to work with Specialized Foster Care Review Boards. The contract establishes training requirements for peer advocates and includes provisions to pay travel, per diem and stipends for the peer advocates. During Fiscal Year 2014, nine peer advocates provided advocacy at foster care review board reviews for 1,273 foster youth. The goal for this year is to have a peer advocate assigned to each county that has a model foster care review board.
- **Foster youth should get a photo id by age 16 and the Tennessee Department of Safety should provide a *free* photo id for all youth in foster care regardless of their age.** The Department of Children’s Services and the Department of Safety and Homeland Security have instituted a protocol to provide a State issued photo identification for all foster youth 16 years and older. While the process is now in place, there continues to be a need for consistent implementation.
- **Foster youth should be encouraged to register to vote when they are 18.** Research shows the earlier a person starts to vote, the more likely they are to continue to vote, and a photo id is required to vote. Foster youth should be encouraged to register to vote in person to ensure they are eligible to vote absentee if necessary in the first election after when they are eligible to vote.
- **Interdepartmental agreements are needed between the Department of Children’s Services and other state departments so DCS can pay for licenses (or have licensing fees waived) for youth who have completed requirements for licensing from those other public agencies.** When young adults who have been in foster care complete requirements for certain trades that require a license (cosmetology, plumbing, electrical, etc.), the cost of the license is often a barrier to moving forward in the job they are trained to do. On the rare occasion that this has been an issue, licensing bureaus, at the request of DCS, have waived the licensing fees.
- **Tennessee law needs an amendment to provide a mechanism for continuing judicial oversight for youth who were in custody in another state and are in Tennessee and otherwise eligible for receipt of Extension of Foster Care Services in order to**

**facilitate their receipt of these services.** A mechanism is needed to ensure compliance with requirements for all young people who are eligible for and receiving EFC services in Tennessee.

- **Juvenile Court Judges should be encouraged to appoint CASA volunteers for older adolescents, and even for young adults who are between ages 18 and 21.** As discussed throughout these recommendations, young adults who have been in foster care are still in need of connection to a caring adult.
- **The Department of Correction and Juvenile Court Judges should be encouraged to facilitate the continuation/development of strong bonds between children and their incarcerated parents,** especially mothers and daughters, as research indicates this is important for the success of both the children and their mothers.
- **Courts should ensure transitional permanency hearings occur and that all factors to encourage successful transition to adulthood are addressed in transition plans and through other appropriate strategies.** Access to housing, educational services, employment, behavioral health services and other needed supports are important for successful transition to adulthood and reduce the likelihood of homelessness, unemployment and criminal justice system involvement.
- **Legislation should be enacted that requires all youth in foster care be allowed to graduate from high school if they have completed the minimum number of high school credits for graduation specified by state law.** Current state law requires 22 credits to graduate, but some counties in Tennessee require more than the minimum number of credits for graduation. While this may be laudable in terms of preparation for college, children in foster care should not be penalized because they sometimes experience placement in multiple school systems with different numbers of credit requirements. As a special “local education agency (LEA),” the Department of Children’s Services ensures the youth development centers and provider agencies’ in-house schools comply with statutory minimum credit requirements. State law should require all school systems to allow graduation for children in foster care who have completed the statutorily specified number of credits.

### **Training Recommendations**

- **Initial and ongoing training regarding the importance of assisting youth in making successful transitions to adulthood needs to be provided to a wide range of stakeholders that all have the potential for making a difference in encouraging positive outcomes for these vulnerable young adults.** Training should include information about the availability of Fostering Connections/EFC and educational, legal and other services and supports that help young adults navigate the many barriers they

face. In addition to the youth themselves, among the stakeholders who could benefit from such training are the following:

- Department of Children’s Services staff;
- Juvenile court judges and magistrates;
- Youth services officers and other juvenile court staff;
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs);
- Guardians ad Litem;
- Attorneys who practice in juvenile court;
- Foster care review board members;
- Foster parents;
- Residential provider agency staff;
- Mental health service providers;
- School guidance counselors/school social workers;
- Peer advocates; and
- Mentors for current/former foster youth.

As reported in the “Accomplishments” section, during fiscal year 2014, DCS trained 2418 individuals. Whenever feasible, workshops regarding transitioning youth should be presented at appropriate regional and state conferences.

- **Juvenile court judges need training regarding the different authority they have related to youth who are receiving extended foster care services as young adults compared to youth under age 18 who are still in state custody or age 18 and still under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court for a delinquent adjudication.** DCS provided a workshop in August at the 2013 Juvenile Court Judges Conference, and such training is needed on an ongoing basis. The AOC and DCS have been collaborating to develop court procedures for the EFC population.

Implementation of new and continuing recommendations included in this report would represent an important step forward in providing the infrastructure needed to help young people who have been in state custody be successful. In general, the recommendations have not been prioritized, as they are interrelated, and there is not a single solution to the many challenges faced by these young adults. As the legal parent for young people who have been in state custody, it is the responsibility of the State of Tennessee, to provide the resources necessary for them to successfully transition to adulthood.

## OVERVIEW

In the fourth year of the program, Extension of Foster Care services continues to expand, by reaching more youth. In Fiscal Year 2014, the program served 312 young people, representing 40 percent of youth aging out of foster care. At the same time the number of youth aging out of foster care continued to decline for the sixth consecutive year. Only 984 young people turned 18 while in the custody of the Department of Children's Services in Fiscal Year 2014, falling from 1209 in FY 2009.

DCS provides services through multiple sources to youth aging out of state custody, based on their eligibility. The services are offered by DCS staff, as well as through DCS contracts with private providers and community agencies. The primary objectives of Tennessee's service network for extension of foster care include helping to ensure ongoing connections with caring adults, the development of productive individuals within their communities, the acquisition and maintenance of gainful employment, the achievement of educational/vocational goals, and the availability of financial assistance and skills training for our youth and exiting young adults, as well as designing other resources to facilitate the transition to adulthood.

DCS has implemented significant enhancements to Tennessee's SACWIS, the Tennessee Family and Child Tracking System (TFACTS), to allow for the accurate establishment of Extension of Foster Care records. This included the ability to conduct IV-E eligibility and reimbursability determinations for this population. As a result, the state was able to retro-claim \$1,639,302 in federal reimbursement during FY 2014 for Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS). The state was also able to claim \$1,770,855 related to Adoption Assistance subsidies for youth over the age of 18.

The Tennessee DCS Independent Living Youth Engagement Lead position started in FY 2014. The Youth Engagement Lead is tasked with contacting aged-out youth who did not accept extension of foster care services. The Youth Engagement Lead attempted to make contact with 366 young adults. The main reasons young people gave for declining EFCS were: 1) preferred work to attending a post secondary program, 2) undecided about future plans, and 3) did not want to be involved with DCS. The Youth Engagement Lead also made 38 referrals to Youth Villages Transitional Living program, 11 referrals for EFCS, and 6 housing and other community referrals.

The Youth Engagement Lead also informed youth about their eligibility as former foster youth up to age 26 for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. It is unknown how many former foster youth have acquired health insurance under the ACA.

The Youth Engagement Lead will continue to respond to all calls/emails coming from the community that are routed to the Office of Independent Living, from youth, young adults and other stakeholders to assist youth and young adults with any needed resources. This role will

expand outreach efforts to young adults who may be eligible for TennCare through the ACA due to aging out of foster care.

One specific group that continues to be less likely to accept Extension of Foster Care services is young people who are adjudicated delinquent. Of the total youth who aged out of state custody eligible for Extension of Foster Care Services during FY 2015, 7% of eligible juvenile justice youth accepted Extension of Foster Care Services, compared to 40% of dependent/neglected youth. IL did see a 4% increase, but more can be done. Three issues were identified among youth from the juvenile justice system: 1) They were more likely to view custody as punitive and therefore less likely to want voluntary services; 2) Unlike many dependent/neglected youth, many of these young people had families to return to as adults, and 3) Some “myths” around eligibility for youth who are in the juvenile justice system continue to exist among staff.

The Department of Children’s Services is implementing two grants to improve services to pregnant and parenting youth in foster care. One grant, the Federal Personal Responsibility Education Program, has been used to implement the evidence based pregnancy prevention Teen Outreach Program® in selected congregate care settings and the initial results are promising. DCS has expanded the grant to utilize the Sisters Saving Sisters Curriculum. Monroe Harding supports Sisters Saving Sisters, a skill-based program designed to reduce the risk of unprotected sexual intercourse among sexually experienced Latino and black adolescent females. The program features culturally and developmentally-appropriate small group sessions that focus on HIV and sexually transmitted disease (STD) risk reduction. The Center for the Study of Social Policy awarded Tennessee a grant to target the unique needs of pregnant and parenting youth in foster care in Knox County. This grant ended in 2014, but DCS will review best practices in this region and work with other DCS regions to ensure they are meeting the needs of this population.

DCS continues to provide training to DCS staff, provider agencies and community partners. In total DCS provided training to 2418 people in FY 2014. DCS has also updated the Tennessee Youth Handbook and the Resource Parent Handbook to include current information on Independent Living and Extension of Foster Care Services. Additionally the Department has updated the Tennessee Office of Independent Living website, providing easy access to relevant policies, manuals and protocols, training materials, and resources.

#### YOUTH VILLAGES TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM

Youth Villages’ Transitional Living (TL) program is designed to assist young people between the ages of 17 and 22, who are transitioning from child welfare and juvenile justice services to adulthood, in learning the skills needed to live successfully. A successful transition could include maintaining safe and stable housing, participating in an educational/vocational program, developing life skills necessary to become a productive citizen and remain free from legal involvement. Transitional living specialists (directly providing the services to young people) carry a small average caseload of 8-10 and have multiple contacts (via phone or face-to-face)

weekly with each young person in order to engage on a high level with each. The program is based on a multiple systems approach, meaning services are aimed not only at the individual but at all the areas (systems) that may affect the youth (e.g. community, peer group, family, and school/work).

Youth in the transitional living programs are assigned a transitional living specialist who is responsible for aiding youth in every step of the transition process. Transitional living specialists are responsible for teaching skills and lessons associated with the focal areas and help ensure that youth are capable of accessing community resources such as medical attention, housing, and financial support, if necessary. Transitional living specialists will be available to the youth 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They will also make a minimum of one face-to-face contact per week with the youth. The number of sessions can be increased based on the individual needs of each youth.

The focal areas of the TL program include: permanency, education, employment, housing (through natural supports), basic independent living skills, and youth engagement. To support youth in their transition to adulthood, the program uses evidence-based interventions and best practices with regards to the following areas: trauma, pregnant/parenting youth, substance abuse issues, physical and mental health, domestic violence, financial literacy, and basic independent living skills.

Since the program was created in 1999, it has helped over 7,100 young people build independent and successful lives for themselves. Youth Villages began providing transitional living services in Tennessee over 15 years ago and has been able to effectively replicate the program in numerous locations. Today, the TL program serves nearly 800 young people daily in Tennessee, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida with a success rate of 87%.

### **Partnership with DCS**

For more than 15 years, Youth Villages has been providing comprehensive services to young adults aging out of care and other at-risk youth in Tennessee through its Transitional Living program. In 2007, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services partnered with the Day Foundation and Youth Villages to reach more youth across the state. That public/private partnership was expanded in 2013, when Youth Villages stepped forward and offered to match dollar-for-dollar state funding for services: Youth Village offered to contribute \$3 million in private dollars if the state would match those private dollars, with \$3 million to provide comprehensive services for young people aging out of foster care. New Department Commissioner James Henry readily accepted this offer. This continued partnership provides the opportunity for every youth aging out of care in Tennessee to receive services.

### **Tennessee TL Data (FY 2014)**

- TL serves about 600 youth daily
- 1,356 youth participated in the program
- 75% In school or graduated
- 70% Employed or seeking employment
- 91% Living with family or independently
- 87% No trouble with the law
- 84% completion rate for the National Youth in Transition Database surveys (As of 9/12/14, Youth Villages has successfully administered 643 out of a total of 764 possible surveys)

### **Update on Clinical Trial**

Youth Villages' Transitional Living Program is participating in an independent, random assignment evaluation conducted by MDRC, a non-profit, non-partisan research and policy group that specializes in this type of evaluation. MDRC has an outstanding reputation in the field for methodological rigor and for translation of evaluative findings to policymakers. Dr. Mark Courtney, a researcher with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, leads the study as principal investigator. The study (taking place in Tennessee) includes more than 1,300 youth, making it the largest random assignment evaluation of this type of program for young people in this critical transition phase.

The evaluation will examine the difference that Youth Villages' Transitional Living program makes for youth aging out of care – its impacts on a range of outcomes, including education, employment, mental health, and financial security. It is intended to provide important information for policymakers and practitioners who are interested in improving the lives of these vulnerable young people. The [Implementation Findings from the Evaluation](#) was released earlier this year and YV staff are anxiously awaiting a preliminary draft of the Impact Findings from the TL study, which should be available before the end of the calendar year.

### **TREATMENT AND RECOVERY FOR YOUTH GRANT**

In 2013, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) approached the Chair of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council about the Council supporting an application for a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to deliver treatment and recovery support services to adolescents and transitional aged youth. The Youth Transitions Advisory Council would collaborate with grantees and provide consultation and state-level support.

The grant was awarded in September 2013 in the amount of \$3.8 million over four years until September 29, 2017. The Department contracted with Centerstone Research Institute for data and evaluation and Centerstone of Tennessee and Pathways, Inc. as the service providers to

implement the Treatment and Recovery for Youth (TRY) grant. Two pilot sites were selected. Centerstone of Tennessee is the service provider in Maury County and Pathways Inc. in Madison Counties. The TRY Team has become an integral part of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council. Team members from TDMHSAS, Centerstone and Pathways are always in attendance and are active participants in meetings, providing updates on progress toward grant goals at each Council meeting.

TDMHSAS has chosen to use the evidence based practice Adolescent – Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA) to serve TRY Project enrollees. According to TDMHSAS, A-CRA focuses on replacing substance use behaviors with healthy and positive behaviors and activities. The goal is for the youth to find the healthy and positive behaviors more rewarding and "reinforcing" than their unhealthy substance abusing lifestyle. A-CRA helps youth and their parents identify pro-social activities and services in their community to become involved in and that provide important alternatives to time spent using substances. In addition, A-CRA teaches skills to improve communication, problem solving and the ability to create positive relationships. A-CRA shows several positive outcomes including reduction in substance use, legal involvement, and co-occurring mental health problems. TDMHSAS is in the process of developing a multi-year workforce development training plan that will enhance services delivered by adolescent and transitional youth serving providers across the state. This training is open to TRY staff, TDMHSAS treatment and recovery staff, as well as Statewide System of Care staff. TDMHSAS is working toward providing A-CRA training to all adolescent and transitional aged youth serving agencies in Tennessee.

TRY grant partners have delivered TRY Project and A-CRA informational sessions and trainings to numerous community agencies and programs including Juvenile Courts and public schools in their counties since the grant was implemented. To date over 400 professionals and youth advocates have been educated on the TRY Project and A-CRA.

#### COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

Tennessee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) has been very supportive of the extension of foster care services program from its inception. Tennessee CASA has received a grant to bring the National CASA Fostering Futures curriculum to more local CASA programs across the state. This curriculum focuses on the unique needs of older youth in foster care. The grant funds will be used for the purposes of increasing the number of CASA volunteers trained in the Fostering Futures curriculum and the number of older youth served, ages 14-21. Training more volunteers will lead to an increase in quality advocacy for transitioning youth and a greater number of youth accepting Extension of Foster Care Services. In an effort to effectively launch this project, a "Train the Trainer" event was held for local program staff co-facilitating this curriculum. Michael Leach, Director of Independent Living, also presented at this event and answered questions about Extension Services from staff.

During the Tennessee CASA State Conference on May 2, 2014 several workshops were offered to attendees regarding older youth in foster care.

- “Success Beyond 18: Transitioning Youth to Adulthood” Michael Leach, Director of Independent Living, TN Department of Children’s Services & Ginger Harris, Youth Engagement and Grants Management Lead, TN Department of Children’s Services.
- “Adolescents Under Construction” Julieanna Huddle & Carolyn Evans, CASA Inc. of Davidson County.
- “High Expectations Lead to High Achievement” Tawny Spinelli, Children’s Cabinet Assistant Director, Young Child Wellness Coordinator.

### AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM STUDY TOUR

On June 4 – 6, 2014, the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) provided an opportunity for national and state policy leaders to learn about and see programs and policies in action that are helping youth as they transition from the foster care system to postsecondary education and independent living. The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC, providing learning opportunities for policy leaders, practitioners and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national state, and local levels.

The study tour was conducted in Nashville, bringing advocates from California, Texas, Michigan and North Carolina to Tennessee to share experiences working with transitioning youth. AYPF chose Tennessee as the site of their tour due to the tremendous success of Tennessee’s extension of foster care program. While in Nashville, participants toured Monroe Harding and met several of the youth transitioning in that program. The youth served lunch to the tour members and also gave recitations of poetry they had written. The tour also visited the Nashville Connections Resource Center at its new location on Church Street, meeting with the director, staff, and teacher in their High School Diploma program.

The highlight of the tour occurred the following day, when participants received an overview of the Youth Villages Transitional Living Program and were then included in a “ride along” with Transitional Living Program Counselors as they visited with transitioning youth. Tour members observed the interactions between Counselors and the youth as they discussed their budgets, education issues, daily life and struggles in relationships and employment.

As follow-up to the study tour, AYPF created a resource page on its website to disseminate information from presentations provided during the tour along with other useful tools. That information is available at: <http://www.aypf.org/resources/aypfs-foster-care-trip-to-nashville-tn-june-4th-6th-participant-resources/>.

## **YOUTH TRANSITIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL DATA FROM DCS**

### **1. Strategies to access and track effectiveness of Extension of Foster Care services and the operation of the Resource Centers**

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services provides Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program (CFCILP) services through its Independent Living Program (ILP), and also monitors the provision of Extension of Foster Care (ESC) Services. As a part of the federal mandate, this Division is charged with building a network of appropriate supports and services for youth transitioning out of care and for those who are likely to remain in care. The primary objectives of Tennessee's service network include helping to ensure ongoing connections with caring adults, the development of productive individuals within their communities, the acquisition and maintenance of gainful employment, the achievement of educational/vocational goals, and the availability of financial assistance and skills training for DCS youth and exiting young adults, as well as designing other resources to facilitate the transition to adulthood. Any youth, including those of Native American heritage, who has been, are or were in the custody of DCS and who meet eligibility criteria as outlined in policy, have the opportunity to request and access IL services.

DCS uses Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program funds to staff Independent Living Program Specialists (ILPS) within each region across the state. The DCS ILPS work directly and collaboratively with Family Service Workers (FSW), foster parents, contracted providers and youth. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development and on-going consultation to agency staff, resource parents and youth. Although the primary function of the ILPS is to provide support and technical assistance to staff and resource adults, they also provide direct services and support to youth and young adults through life skills training classes, provisions of the Independent Living Allowance, assistance with financial aid (FAFSA), Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and other scholarship applications, and support and coordination of statewide youth leadership boards (Youth 4 Youth).

#### **Goals for this fiscal year are:**

- Focus on earlier interventions with 14-16 year olds, to promote increased opportunities for life skills development.
- Integrate preparation for adulthood with permanency efforts through improved, quality Transition Planning (File reviews and coaching)
- Statewide youth leadership board: Tennessee Youth Ambassadors (currently under development).

- Youth who are unable to achieve permanency by the age of 18 should be more supportively encouraged to utilize EFC.
- DCS will attempt to contact all young adults who could be eligible for TennCare; DCS has provided and will continue to provide an information sheet provided by TennCare.
- Improve work around LGBT population and immigrant populations.
- IL will improve practices for assisting youth in completion of FAFSA and college applications and pursue more training on services and understanding youth and young adults with Guardian ad Litem.
- Scaling pregnant and parenting best practices learned in the Knox County grant statewide.
- Implement federally mandated credit check procedures and TFACTS processes
- EFCS expansion to include eligibility criteria such as: participating in program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment; or employed for at least eighty (80) hours per month.

The Department of Children’s Services continues to be committed to data-driven decision making. Key goals for the office of Independent Living were developed and adopted by regional DCS staff as part of the Department’s “S.M.A.R.T. Goals” implementation. A workgroup composed of Regional Administrators is currently developing new S.M.A.R.T Goals for Extension of Foster Care Services FSWs, in an effort to reflect more specific tasks/responsibilities in this particular work area. DCS continued to measure specific variables over the past fiscal year, including completion of life skills assessments and transitional surveys, and, ongoing work to identify uptake rates for Extension of Foster Care Services. The measures related to completion of life skills assessments are displayed below, and identification of Extension of Foster Care Services uptake rates is described in a subsequent section. The Transitional Survey functions in TFACTS were overhauled for the custody age 17-19 and Extension of Foster Care versions, creating options that are more streamlined, easier for staff to complete, and better designed to capture the most relevant data. Data on Transitional Survey completion (custody age 17-19 version) is added as a new section, below. The ability to accurately capture monthly face-to-face contact with the EFCS population is still not available, as it is not only dependent upon implementation of the “Fostering Connections” functionality enhancements, but also a case assignment redesign in TFACTS. A new strategy will offer the opportunity to review the EFCS lengths of stay (LOS), work to increase LOS over time, and monitor completion of secondary and post-secondary education, as demonstrated in section 4.

## **Transitional Survey Custody Age 17-19 Monitoring:**

Completion rate for April, May and June 2014 is 78%.

Brian A. outcomes for April, May and June 2014 on approved surveys is 84%. Measures the following outcomes -

- earned a GED, or
- graduated from high school, or
- enrolled in high school, or
- enrolled in college, or
- alternative approved educational program for special needs children, or
- currently enrolled in vocational training, or
- employed full time.

DCS now receive reports to help to increase completion percentages, and increase compliance with Brian A. outcomes standards.

Tennessee Department of Children's Services policy requires that a Life Skills Assessment be administered annually with all youth in state's custody ages 14 potentially to 19 years of age, regardless of adjudication or placement status. Tennessee DCS continues to recommend the Casey Life Skills Assessment, to include the associated life skills training resources available. In order to more accurately determine compliance this year, the data analyzed was focused on all youth age 14 and up who entered Tennessee DCS custody between July 1, 2013 to April 30, 2014, who had a life skills assessment recorded in TFACTS during the same time frame. Life Skills Assessment outcome measures for the reporting period July 1, 2013 to April 30, 2014 are as follows:

- Total # age 14 up entered Tennessee DCS custody between July 1, 2013 to April 30, 2014: 2152
- Total Life Skills Assessments Recorded in TFACTS: 1102
- Approved Life Skills Assessments Recorded in TFACTS: 980
- In Progress or Pending Approval Life Skills Assessments Recorded in TFACTS: 122
- This demonstrates that 46% of youth who required a life skills assessment had one recorded and approved in the SACWIS.

## **2. Strategies for maintaining accurate numbers of young adults served by Extension of Foster Care**

In addition to using TFACTS data, Independent Living Program Specialists maintain data that demonstrates overall provision of Extension of Foster care services via a monthly report that is submitted to Central Office. This report includes certain identifying information on the clients and dates of service. The monthly reports are compiled upon the conclusion of each fiscal year to

produce each year’s data. Data reported for youth in custody is derived from TFACTS system records. A significant effort to increase the capacity to derive data from TFACTS was the “Fostering Connections” enhancement project. This functionality enhancement, which was implemented in October 2013 along with a conversion of data, now allows the creation of system records that accurately establish programmatic and IV-E eligibility for the Extension of Foster Care population, and streamlines the way services are provided to the young adults. These enhancements will ultimately eliminate the need for staff to track data manually (this report is still under development), allows the Department to claim IV-E reimbursement, and ensures greater fiscal internal controls. These enhancements also included fixes to TFACTS functionality related to establishing subsidy records, and the capability to accurately claim IV-E reimbursement for eligible adopted youth and youth who exited custody to subsidized permanent guardianship. Note: A set of data related to length of stay in Extension of Foster Care Services is included in this year’s report, in Section 4.

**3. The number of services provided by the Department of Children’s Services;**

**Services Available to Youth in State Custody  
and Those Who Receive Extension of Foster Care Services**

1	Post Secondary Application Fees
2	Testing Fees (SAT, ACT, GED)
3	Tutoring
4	Summer School
5	Independent Living Class Stipend (to Support Life Skills Instruction)
6	Graduation Package
7	Yearbooks
8	Membership/Activity Fees for Extracurricular or Leadership Activities
9	Senior Event Related Transportation
10	Honor/Senior Class Trip (School Related Activity)
11	Housing Application/Fees for Post Custody
12	Materials/Uniforms for Vocational Studies
13	Completion of Job Readiness Training
14	Job Start-up Costs
15	Driver’s Education Class Fees
16	Driver’s Testing Fees
17	Car Insurance
18	Transportation Grant
19	Car Repairs
20	Housing Related Fees
21	Tools/Equipment (Technical/Vocational Programs)
22	Other Special Needs Unique to Youth Services

23	Child Care Assistance
24	Youth Leadership Stipend
25	Independent Living Allowance
26	Educational and Training Voucher (Scholarship)
27	Bright Futures (State Funded) Scholarship
28	Youth Villages Transitional Living
29	Opportunity Passport™ (per the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative) - Provided Via the Resource Centers
30	Placement Services
31	Case Management

**4. The number of young adults who received these services during Fiscal Year 2013-14 and length of stay in EFCS**

DCS provides youth aging out of state custody services through multiple sources. This is based on their eligibility, and services are provided by DCS as well as through DCS contracts with private providers and community agencies.

Services Provided:

- Transitional Living: 767 Individuals/773 Episodes
- Resource Centers: 112 New Youth Served
- Extension of Foster Care Services: 623 Individuals/646 EFCS Episodes
- Scholarship Only: Not Currently Available

*Sources: Grantee Reports, Independent Living Monthly Report, Independent Living Scholarship Report*

**FY 14 EFCS Retention: Days in EFCS**

Region	Mean (Days)	Median (Days)	Mode (Days)
Northwest	193	143	55
Southwest	298	227	1096
Shelby	292	213	90
Davidson	196	141	48
Mid Cumberland	213	204	310
South Central	226	137	15
Upper Cumberland	247	163	189
Northeast	185	152	31
Knox	234	147	N/A
East	195	121	37
Smoky Mtn	209	140	128
TN Valley	225	150	150
<b>Total (Days)</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>1096</b>

**5. Reasons why youth do not accept these services;**

The Tennessee DCS Independent Living Youth Engagement Lead position started in FY 2014. The Youth Engagement Lead was tasked with contacting aged- out youth who did not accept services. Youth Engagement Lead attempted to make contact with 366 young adults. The main reasons young people gave for not accepting EFCS were as follows:

1. Wanting to work instead of attend a post secondary program.
2. Undecided about future plans.
3. Did not want to be involved with DCS.

The Youth Engagement Lead also made:

- 38 referrals to Youth Villages Transitional Living program.
- 11 referrals for EFCS.
- 6 housing and other community referrals

Six young adults were referred to us by homeless shelters to assist with improving circumstances. The Youth Engagement Lead reached out to homeless shelters across the state. The Youth Engagement Lead will continue to respond to all calls/emails coming in from the community that are routed to the Office of Independent Living, from youth, young adults and other stakeholders, to assist youth and young adults with any needed resources. This role will expand outreach efforts to young adults who may be eligible for TennCare through the ACA due to aging out of foster care.

An Extension of Foster Care Exit Survey, which is administered to young adults exiting EFCS, is also yielding useful information. DCS just started capturing this data and has an N-16 since March of 2014; below are a few examples of the responses.

**Were you provided assistance with researching school, applying for scholarships, or other tasks related to plans for education?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Strongly Agree	66.7%	10
Agree	20.0%	3
Don't Know	13.3%	2
Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>15</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

**Did you have a clear understanding of the next steps listed in your transition plan?**

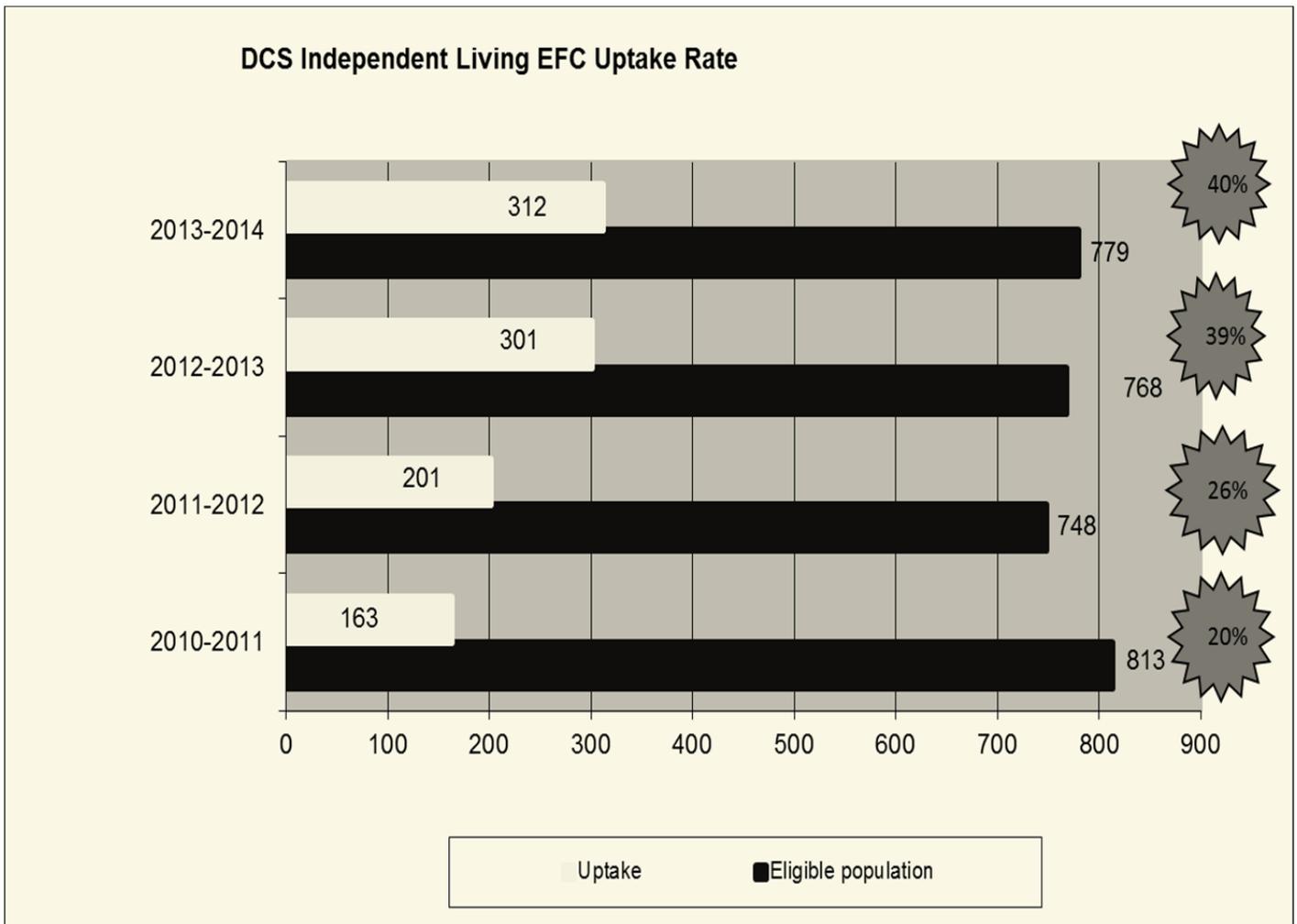
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Strongly Agree	60.0%	9
Agree	40.0%	6
Don't Know	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>15</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

**Do you feel that you received quality case management services during your time in foster care?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Strongly Agree	53.3%	8
Agree	33.3%	5
Don't Know	13.3%	2
Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>15</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

One specific group that continues to be less likely to accept Extension of Foster Care services is young people who are adjudicated delinquent. Of the total youth who aged out eligible for Extension of Foster Care Services during FY 2014, 7% of eligible juvenile justice youth accepted Extension of Foster Care Services, compared to 40% of dependent/neglected youth. IL did see a 4% increase, but more can be done.

The following displays the Post Custody/Extension of Foster Care uptake rate for prior years:



TN DCS IL met with the regional IL Coordinators to provide ongoing regional training for staff working with youth adjudicated delinquent. In the previous report, input from the youth was gathered by these regional staff. There were three issues identified among youth from the juvenile justice system: 1) They were more likely to view custody as punitive and therefore less likely to want voluntary services, 2) Unlike many dependent/neglected youth, many of these young people had families to return to as adults, and 3) Some “myths” around eligibility for youth who are in the juvenile justice system continue to exist among staff. To address this, specific training was delivered to juvenile justice and youth development center staff. Per their request, handouts specific to the eligibility of juvenile justice youth were developed and disseminated.

Identifying better ways to serve young people adjudicated delinquent and placed at the Youth Development Centers is another opportunity. Establishing YDC step-down options is part of this

effort, which will provide more opportunities to serve such youth in EFCS and with Chafee funded services. DCS put out RFP for step-down placements for this population, for example.

**6. The number of youth who exited state custody and received scholarship assistance from DCS to continue into post-secondary educational programs during FY 2012-13:**

401 Total Scholarships (some youth received both over time): ETV: 262, State Scholarship: 139

*Source: Independent Living Scholarship Report*

**7. Number of children in state custody during FY 2013-14**

<b>Number of Children by Demographics</b>		<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,249</b>
<b>Adjudication</b>		
Dependent/Neglect		11335
Delinquent		2525
Unruly		249
Unknown/Missing		140
<b>Gender</b>		
Male		8129
Female		6120
<b>Age Range</b>		
0-12		7921
13-19		6328
<b>Race</b>		
White		9972
Black/African American		3455
American Indian/Alaska Native		25
Asian		24
Multi-Racial		661
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		19
Unable to Determine		38
Unknown/Missing		55

Number of Children by Adjudication, Gender and Age Group							
	Total	Female			Male		
		0-12 years	13-19 years	Total	0-12 years	13-19 years	Total
Dependent/Neglect	11335	3683	1797	5480	4121	1734	5855
Delinquent	2525	3	450	453	13	2059	2072
Unruly	249	2	112	114	9	126	135
Unknown/Missing	140	51	22	73	39	28	67
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>14249</b>	<b>3739</b>	<b>2381</b>	<b>6120</b>	<b>4182</b>	<b>3947</b>	<b>8129</b>

**Number of Children by Region and Age Range**

Assignment Region	Total	0-12 years	13-19 years
Davidson	921	402	519
East Tennessee	1014	629	385
Knox	1206	869	337
Mid Cumberland	1585	791	794
Northeast	1312	793	519
Northwest	759	423	336
Shelby	1666	826	840
Smoky Mountain	1405	853	552
South Central	881	349	532
Southwest	716	353	363
Tennessee Valley	1352	723	629
Upper Cumberland	1400	890	510
Missing	32	20	12
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>14249</b>	<b>7921</b>	<b>6328</b>

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

**8. Number of EFCS young adults served FY 2014 broken down by adjudication, gender, race/ethnicity, region/county;**

**Total Served: 623**

**Adjudication:**

- Dependent/Neglected: **508**
- Unruly: **23**
- Delinquent: **91**
- Exited Custody via Interstate Compact: **1**

**Gender:**

- Female: **339**
- Male: **284**

**Race/Ethnicity:**

- American Indian/Alaska Native: **7**
- Asian: **1**
- Black/African American: **213**
- White: **392**
- Unable to Determine: **10**
- Additional Hispanic/Latino Designation: **39**

**By Region:**

Northwest	44
Southwest	40
Shelby	87
Davidson	45
Mid Cumberland	72
South Central	55
Upper Cumberland	52
Northeast	41
East	42
Smoky Mountain	51
Tennessee Valley	52
Knox	42

**By County:**

<b>County</b>	<b>Number of EFCS Episodes</b>	<b>Number of Young Adults Served</b>
Anderson	10	10
Bedford	2	2
Benton	4	3
Blount	24	23
Bradley	14	14
Campbell	5	4
Carroll	1	1
Cheatham	1	1
Chester	1	1
Claiborne	8	8
Clay	1	1

Cocke	6	6
Coffee	6	6
Cumberland	10	10
Davidson	44	43
Dekalb	1	1
Dickson	10	10
Dyer	7	6
Fayette	2	2
Fentress	4	4
Franklin	9	9
Gibson	10	9
Giles	7	7
Greene	8	7
Hamblen	2	2
Hamilton	19	18
Hardeman	3	3
Hardin	6	4
Hawkins	7	7
Haywood	3	3
Henderson	3	3
Henry	6	6
Houston	1	1
Humphreys	3	2
Jackson	3	3
Jefferson	6	6
Johnson	1	1
Knox	40	40
Lauderdale	3	3
Lawrence	10	10
Lincoln	5	5
Loudon	6	6
Macon	6	6
Madison	15	15
Marion	2	2
Marshall	2	2
Maury	13	13
McMinn	11	10
McNairy	1	1
Meigs	2	2

Monroe	6	6
Montgomery	23	21
Morgan	4	4
Obion	1	1
Overton	3	3
Polk	2	2
Putnam	12	12
Rhea	4	2
Roane	8	7
Robertson	3	3
Rutherford	25	23
Scott	4	4
Sequatchie	1	1
Sevier	8	8
Shelby	88	87
Smith	2	2
State of WI	1	1
Stewart	2	2
Sullivan	6	6
Sumner	7	6
Tipton	3	3
Unicoi	9	8
Union	1	1
Van Buren	1	1
Warren	8	8
Washington	12	12
Wayne	4	4
Weakley	3	3
White	2	2
Williamson	9	9
Wilson	10	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>623</b>

*Source: Independent Living Monthly Report*

**9. The following describes the number of youth who received independent living wraparound services FY 2014.**

**Independent Living Wraparound Services Custodial Population 2012-14:**

Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2012-13	Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2013-14	Total Youth Served 2012-13	Total Youth Served 2013-14	Total Expenditure 2012-13	Total Expenditure 2013-14
257	399	166	234	\$34,759.35	\$46,342.82

Service	Intances of Service Provided 2012-13	Instances of Service Provided 2013-14	Youth Served 2012-13	Youth Served 2013-14	Expenditure 2012-13	Expenditure 2013-14
Drivers Education	15	29	15	28	\$5,040.00	\$9,684.00
Drivers Testing Fees	1	1	1	1	\$23.00	\$20.00
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/Membership Fees	11	6	9	6	\$2,567.92	\$321.00
Good Grades Incentive	17	65	16	58	\$683.00	\$2,540.00
Graduation Package	106	144	80	99	\$18,120.44	\$21,234.34
Honor/Senior Class Trip	2	7	2	7	\$290.00	\$871.00
Housing Application Fees (Post Secondary)	7	12	7	12	\$1,468.00	\$2,350.00
IL Class Stipend	6	1	6	1	\$175.00	\$50.00
Materials for Vocational Studies	0	3	0	2	\$0.00	\$445.92
Other Special Needs	0	19	0	16	\$0.00	\$3,240.06
Post Secondary Application/Registration Fees	38	47	28	37	\$2,852.50	\$1,545.00
Senior Event Transportation	1	1	1	1	\$10.00	\$20.00
Educational Fees	1	2	1	2	\$100.00	\$390.00
Testing fees (GED, SAT, ACT)	24	30	22	23	\$1,268.00	\$1,380.50
Tutoring	4	5	2	3	\$1,035.00	\$390.00
Yearbooks	13	27	13	27	\$776.49	\$1,861.00
Youth Leadership Stipend	11	0	11	0	\$350.00	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	257	399	*166	*234	<b>\$34,759.35</b>	<b>\$46,342.82</b>
*These are not sums, they are totals						

**Independent Living Wraparound Services Extension of Foster Care Population 2012-14:**

Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2012-13	Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2013-14	Total Youth Served 2012-13	Total Youth Served 2013-14	Total Expenditure 2012-13	Total Expenditure 2013-14
256	257	133	145	\$37,245.14	\$34,733.03

Service	Intances of Service Provided 2012-13	Instances of Service Provided 2013-14	Youth Served 2012-13	Youth Served 2013-14	Expenditure 2012-13	Expenditure 2013-14
Auto Insurance	9	11	6	10	\$2,948.00	\$3,300.00
Drivers Education	28	11	23	11	\$9,440.00	\$3,695.00
Drivers Testing Fees	1	0	1	0	\$23.00	\$0.00
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/Membership Fees	1	4	1	4	\$400.00	\$191.00
Good Grades Incentive	7	1	6	1	\$240.00	\$30.00
Graduation Package	69	78	48	59	\$9,102.40	\$11,349.34
Honor/Senior Class Trip	5	10	5	10	\$795.00	\$1,360.00
Household Furnishings	1	0	1	0	\$896.00	\$0.00
Housing Application Fees (Post Secondary)	9	18	8	17	\$1,015.00	\$2,875.00
IL Class Stipend	5	1	5	1	\$125.00	\$50.00
Materials for Vocational Studies	1	0	1	0	\$75.00	\$0.00
Non Recurring Housing Start Up	22	9	11	7	\$4,524.49	\$3,294.00
Other Special Needs	7	9	5	8	\$1,945.00	\$1,165.74
Post Secondary Application/Registration Fees	12	30	10	21	\$395.00	\$1,370.00
Senior Event Transportation	3	3	3	3	\$60.00	\$75.00
Educational Fees	0	2	0	2	\$0.00	\$660.00
Testing fees (GED, SAT, ACT)	12	16	11	13	\$649.50	\$1,311.50
Transportation Grant	21	19	11	15	\$990.50	\$902.40
Tutoring	0	2	0	1	\$0.00	\$500.00
Vehicle Repairs	6	3	4	3	\$1,970.31	\$1,105.05
Yearbooks	14	14	11	14	\$860.94	\$899.00
Youth Leadership Stipend	23	16	22	12	\$790.00	\$600.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>133*</b>	<b>145*</b>	<b>\$37,245.14</b>	<b>\$34,733.03</b>
<b>*These are not sums, they are totals</b>						

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

In an effort to identify life skills development opportunities for youth 14 and older provided outside of DCS service delivery, a Resource Parent survey was developed and administered to an N-85. This was intended to understand what work resource parents are doing with youth residing in their homes. One area of opportunity identified was to increase awareness and options for youth regarding transportation and driving (ability to practice driving, obtain a driver's license, etc.) Resource parents teach less and are less comfortable with this area of life skills development. The results of the survey are as follows:

I taught the youth I fostered the following Home Care life skills while they were living in my home:

Answer Options	Yes	No	Youth already knew this skill when they entered my home	Response Count
Shopping for food	75	6	1	82
Cooking meals	71	4	9	84
Cleaning (sweep/mop/remove trash)	71	2	10	83
Washing dishes	68	2	13	83
Washing and drying clothes	62	10	10	82
Dealing with minor injuries	56	16	10	82
Health care/oral care	69	3	10	82
Mowing a lawn	43	34	3	80
			<i>answered question</i>	<b>85</b>
			<i>skipped question</i>	<b>0</b>

I taught the youth I fostered the following Transportation life skills while they were living in my home:

Answer Options	Yes	No	Youth already knew this skill when they entered my home	Response Count
Driving a car	26	48	5	79
Getting a driver's license	29	47	3	79
Purchasing a car	16	59	0	75
Getting gas for a car	46	27	4	77
Changing a tire	25	50	1	76
Getting an oil change	29	47	1	77
Using public transportation	20	48	7	75
			<i>answered question</i>	<b>80</b>
			<i>skipped question</i>	<b>5</b>

I taught the youth I fostered the following Finance life skills while they were living in my home:

Answer Options	Yes	No	Youth already knew this skill when they entered my home	Response Count
Making a budget	50	24	5	79
Using a debit card	37	36	4	77
Using a bank/ saving/credit accounts	41	34	3	78
Saving money	71	8	2	81
Avoiding debt	55	20	2	77
Learning credit score	21	54	1	76
Filing taxes	13	59	3	75
			<i>answered question</i>	<b>83</b>
			<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

### 10. Number of youth who decline continuation of foster care services and the reasons given for declining the services

During FY 2014, 40% of the total, eligible aged-out population of youth accepted Extension of Foster Care services; 31% of dependent/neglected youth, 2% of unruly youth and 7% of eligible juvenile justice youth accepted Extension of Foster Care Services.

*Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS and Independent Living Monthly Report*

Reasons for declining voluntary services: see question 5.

### 11. Number of young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services who were in foster care placement, supervised independent living arrangements and other placement arrangements

- # in Foster Care Placements at some point during FY 2013-14: **254**
- # who received the Independent Living Allowance during FY 2013-14: **374**

*Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – Independent Living Monthly Report,*

The Department of Children's Services continues to be focused heavily on implementation of the federal Fostering Connections Act and Tennessee's Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act. The Department focused heavily on training efforts, increased outreach to young people, youth engagement to improve practice, increased services (paid and non-paid life skills development), increasing housing opportunities, and overcoming barriers to serving special populations.

The Office of Independent Living continued to provide training, as follows:

Training Group	Number of Participants Trained
DCS Staff	880
Provider Agency	66
Foster Parents	85
Court Affiliated	23
Mixed Group	1364
Total	2418

The Department of Children’s Services coordinated Youth Leadership Academies and Youth 4 Youth Board meetings in collaboration with community based partners in all three Grand Regions.

- East – 11 meetings, 202 total attendance, 17 average attendance
- Middle – 1 meeting, 8 total attendance
- West – 11 meetings, 161 total attendance, 12 average attendance

The Department of Children’s Services is implementing two grants to improve services to pregnant and parenting youth in foster care. One grant, the Federal Personal Responsibility Education Program, has been used to implement the evidence based pregnancy prevention Teen Outreach Program® in selected congregate care settings and the initial results are promising. DCS has expanded the grant to utilize the Sisters Saving Sisters Curriculum. Monroe Harding supports Sisters Saving Sisters, a skill-based program designed to reduce the risk of unprotected sexual intercourse among sexually experienced Latino and black adolescent females. The program provides culturally and developmentally-appropriate small group sessions that focus on HIV and sexually transmitted disease (STD) risk reduction. The Center for the Study of Social Policy awarded Tennessee a grant to target the unique needs of pregnant and parenting youth in foster care in Knox County. This grant ended in 2014, but DCS will review best practices in this region and work with other DCS regions to ensure DCS is meeting the needs of this population.

Over the last 10 years, Tennessee enacted foster care reforms that have resulted, among other things, in a reduction in its reliance on congregate care. However, at times, abused, neglected or delinquent youth need residential treatment. An innovative public-private partnership, the Youth Development Learning Collaborative, is improving residential care providers’ ability to provide the supports, opportunities and adult relationships that promote optimal growth and development.

Beginning in early 2012, the TN Department of Children’s Services, the University Of Tennessee Center Of Excellence for Children in State Custody and Oasis Center launched the Youth Development Learning Collaboratives to disseminate Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program (TOP®) to Level 2 and 3 congregate care facilities in Tennessee. TOP® is an evidence-based

youth development approach designed to help adolescents develop life skills, healthy behaviors and a sense of purpose. Key elements of TOP® include:

- Twice weekly curriculum-guided discussion groups that are active and engaging and in which youth do most of the talking.
- A significant amount of time spent in youth-driven community service learning projects, at least 20 hours in a four month period.
- Caring adult staff who believe in youth and help them build on their strengths.

TOP® has proven effective in increasing graduation rates and reducing teen pregnancies and other negative behaviors among program participants. Furthermore, TOP® helps congregate care providers “normalize” their settings by engaging youth in experiential learning, healthy risk-taking and everyday activities that promote growth and development. TOP® provides youth with experiences, not explanations. From March 2012 to April 2014, more than 1,300 youth residing in Tennessee congregate care homes participated in TOP®, contributing nearly 12,000 hours of service to Tennessee communities. TOP® youth have:

- Held bake sales and car washes to raise money for animal shelters in Upper Cumberland;
- Knitted soft caps for children in Knoxville who have lost their hair due to chemotherapy;
- Made blankets for a homeless women’s drop-in center in Upper East Tennessee;
- Helped build homes with Habitat for Humanity in Crossville;

Preliminary data and anecdotal reports indicate implementation of TOP® is helping providers meet key outcomes for youth, i.e., reduction of days in congregate care, increases in permanent exits from care, and reduction of reentries into care.

Tennessee providers currently implementing TOP®: Florence Crittenton Agency, Group Effort, Holston Home, Madison Oaks Academy, Monroe Harding, OmniVisions, Porter-Leath, UCHRA and Youth Villages (Nashville). By fall 2016 it is projected that more than 4,000 youth will have been engaged in TOP®.

DCS conducted 3 youth panels that spoke to over 100 participants. Commissioner Henry met with youth at a DCS Children’s Forum, and youth who are receiving Transitional Living Services and who are also participating in the YV Scholars Program (a Youth Villages’ program where young people participating in Transitional Living are awarded college scholarships, provided they maintain academic and community service requirements).

The Performance Accountability Review (PAR) Unit is utilizing a review tool to evaluate private providers to better assess whether independent living and transition planning goals from the youth’s permanency plan are incorporated into the youth’s individual treatment plans. The office of Independent Living is reviewing PAR reports to determine whether agencies need additional technical assistance in the areas of planning for our youth. Provider agencies are scored and

offered assistance if scores are below a certain threshold. The Well-Being Domain of the PAR report includes the “Health Services Provision,” “Independent Living,” and “Transitional Living” indicators. “Independent Living” and “Transitional Living” is monitored for treatment services to address assessed needs for age appropriate youth. This review helps Independent Living pursue ongoing improvement efforts with provider agencies and ensure youth with identified needs and strengths are getting activities associated with life skills development and preparation for adulthood.

### **Opportunities:**

One of the biggest challenges for the Department of Children’s Services continues to be transitioning those youth with serious special needs. New policy provides an opportunity to continue services to these youth and bridge them to appropriate adult services during a critical time period. While this option is available, it is voluntary, and many young people most in need of the services do not wish to accept them. DCS is implementing a centralized review and monitoring process for these young adults and is strengthening partnerships with key agencies through entities such as the Youth Transitions Advisory Council, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Improving the transition of youth with serious special needs will take ongoing collaboration between multiple state agencies and community-based partners. Additionally, while there are some excellent services for some of the state’s more complex youth, there are fewer developmentally appropriate services available for those young adults with a borderline IQ or certain mental health diagnoses. In some instances, youth have particular needs that are going unaddressed due to gaps in the array of services and housing.

Another opportunity is increasing access to housing for young adults receiving EFCS. Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (THDA) has provided information on grants and their web-based housing search. Current DCS providers are developing unique approaches to make housing available as well, and applying for local housing authority funding.

DCS will continue to partner with TennCare/Blue Care to develop training information and webinars to primarily inform mental health providers, providers who work with TennCare, advocacy groups and other stakeholders external to DCS about former foster youth being eligible for TennCare up to age 26 under the Affordable Care Act.

### **Other accomplishments**

- Terminology in statute has been changed: Post Custody to Extension of Foster Care Services
- Over the last 5 years, DCS has been able to continue funding for the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and Opportunity Passport™, administered by three resource

centers located in Knoxville, Nashville and Memphis, and have expanded to a fourth site in Chattanooga that opened in June, 2014 called I.A.M Ready Chattanooga through Partnership for Families, Children and Adults.

- DCS IL was able to secure funding to continue and expand the Youth Villages contract that makes Transitional Living Services available to all eligible youth 17 years of age or older while in custody, and young adults that are exiting the system.
- In 2014, DCS IL was able to secure free state photo ID's for all youth through the Department of Safety's Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Continued partnerships with CASA, Tennessee Foster and Adoptive Care Association, the Tennessee Alliance for Children and Families, and DCS Performance-Based Contract Providers to ensure our youth's needs are being met.
- DCS continues to be monitored by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) and Youth Transitions Advisory Council (YTAC). This group is statutorily mandated to review the practices of DCS IL around transition aged youth, and provide recommendations to the Tennessee legislature.
- Utilized internal review tools to evaluate the quality of independent living and transition plans and services.
  - Piloted two Extension of Foster Care Services Quality Service Reviews in the Northwest region. Feedback stated that the region did exceptionally well.
- Implemented significant enhancements to Tennessee's SACWIS, the Tennessee Family and Child Tracking System (TFACTS), to allow for the accurate establishment of Extension of Foster Care records. This included the ability to conduct IV-E eligibility and reimbursability determinations for this population. As a result, the state was able to retro-claim \$1,639,302 in federal reimbursement during FY 14 for Extension of Foster Care Services. The state was also able to claim \$1,770,855 related to Adoption Assistance subsidies for youth over the age of 18.
- DCS IL continued to administer training to educate DCS staff, providers, other partners, and the public regarding quality Independent Living and Transition Planning, and Extension of Foster Care Services.
- Updated the Resource Parent Handbook to include current information on Independent Living and Extension of Foster Care Services.
- Updating the Tennessee Youth Handbook to include current information on Independent Living and Extension of Foster Care Services.

- Updated the Tennessee Office of Independent Living website, providing easy access to relevant policies, manuals and protocols, training materials, and resources.
- Continued to promote educational opportunities for youth in custody, and those who leave custody at an older age. During FY 2014, approximately 389 youth in custody obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, 126 young adults receiving EFCS obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, and 9 young adults completed post-secondary educational goals.
- Continued working with colleges and universities to develop support services for former foster youth. This included successfully moving 5 young adults up the waiting list to attend Tennessee College for Applied Technology programs.
- Enhanced the Transitional Survey for youth exiting custody between 17-19 years of age, making it streamlined and easier for DCS staff to complete.
- Developed an extended Exit Survey for youth leaving voluntary extension of foster care services to better understand what DCS can continue to do with Extension of Foster Care.
- Improvements to the programmatic and technical procedures that query and identify youth in the National Youth in Transition Database populations resulted in compliant file submissions since 2011B. This includes the 2013A and 2013B submissions containing Follow Up Age 19 survey data, which was accomplished by the means stated above and also with the assistance of contracted providers locating youth and administering surveys.
- Continued to meet with different housing programs and current providers of housing to discuss expansion, focused on laws and programs that target housing issues facing youth aging out.
- The Office of IL continues to strive towards analyzing data to verify and measure the effectiveness of services to help DCS IL make informed policy and practice decisions, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for the youth and young adults we serve.
  - Increased use of IL Wraparound services to youth 14-16 years of age, to support developmentally appropriate, normalizing experiences.
  - Increased EFCS provision, including for the adjudicated delinquent population.
  - Separated IL wrap-around extracurricular activities from Educational programs, to allow more use.
  - Expanded PREP Teen Outreach Program to YV, Holston, additional Omni congregate care, and soon to G4S.
  - Guide to Being a Teenager in Care-Developed and will be disseminated.

- Resource Parent “Teachable Moments” training has been developed and was piloted at the annual resource parent conference in September 2014.
- Commissioner/Youth Villages youth meeting and three Children's Panels.
- Development of youth friendly website.
- Delivered three DCS statewide webinars on Youth Engagement, Positive Youth Development and LGBTQ youth.
- In December 2013, DCS Collaborated with Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, The National Resource Center for Youth Development, provider partners, and youth to discuss planning and goals for Independent Living. Topics included increased youth engagement, older youth connection with kin/relatives, research of youth-centered models for CFTMs, permanency roundtables, and IL skill development work with foster parents. A draft action plan was created and is being followed to improve practice in these areas. Tennessee DCS IL and the Office of Permanency is working this plan. A few goals were also identified to be accomplished in 2014-2015. These are contacting aged-out youth to ensure they are aware of services, to include the ACA, technical assistance with providers, increased work around normalcy and engagement of youth with extenuating circumstances (special needs).
- Youth-developed “Youth Engagement tools.”
- Twenty-three young people with intellectual disabilities were successfully transitioned from DCS to DIDD funded residential services during FY 2014. These services include supported living, residential habilitation, or family model.

*“I wish I had the advantage of a peer advocate when I was still dealing with the courts and especially when exiting custody because I think it’s beneficial to have someone who relates to the youth to help them advocate for themselves and make sure they are heard and no need goes unheard.” Taahira.*

*“Extension of foster care has helped me in school in different ways. When I graduated from high school I did not have anywhere to go for the summer before I moved on campus. My resource parent suggested I live with her which really helped out a lot. She helped me shop for stuff for school and my dorm. My resource parent was lovely as well as my case worker and counselor.” Ashley*

**APPENDIX A**  
**RESOURCE CENTERS**

*“To me EFCS was a way to help me get onto my feet and have the extra income and motivation to make sure I could attend school. Going to a community college you don't get to live on campus so the IL allowance helped with that and then just having the extra push coming from the IL staff even when I was ready to give in and burn the bridge I had that push of well if you burn this bridge then this other bridge may be burnt as well, so think twice about it.”~Tim*

## YOUTH TRANSITION ADVISORY COUNCIL RESOURCE CENTERS REPORTS

### Monroe Harding Nashville Connections

- **History**

Monroe Harding (MH) was established in 1893 to provide a home for orphaned children. Throughout the years, it has served over 15,000 youth and today continues to provide services for youth and their families throughout middle Tennessee. Monroe Harding's mission is to guide and support the most vulnerable children and youth across a bridge to personal independence and success within a safe and nurturing environment. Monroe Harding provides both residential and non-residential programs. The residential program provides a home for at-risk youth who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect and behavioral problems. The non-residential programs are: Project SHARE, which matches at-risk elementary students with adult mentors; Independent Living, which provides a safe place for youth to live as they transition out of care into the community; and Youth Connections, which is a one-stop shop resource center for young people ages 16-26 who are currently in, or aging out of, the foster care system.

- **Core Services**

Youth Connections has been in existence for almost eight years and has focused on quality performance since inception. The center provides an assortment of services focused on empowering youth through their transition out of care. Youth Connections houses five major programs: Opportunity Passport™ financial management, life skills, Stepping Stones employment training, GED education, and an in-house thrift store specifically for foster youth. Through our programs and staff relations, we encourage personal stability and a healthy transition into adulthood for all young adults involved in Youth Connections.

- **Local Partnerships**

Youth Connections continues to partner with the Department of Children's Services and US Bank.

Through our Stepping Stones program, MH partners with several local businesses and organizations such as Crossroads Pet Shop and Adopt, Essex Bargain Hunt Stores, and The Shop Barber and Hair Salon. These businesses have agreed to provide employment opportunities or vocational training to prepare young people for the workforce.

Youth Connections informally collaborates with Oasis Center, Y-Build, Job Corp, United Neighborhood Health Care, Goodwill Career Solutions, Youth Villages and the

Community Advisory Board to provide services to youth who do not meet the criteria to be in DCS custody. This group of young people can receive various services through the aforementioned agencies, such as referrals to community resources, financial assistance, counseling, and mentoring.

- **Successes**

Since Youth Connections has been in existence, over 100 young people have obtained their GED through their participation in the GED classes, and 80% of Stepping Stones participants have obtained employment with assistance of the vocation coordinator. Also, in addition to young people learning sound financial management and the importance of saving, numerous youth have matched their savings through Opportunity Passport™ to purchase assets such as transportation, laptops for school, and investment in a Roth IRA.

S.H.E. (Sexual Health Education), which has been in existence for only a year, has so far educated over 30 young women on how to change their behavior to avoid contracting HIV and STDs and to significantly decrease their chances of being involved in unintended pregnancies.

Youth Connections recently moved to downtown Nashville and is now located on the third floor of McKendree United Methodist Church. This location places the center in the heart of the city and makes it more accessible to program participants. The center is also in close proximity to many of its community partners, including the Department of Children's Services, and also closer to many resources such as the Nashville Public Library.

- **Challenges and Barriers**

Many of the young people who come to Youth Connections for services lack support systems that can assist them with navigating the challenging period of transitioning into adulthood. They are often unemployed, lack transportation, are dealing with current and past abuse (emotional, physical and sexual), have had insufficient future planning and are sometimes homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Many of these presenting issues make it difficult for the young people to remain focused on following through with completing the goals that they have set for themselves.

- **Next Steps**

Monroe Harding is committed to serving more youth and achieving better outcomes. The organization continues to assess its programs and make changes and improvements where needed. Youth Connections will continue with the current programming and strive to reach additional young people, strengthening the manner in which we use the youth voice to improve our services.

## Nashville Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update  
 Report Completed by: Pamela Cash

	Previous Year	Year to Date
<b>Opportunity Passport™</b>		
Number of new youth enrolled	44	40
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered	11	12
# of Asset Specific Classes offered	21	22
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome	95%	97%
<b>OPPS Surveys</b>		
(April & October only), % of youth completing an OPPS survey		62%
<b>Community Partnership Boards</b>		
Number of board meetings	0	1
Number of new door openers created	5	6
<b>Life Skills Classes</b>		
Number of life skills classes held	21	22
Total number of participants in life skills classes	165	224
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	100%	100%
<b>Youth Leadership &amp; Engagement</b>		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	9	8

*“I have a lot of dreams and things I want to do. Natalie reins me in and helps me prioritize and focus. I know I’m going to see her every week and I count on that. I wish I would have known about TL earlier, but I’m thankful for it. I believe so much in Youth Villages.”*

*Jennessa*

## **Partnership I.A.M Ready Chattanooga Independent Living Resource Center**

- **History**

The Partnership for Families, Children and Adults (Partnership) has provided services to at-risk youth through various programs since its establishment in 1877. Agency-wide services include foster and adoptive services for dependent, neglected, homeless and runaway youth; family and individual counseling; independent living services; and sexual assault and domestic violence services. The Partnership served over 75,000 Families in 2013.

Partnership is one of the few accredited human serving organizations in Chattanooga, accredited with the Council on Accreditation. This assures funders and partners the agency has met “best practice” standards in all areas of the organization. Partnership is also a licensed child placement agency. Throughout the agency, all clients are approached with a trauma-informed, strength based and culturally sensitive philosophy.

### **Mission Statement**

Partnership’s mission statement is as follows: “Partnership is a community impact organization whose mission is to strengthen families and individuals of all ages. Our services provide benefits through an effective array of critical services and collaborative partnerships that continually evolve to meet community needs.”

### **Vision Statement**

Partnership’s vision statement is as follows: “Partnership is the recognized leader in providing excellent human services that meet the ever-changing needs of our communities’ families and individuals of all ages.”

- **Core services**

### **Partnership Programs Impact – The Entire Circle of Life**

The Partnership is Chattanooga’s oldest and largest human services non-profit organization. Partnership has over 20 programs that provide individuals and families with the tools and resources to build stability and create independence. From children to elderly, Partnership programs impact the entire circle of life in the Greater Chattanooga area. These programs are not geared to help an individual for a day, a month or even a year. Instead, Partnership aims to develop a lifetime of success for the most vulnerable in our community.

## **Partnership Five Centers of Service: Youth Services-Elder Services-Family Strengthening Services-Credit Counseling Services-Crisis Services**

Reaching a diverse range of individuals and families through Five Centers of Service, Partnership programs focus on specific needs of the Greater Chattanooga community with experienced social workers, counselors and other highly trained professionals. Together, these separate but complimentary Centers of Services provide support to families and individuals who may have many related needs.

Youth Service core services are family foster care, emergency roster care, respite foster care, therapeutic foster care and independent living services (IAM Ready Center).

The IAM Ready Center grand opening was held on June 25, 2014. The center is co-located with the City of Chattanooga's Youth and Family Development Department (YFD), creating a one-stop shop for program participants. YFD services include education, leadership, career development, social services and recreation services to provide every child/family with the opportunity for success, safer streets and promoting economic development.

IAM Ready Center serves young people between the ages of 14-26 who have spent at least 1 day in foster care after the age of 14 and live in or around the Hamilton County area. Services available include a financial education curriculum that teaches basic knowledge such as: savings, asset building, credit, credit reports, money management, budgeting, etc.

In addition to financial skill-building and support, IAM Ready Center participants have access to streamlined and specialized services within the Hamilton County community, specifically related to the key outcome areas defined by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative that are evidence-based to be essential for a successful transition into adulthood. Participants are connected with resources and tools within their community to help them establish their own social capital and support networks.

- **Local Partnerships**

Partnership organization has joined with the City of Chattanooga's Youth and Family Development Department to implement the Jim Casey Initiative in the Chattanooga area, and both organizations have committed to providing resources and opportunities for young people. Community partners include key members from many of the areas in which we are hoping to affect outcomes, such as: education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, social capital and financial capability.

Education partners: Chattanooga State, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Bryan College, Southern Adventist, ITT-Technical Institute.

Employment partners: Southeast Local Workforce Investment Board, Goodwill, Tennessee Career Center of Southeast Tennessee, Chattanooga Ambassador Program.

Housing partners: Pathways for Young Adult Program, Youth Villages, Partnership Foster Care, Chattanooga Homeless Coalition, Chattanooga Housing Authority, Salvation Army, Partnership Homeless Program and Transitional Living Program, Room at the Inn.

Physical and mental health partners: Health Connect of America, Mental Health Co-Op, Fort-Wood, Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Social Capital partners: Department of Children Services, Community Foundations of Greater Chattanooga, City of Chattanooga

Financial Capability partners: Partnership Credit Counseling Services, Tennessee Valley Authority Credit Union.

- **Successes**

Since opening day of June 25, 2014 the IAM Ready Center has enrolled 12 youth into the program. We are currently working with Community Partners to host upcoming door opener events and leadership activities for this grant reporting year.

- **Challenges and Barriers**

Many of the young people who come to the IAM Ready Center for services lack support systems that can assist them with navigating the challenging period of transitioning into adulthood. They are often unemployed, lack transportation, are dealing with current and past abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual), have had insufficient future planning, and are sometimes homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Many of these presenting issues make it difficult for the young people to remain focused on following through with completing the goals that they have set for themselves.

Additionally, youth aging out of foster care often do not have access to medical care or knowledge of medical coverage/benefits. Additional funding is needed for case workers and matching funds for program participants.

- **Next Steps**

Partnership's IAM Ready Center is excited about the program and very confident in achieving program outcomes within a timely manner. Year one was mainly focused on

program set up/implementation; year two will focus on reaching or exceeding program established outcomes. The organization continues to assess its programs and make changes and improvements where needed. Partnership's IAM Ready Center will continue with current programming and strive to reach additional young people, strengthening the manner in which we use the youth voice to improve our services.

Partnership is currently exploring the possibility of providing transitional housing through our Level 2 Continuum Contract.

*“At first DCS saved my life. I came from a bad situation and would not be here if DCS was not involved. Overall, I’ve had a good and positive experience. Now I’m working with other women who need help. I do not hesitate to have them reach out to DCS.”~ Mary*

## Chattanooga Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Completed by Jack Parks

	Previous Year	Year to Date- Grand Opening June 25, 2014
<b>Opportunity Passport™</b>		
Number of new youth enrolled		12
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered		2
# of Asset Specific Classes offered		2
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome		95%
<b>Survey</b>		
(April & October only), % of youth completing an OPPS survey		
<b>Community Partnership Boards</b>		
Number of board meetings		2
Number of new door openers created		1
<b>Life Skills Classes</b>		
Number of life skills classes held		2
Total number of participants in life skills classes		10
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment		N/A
<b>Youth Leadership &amp; Engagement</b>		
Number of youth leadership activities offered		0

*“TL gave me a boost of confidence. Aside from the skills I could’ve learned in any book, it was the wisdom that also came with it. Shanina and the TL program have been a true blessing in my life. She’s like a second mom to me. I needed that support and it allowed me to take a turn for the better. It’s not about where I come from but where I’m going.” Hezekiah*

## Helen Ross McNabb Center's Project NOW

- **History**

Helen Ross McNabb Center is a premier not-for-profit provider of behavioral health services in East Tennessee. Since 1948, the Center has provided quality and compassionate care to children, adults and families experiencing mental illness, addiction and social challenges. As the Center celebrates more than 65 years of providing services to communities in East Tennessee, its mission remains clear and simple: “Improving the lives of the people we serve.” Following a merger with Child & Family Tennessee in August 2013, Helen Ross McNabb Center assumed management of Project NOW and a lengthy history operating programs for runaway and homeless youth. Our 32 years of experience with runaway, homeless and at-risk teenagers is complemented by 19 years providing outreach services to youth in local schools, 11 years providing street outreach services, 16 years of offering transitional living services for older youth and young adults, and 4 years of permanency services for youth in foster care.

- **Core Services**

Project NOW (Navigating Opportunities that Work) is one of over 35 evidence-based programs operating under the umbrella of Helen Ross McNabb Center. Over the past year, Project NOW serves to provide Resource Center services to youth. Due to Jim Casey changes, youth are no longer required to open IDA accounts; they can now open or use a bank account with ANY financial institution. The role of Project NOW is to proactively assist them in completing this task during their active program engagement. Participants are adolescents and young adults age 14 to 26 (up to the client's 26<sup>th</sup> birthday), who have a current or previous connection to the State's foster care system (at least 1 day after the age of 14). Project NOW allowed youth access to the agency's existing transitional living services for youth and additionally included an IDA component for interested youth meeting what is traditionally an unmet need of youth in transition in East Tennessee. The project served any youth meeting criteria living within the 16 county Department of Children's Services (DCS) Knox, Smoky Mountain or East Tennessee Regions. Clients were offered thirteen (13) activities through Knoxville's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) approach, all of which fall within the domains of independence identified by Brendto, et. al. in the reclaiming youth approach to positive youth development.

- **Local Partnerships**

<b>Community Partners include:</b>
Knox County, Smoky Mountain, and East Tennessee Department of Children's Services
Helen Ross McNabb Center's Runaway Shelter, Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach
K-Town Youth Empowerment Network & K-Town Coordinating Council
Knox County Juvenile Court

Knox Area Compassion Coalition
Youth Villages Transitional Living Program (TLP)
Goodwill Industries
University of Tennessee Work Achievement Values Education (WAVE) GED program
Knox County Public Defender's Office
University of Tennessee Center for Parenting
Boy Scouts of America
Knoxville Interfaith Network (KIN)
Youth Villages Governor's Mentoring Program
Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union
YMCA Knoxville
YWCA Knoxville Housing
Knox County Health Department
Tenants Choice Property Management
Knox Auto Parts
Emerald Youth Foundation
Knoxville CAC Transit
Omnivisions
Camelot Care Centers
ChildHelp USA TN
Tennessee School of Beauty
Excent Ultimate Life Summit
SEED of Knoxville
Smoky Mountain Financial
Hiwassee College
Middle Tennessee State University
Children's Defense Fund; Haley Farms
Tennessee Housing Development Authority
Knoxville Homeless Coalition
Knox County CASA
Knoxville Leadership Foundation – KnoxWorks
Workforce Connections

- **Successes**
  - Number of Opportunity Passport participants ever enrolled: 93
  - Number of participants currently enrolled: 61
  - Number of participants currently inactive: 3
  - Number of participants currently exited: 29
  - Project NOW has seen its highest referral numbers and sources in recent months – DCS and Youth Villages are the two main referral sources.

- Thus far, 46 matches have been completed by 23 different youth (17 unduplicated youth), totaling \$18,281.97 in matched funds. Average matched purchase was \$397.43. To date, 27.87% of youth have completed matches.
- Location secured for ongoing delivery of financial classes, life skill classes, and asset trainings. Saturday programming available for youth to increase program participation and attendance.
- Several youth have expressed their interest in co-facilitating financial classes, and youth have been identified to help lead financial classes in September and November.
- Project NOW youth active on the Youth 4 Youth board participated in the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Conference on August 5, 2014.
- Debt reduction programming has prevented several Project NOW youth from facing eviction.
- Staff are actively involved with Youth Circle through local DCS, Y4Y and K-Town.
- Coordinating Council helps address strengths and needs of youth in transition.
- Project NOW youth was involved with the spending down of program funds and youth assisted with planning and purchasing of needed program supplies.
- A new Facebook account will be opened to aide in program updates, resource attainment and community linkage.
- Participants continue to take advantage of speaking engagements and leadership opportunities.

- **Challenges & Barriers**

- Transportation needs can be a barrier to serving young people in transition. We have found that many youth do not have access to personal transportation and, even though Financial Literacy courses are held near a major bus stop, not all youth have access to public transportation.
- Fulfilling contractual obligations of additional services can sometimes be challenging, given staff limitation, and respect for youth's personal time and other obligations/commitments.
- Despite meeting all quarterly benchmarks in financial education offerings, Project NOW has seen lower numbers of actual enrollment, and has not adequately met quarterly enrollment expectations; courses may begin with an adequate enrollment amount, but not all these youth see courses through to completion.

- **Next Steps**

During the next year, Helen Ross McNabb Center's Project NOW will continue to:

- Enroll youth in Financial Literacy courses,
  - Specifically addressing issues relating to those who fail to complete the entire enrollment process.
- Assist interested youth in opening Individual Deposit Accounts (IDA) with Project NOW's banking partner.
- Build community partnerships around education, employment, housing, health, personal development and other support services.
- Continue efforts to actively seek new and innovative ways to facilitate permanent connections for youth, in alignment with current initiative focus.
- Continue engagement with KYTC to increase local networking collaborations and efforts towards youth services.
- Continue to make accommodations as needed to assist with youth enrollment, active participation, and successful completion of financial education programming.

*“Before we began working together I was kind of closed off and it bothered me. But I want to be somebody and get things done. I wouldn't be where I am without Amy, that's for sure. I got my confidence back. Amy stepped in to help me and things started happening.” Jason*

## Knoxville Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Report Completed by: Laura Denton

	<b>Previous Year July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014</b>	<b>Year to Date July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015</b>
<b>Opportunity Passport™</b>		
Number of new youth enrolled	26	0-classes in session, potential of 10 new youth
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered	6 sessions	1 session
# of Asset Specific Classes offered	8	0-scheduled for 9/27/14
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome	100%	0%
<b>OPPS Surveys</b>		
(April & October only), % of youth completing an OPPS survey	73.5% (April)	75.28% (April & October)
<b>Community Partnership Boards</b>		
Number of board meetings	9 Youth / 9 Community	2youth / 2 community
Number of new door openers created	4	2 pending
<b>Life Skills Classes</b>		
Number of life skills classes held	21	1 held and 2 pending (8/20-credit recovery 8/27- identity theft)
Total number of participants in life skills classes	44	3
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	100%	100%
<b>Youth Leadership &amp; Engagement</b>		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	19	9

*“Without Youth Villages and  
Micah, I’d probably be back  
in the old ways. I’d be  
making bad choices and  
hanging out with bad people.  
Before, I didn’t have it. Now,  
I’ve got the confidence to try  
new things and work toward  
getting in the Navy. I  
needed help with being 18,”  
Cody*

## South Memphis Alliance, Inc.

- **History**

South Memphis Alliance (SMA) opened its doors in 2000 to help organize neighborhood associations in the urban communities of South Memphis. Over time SMA expanded services to serve youth in foster care and families in crisis. Despite growth, SMA holds fast to its core belief that civic engagement is the bedrock of strong communities, and that **strong communities promote stable families.**

SMA work focuses largely on five core initiatives:

- **Dream Seekers Initiative** works with young people transitioning from foster care;
- **Hope Chest** supports services for pregnant and parenting teens who are or were in foster care;
- **Stand By Me** provides behavioral health education services focused on alcohol, drug and HIV/AIDS prevention for youth aged 13-21;
- **Community Action Panel** is composed of community leaders from over a dozen South Memphis civic groups; and,
- **Social Suds Resource Center**, located inside a neighborhood Laundromat, provides a plethora of social services to patrons who live in South Memphis.

SMA is one of the most unique community based agencies in the City of Memphis. Our close connection with urban residents creates a level of trust and interaction rarely seen between an agency and members of the community.

- **Core Services**

Foster care advocacy, mentoring, HIV/AIDS education and testing, substance abuse prevention, anger management and goal setting, financial education, and teen pregnancy and parenting support services.

- **Local Partnerships**

Tennessee Department of Children Services	Meritan Inc.	Bent Tree Apartments	Metropolitan Inter Faith Association (MIFA)
Southern College of Optometry	Shelby County Office of Childhood and Youth	First Tennessee Bank	Black Rose Foundation
Memphis Cares	Grizzlies Foundation	JustCare Family Network	The Women's Foundation
United Way of the Mid-South	Memphis Public Library	ResCare	Hatilloo Theatre
Planned Parenthood	The Assisi Foundation	Shelby County Family Planning	Goodwill Village Apartments
Omnivisions	Memphis Artists for Change	Lemoyne Owen College	St. Jude Research Hospital
Porter Leath	Shelby County Health Department	Seedco	

- **Successes**

- 171 participants have successfully completed financial education, many of whom continue to participate via youth leadership board meetings (95% of Y4Y board are Dream Seekers) and other youth engagement activities.
- SMA now offers financial education at two satellite sites, in an attempt to overcome the transportation/location obstacles faced by many of the young people served. SMA partnered with Meritan and has already had five young people from Meritan complete the program. SMA has also established an agreement with Omnivisions, and will hold a financial education training session there in the fall of this year.
- SMA has hired a new Youth Services Coordinator, Melissa Howard. Melissa completed financial education with the first cohort in 2011. Melissa also serves as Y4Y President. Since her transition into the position, youth engagement has been more of a collaborative effort between the Y4Y board and SMA.
- Three teens enrolled and successfully graduated from the Hope Chest program, which provides incentives for implementing healthy parenting skills such as doctor's visits, well-child check ups, breastfeeding, parenting classes, etc.
- Eight young people completed job readiness training. In doing so, they earned eligibility for a referral to Flextronics, a company that has agreed to give these young people priority in filling their open positions. This option is only available to youth who successfully complete job readiness training.

- The youth completed a visual installation across the street from SMA administrative offices. The installation represented young people involved in the foster care system across the country and featured a field of 800 wooden stakes tied with blue ribbons. Each blue ribbon represented 500 young people in foster care. The work was officially titled: Fostering Awareness Field.
- **Challenges and Barriers**
  - Transportation needs are a barrier for the population of young people that SMA serves. The agency provides bus passes to participants, but the public transit system in the area is often inadequate.
  - Youth Dimensions, a local youth detention center, closed. SMA had eleven young men enrolled in the center that were not able to complete their program due to the inability to re-establish contact or transition them to the office in order to complete the final course.
  - Finding viable housing options for older participants has been one of the greatest challenges in helping young people establish stability.
- **Next Steps**
  - SMA continues to diligently seek housing options and innovations in providing housing for young people transitioning out of care.
  - Sponsorship for IDA matches, stipends/incentives, and computer equipment/building space are among top priorities.
- **Success Story**

Ken had been going through a lot of changes. During his senior year, his grades dropped drastically. Ken failed his senior year and was about to turn 18. Although he had signed up for extension of foster care, his foster mom decided she no longer wanted Ken in the household. After much compromise, Ken's foster mom agreed to let him to stay. The following school year Ken often became discouraged and considered dropping out of school many times. But with encouragement from his peers in Y4Y and support of the Dream Seeker program, as well as DCS staff, Ken successfully completed his senior year of high school. He is now a freshman at University of Memphis and also serves in a leadership position on the Y4Y Board.

## Memphis Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Report Completed by: Tomeka Daniel

	Previous Year	Year to Date
<b>Opportunity Passport™</b>		
Number of new youth enrolled	55	8
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered	24	4
# of Asset Specific Classes offered	5	1
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome	80%	80%
<b>OPPS Surveys</b>		
% of youth completing an OPPS survey (April & October only)	83%	80% (April)
<b>Community Partnership Boards</b>		
Number of board meetings	4	1
Number of new door openers created	2	
<b>Life Skills Classes</b>		
Number of life skills classes held	6	4
Total number of participants in life skills classes	49	14
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	100%	100%
<b>Youth Leadership &amp; Engagement</b>		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	16	5

**APPENDIX B**  
**MEETING AGENDAS AND SUMMARIES**

*“My life changed for the positive because if I hadn’t gotten in trouble and placed in custody, there is no telling what might have happened. Without my case worker there, being stubborn and making me change, it would not have ended well. At first did not want to go to college, I only cared about myself and my child. My workers straightened out this thinking. I did not think I could go to college. I call my case worker even now when I need help.” ~ Erin -*



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Andrew Jackson Building, Ninth Floor  
710 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800  
(615) 741-2633 (FAX) 741-5956  
1-800-264-0904

**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

**November 21, 2013**

**12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time**

**Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee**

**937 Herman Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37208**

**Agenda**

**Welcome/Introductions/Acceptance of September Meeting Summary**

- *Linda O'Neal*

**Department of Children's Services and Office of Independent and Transition Living Update –**

- *Mike Leach, Director, Office of Independent and Transitional Living, Department of Children's Services.*
  - *TennCare Enrollment Information Sheet*

**Update from Resource Centers**

- *Pamela Cash, Youth Connections at Monroe Harding*
- *Shantel Standefer, Helen Ross McNabb (formerly Child & Family Tennessee)*
- *Tameka Daniel, South Memphis Alliance*

**Supported Employment**

- *Sue Karber, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*

**2013 Report to the General Assembly due October 31, 2013**

- *Discussion*
- *Legislation needs*

**Next Meeting**

- *Future date May 1, 2014*

**Other Business**





STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Andrew Jackson Building, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800  
(615) 741-2633 (FAX) 741-5956  
1-800-264-0904

**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

November 21, 2013

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time

Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

**Meeting Summary**

**Participants:**

Julia Barlor  
Gayle Feltner  
Karin Freyer  
Joe Goldsmith  
Ashley Harrington  
Ginger Harris  
Joan Jenkins  
Brianna Johnson  
Sue Karber

Dustin Keller  
Sumita Keller  
Richard Kennedy  
Kristy Leach  
Mike Leach  
Mary Lee  
Melissa McGee  
Nneka Norman-Gordon  
Linda O'Neal

Jackie Parker  
Steve Petty  
Clayton Ramsey  
Ned Solomon  
Erica Spencer  
Sukey Steckel  
Millie Sweeney  
April Tanguay  
Alysia Williams

**Welcome/Introductions/Acceptance of September Meeting Summary (Linda O'Neal)**

- O'Neal welcomed the group, thanked them for attending to do great work for youth in transitions, and asked for introductions.
- She also noted several additions to the agenda including the TRY grant update and an update from Youth Villages about their Transitional Living program.
- She thanked Dustin for completing the meeting summary and Steve for his work on the report to the legislature and meeting coordination. She also thanked others for their work in helping prepare and compile the recent report submitted to the legislature. O'Neal also encouraged participants to sign one of the attendance sheets in order to be counted in the meeting summary.

**Acceptance of September Meeting Summary (O'Neal)**

- O'Neal asked members to review the September Meeting summary and asked for revisions or edits.

- **IT WAS MOVED (LEE) AND SECONDED (S. KELLER) TO ACCEPT THE SEPTEMBER 2013 MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Department of Children’s Services and Office of Independent and Transitional Living Update (Mike Leach)**

*Refer to the survey handout sent to members after the meeting.*

- Leach introduced the newest member of his staff, Ginger Harris, who will work to evaluate why youth do not accept extension of foster care services and other duties.
- Staff has interviewed 49 youth across the state to get feedback about the program and others working in their life including their Guardian ad Litem. Additional statistics are included on the handout.
- Several lessons were learned from the survey about how to work with transition youth. Youth stated they prefer staff don’t think of the youth as their friends and don’t share their own personal information. Simply, support and encourage the youth.
- Report also includes some research-based information for caseworkers.
- On December 1, the Office of Independent Living is having their first meeting/webinar involving youth to provide input and give feedback to the system.
- This survey will continue to be used with youth to provide ongoing input to the department.
- A Youth for Youth Board meeting was held on Tuesday with 20 youth attending. The survey results were discussed at the meeting.
- Leach is developing some outreach materials to send to targeted youth. Petty will send drafts of these materials out for the groups’ input.
- Based on a prior report recommendation, the department will start conducting credit checks on all DCS youth 16 and over this spring. Their credit reports will continue to be monitored. Training will also be provided to help educate youth, and staff will work to clear their report if needed. DCS has agreements in place with all three credit agencies.
- Feltner stated she had attended a workshop and heard participants talk about the challenges with filing FAFSA and issues related to delinquent credit from when they were prior to 18.
- IL is working through a contract with Partnership for Children and Families and the City of Chattanooga to start a resource center in Chattanooga. The center is projected to start on January 29, 2014.
- Staff will start cold calling youth to make sure they are aware of extension services and how to reenroll if needed.
- Staff is also working on providing information about TennCare changes and how youth can stay enrolled.

- Leach referenced a report recommendation for essential document storage similar to DropBox. He stated Hawaii has an independent website where youth can retrieve these documents. The department will consider reviewing options to meet this need.
- Harris stated she is new to this position. She will serve as the youth engagement lead and focus on promoting youth to have a voice and talk about their needs.
- Leach discussed how she has great ideas and has been getting things accomplished.
- Tennessee had two youth selected as foster club outstanding 100 leaders in America.
- O'Neal expressed her appreciation to Leach and his staff for sharing this information and for activities completed by DCS.

### **Update from Resource Centers**

- Center staff were unable to be present – so Leach provided updates from two of the centers.
- Helen Ross McNabb – report has been emailed to the group:
  - Staff was present at the birth of a young person's child to provide support.
  - The center's Youth for Youth (Y4Y) board has seen marked growth and youth engagement. The group has great diversity.
  - The center continues to hold debit reduction and credit building classes
  - The center also reports former youth are coming back to the program to help provide support to youth currently in the program.
- South Memphis Alliance:
  - The center provided training to youth in congregate care settings and expects to have an additional class in the spring.
  - Housing has been identified as a need for youth, so the center is working with agencies to provide some housing options.
  - Recent Y4Y board meetings have been the highest attended.
- Monroe Harding:
  - Center reported that a youth was able to purchase a house with her matching funds.
- O'Neal thanked Leach for updates from the resource centers.

### **Supported Employment (Sue Karber)**

*Refer to the handout sent to members after the meeting*

- Karber is with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) and coordinates the supported employment initiative for the department.
- Employment of young people is a major need for youth in our state and there are several initiatives working to get youth employed.
- The initiative has created a collaboration of departments and agencies to create a system for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral challenges to get

gainful employment. The most recent meeting of the collaborative was yesterday, and Petty and Leach attended.

- Helen Ross McNabb, Frontier and Ridgeview are partnering with the department and have an Individual and Placement Support (IPS) program using funding diverted from the Lakeshore closure. These programs started October 1, 2013 and are at different stages of implementation. The programs use a rapid impact and integrated treatment team approach to get youth ready and available for employment.
- Handout provides an overview of IPS and the eight guiding principles. Approach is evidence-based with 19 control trials completed and demonstrating that 58 percent get meaningful employment through this model. Tennessee does not have this type of data as the program just started and Karber agreed to share results with the group when more information is available.
- To be involved with the program, a person must be 18 and older with a mental health or co-occurring disorder and need employment or training.
- Jenkins stated the best treatment plan is to have a job. She plans to do something similar in West Tennessee.
- Pathways has an employment program and Karber hopes to collaborate with their project. The current collaborative is a pilot project and will need data to expand.
- Participants have access to a benefits counselor to work through issues and see impact of employment on benefits.
- O'Neal stated it is exciting to hear about these opportunities for youth in transition and thanked Karber for presenting.

### **2013 Report to the General Assembly submitted October 31, 2013**

- O'Neal thanked the group for their great work on the report and wanted participant feedback.
- Leach stated one of the recommendations will be a legislative proposal in the governor's package for the upcoming legislative session.
- O'Neal mentioned she has been asked by a senator about legislation and if we were looking for sponsors related to YTAC recommendations. She asked if there were other issues we need to propose for legislation.
- Parker stated we need to identify highly mobile youth to ensure they do not continue to fall short of credit required to graduate.
- Sweeney talked about a new group forming to work on youth with SED and challenges they face. Credits may be an issue this new group can also discuss.
- Answering a question from Solomon about how potential legislation might be structured, O'Neal stated the proposal was to allow foster care youth who meet the minimum state requirements but maybe not the LEA's more stringent requirements to graduate with a regular diploma.

- Feltner stated Paul Rainwater who is over diplomas may be a contact to provide additional information including school systems with more stringent requirements.
- Leach updated the group about his attempts to provide State IDs for foster youth. A system has been created to fill out all the paperwork and create a check from DCS fiscal. There are several issues continuing to surround this process. Commissioner Henry has talked with Commissioner Gibbons to work on a new process that involves journal vouchers to make this process simpler.
- Leach asked about certifications or licenses and how youth could get these more cost effectively.
- Karber stated there are programs for youth with SSDI or other services to get funding assistance for IDs, licenses, etc. Participants discussed various options for getting children state IDs.
- TennCare Select Behavioral Health Advisory Committee is creating a statewide webinar and could include this issue in the webinar.
- Leach talked about needing help getting some of these recommendations accomplished.
- Labor has worked with Tennessee Department of Correction and vital records to get a state id for inmates. This type of system could work for DCS.

### **Next Meeting**

- O'Neal stated the next meeting for YTAC would be on May 1, 2014.

### **Other Business**

#### *Youth Villages Transitional Living Contract (Mary Lee):*

- Lee gave an update about the grant from the Day foundation and matching dollars provided by DCS. The contract is structured to serve 800 youth, but Youth Villages (YV) plans to serve additional youth as needed. YV will do National Youth in Transitions Database surveys on this population as part of this grant. Lee stated they hope to survey 2,000 people over the next year. The process currently has a 99 percent return rate of the surveys with 88 completed so far.
- On October 30, YV had a peer-to-peer activity about job development with about 60 young people in attendance. Lee thanked all who attended. Commissioner Henry and Governor Haslam came to meet with young people and announced the grant to serve all young adults aging out of care.
- O'Neal stated she and Petty were able to attend the event and talked about the impact of watching the youth involved.

#### *TRY Grant (Ashley Harrington):*

- Harrington is the program manager for the TRY grant at Centerstone. TRY works with 18-24 year old youth with co-occurring disorders in Madison County and Maury County. Centerstone and Pathways are the agencies involved.

- April Tanguay has been hired as statewide coordinator for TRY grant.
- O’Neal stated the existence of this group (YTAC) was beneficial to the state receiving this grant. We are pleased to be part of the governance structure for the grant.
- Harrington discussed how the local agencies will develop councils or groups in their areas as well.
- O’Neal encouraged staff to bring youth to these meetings as they provide insight and meaningful feedback to the group.

*Supportive Employment (additional information – Julia Barlor)*

- Barlor stated she is excited about their partnership with vocational rehabilitation (VR). She said the program is designed to work on the goals of the client, not the goals professionals think they need.
- This program will help fast track youth through VR and into employment opportunities. She stated there is a need to move quickly in getting youth involved or they will lose engagement.
- Karber praised VR for their willingness to make necessary changes and adjustments to make this program work statewide. She also acknowledged Park Center for working with everyone for job placement without regard to payer source.
- VR used LEAN to streamline their application and intake process. The prior process took six months to move from beginning to employment. Staff made a goal to trim the process down to 90 days. During August through October, 500 cases were opened. Staff accomplished the 90-day goal in 86 percent of the cases. This is an improvement over 24 percent previously.
- Petty attended the collaborative meeting yesterday and discussed how VR will stop paying for services and start paying for outcomes.

**Announcements**

- Solomon discussed a youth leadership forum offering one-day trainings. He is willing to share the curriculum with this group and to work on training youth in transition and determine if other populations would benefit. This curriculum was initially designed for the DIDD population.
- O’Neal discussed TCCY’s Children’s Advocacy Days to be held on March 11 and 12, 2014 at War Memorial Auditorium.
- Williams announced the TAMHO conference on December 3 and 4, 2013. The main topic is about the integration of primary and behavioral health and co-occurring disorders. Petty will forward information to the group.
- Jenkins invited participants to become involved with the TennCare Select Behavioral Health Advisory Council. Their next meeting is scheduled for December 5, 2013 at the AIM Center in Chattanooga and will include a presentation by Tawny Spinelli about the Children’s Cabinet and kidcentraltn.

- O'Neal stated Genesis Hardin who has been involved with YTAC and KTOWN has been appointed as a youth member of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.
- Norman-Gordon mentioned a Comptroller's Conference on December 12, 2013 at One Century Place. Petty will send out additional information.

**Next meeting agenda**

- Participants recommended updates from the TRY grant, Youth Villages, DCS and Resource Centers and an overview of legislation and the session. Additional possible topics include a panel about housing, information on Specialized Foster Care Review Boards, and the Children's Cabinet and kidcentraltn.
- Petty stated the TCCY website has a YTAC page that will have meeting summaries, handouts, and other YTAC relevant material. ([www.tn.gov/tccy/ytac.shtml](http://www.tn.gov/tccy/ytac.shtml))
- O'Neal encouraged members to sign up for the legislative report on TCCY's website ([www.tn.gov/tccy](http://www.tn.gov/tccy))
- O'Neal shared her appreciation for everyone attending and working to improve services and supports for youth in transition.

Adjourned at 3:34 p.m.





STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Andrew Jackson Building, Ninth Floor  
710 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800  
(615) 741-2633 (FAX) 741-5956  
1-800-264-0904

**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

**May 1, 2014**

**12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time**

**Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee**

**937 Herman Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37208**

**Agenda**

**Welcome/Introductions/Acceptance of November Meeting Summary**

- *Linda O'Neal*

**Department of Children's Services and Office of Independent and Transition Living Update –**

- *Mike Leach, Director, Office of Independent and Transitional Living, Department of Children's Services.*

**Update from Resource Centers**

- *Pamela Cash, Youth Connections at Monroe Harding*
- *Helen Ross McNabb (formerly Child & Family Tennessee)*
- *Tameka Daniel, South Memphis Alliance*
- *Chattanooga/Hamilton/Southeast*

**Update from Youth Villages Transition Living Program**

- *Joseph Goldsmith, Transitional Living Coordinator, Youth Villages*

**Update from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant**

- *Ashley Harrington, Centerstone*
- *Clayton Ramsey and Erica Spencer, Pathways*

**Next Meeting**

- *July 31, 2014*
- *September 18, 2014*
- *November 20, 2014*

**Other Business**





STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Andrea Jackson Building, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
502 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800  
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**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

May 1, 2014

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time

Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

**Meeting Summary**

**Participants:**

Dave Aguzzi

Erick Batts

Liz Blasbery

Tameka Daniel

Joseph Goldsmith

Ashley Harrington

Ginger Harris

Timothy Hickman

Betsy Holmes

Joan Jenkins

Mary Jones

Dustin Keller

Sumita Keller

Richard Kennedy

Kristy Leach

Mike Leach

Linda McCorkle

Melissa McGee

Quatrece McKinney

Diana Miller

Heidi Moseley

Nneka Norman-Gordon

Linda O'Neal

Vivian Park

Steve Petty

Clayton Ramsey

Ned Solomon

Erica Spencer

Tawny Spinelli

April Tanguay

**Welcome and Introductions (Linda O'Neal)**

- O'Neal welcomed the group, thanked them for attending to do great work for youth in transitions, and asked for introductions.
- She thanked Dustin for completing the meeting summary and Steve for his work on the report to the legislature and meeting coordination. .

**Acceptance of November Meeting Summary (O'Neal)**

- O'Neal asked members to review the November Meeting summary and asked for revisions or edits.
- **IT WAS MOVED (HARRINGTON) AND SECONDED (SPINELLI) TO ACCEPT THE NOVEMBER 2013 MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **Department of Children's Services and Office of Independent and Transitional Living Update (Mike Leach)**

- Leach stated the office has served more youth this year than last year. He does not have the usual information as his staff are preparing for the end of the fiscal year. He will forward reports to the group when they are complete and will discuss them at future meetings.
- The Office of Independent Living is included in the Administration of Children and Families' review happening at the Department of Children's Services. ACF will look at the previous five years and discuss the department's goals for the next five years.
- His office is also reviewing the Brian A. settlement to ensure there is an appropriate service as required in Independent Living and transition.
- His staff along with youth groups has developed a rights and responsibilities brochure for youth in custody and a youth handbook of over 100 pages of information. These resources will assist youth in becoming better advocates for their needs.
- The credit checks originally slated to begin in spring 2014 have not started. It took nine months to complete contracts with the three credit-reporting bureaus and they still need to integrate this within TFACTS to get batches of reports completed. He is currently unsure of a completion timeframe. Other states are having difficulty with this as well. Based on communications with other states who are performing credit checks on their youth, about five percent of youth have had issues with credit. This gives DCS some estimate of how much work will be involved with clearing credit for youth in custody.
- Leach discussed a recent reality check event at Chambliss Center for Children. The event lasted four hours and included a mock lifestyle experience about how to budget and spend money. Sixty young people attended the event and several adults volunteered to assist, including Leach and the Juvenile Court Judge for Hamilton County.
- American Youth Forum for Policy will conduct a Foster Care Youth Study in Tennessee focused on transitioning youth. This three-day event will bring leaders from seven other states to learn about Tennessee Foster Care. Site visits will be conducted at Monroe Harding and Youth Villages. Petty and Leach will present at the conference.
- Leach has been meeting with universities about the needs of youth in transition. Colleges include Carson Newman and Bethel University. DCS also has an agreement with the Tennessee Colleges for Applied Technology. DCS youth in transition can be moved to the top of the waiting list ensuring a faster enrollment. TCATs have an 80 percent completion rate for their students and all students are guaranteed employment.
- Soloman asked if there is a set curriculum for the reality check program used at the recent event in Chattanooga. The Chamber in Hamilton County supported the program and has a curriculum they use.
- Harris stated that she is working on youth engagement with the Office of Independent Living. She contacts youth who have aged out of foster care and did not accept services.

She has been successful in getting youth to reconnect. She stated the main reasons youth do not accept transition services are a need to be independent from DCS, they do not completely understand the services available, and they do not want to have the same caseworker. She has also attempted to partner with shelters in the area as a means to reconnect with youth. Participants discussed contacts and other avenues for assistance with contacting shelters outside the Nashville area.

- Harris stated youth must enroll before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday to receive services, but the program will follow you through four years of college as long as you have enrolled before age 21.
- Miller asked if there is a resource list used for the job training or placement. Harris said she uses DCS' resource linkage division.
- O'Neal suggested working with Labor and Workforce Development to take advantage of their programs for this population. She also commented on the great partnership with shelters.
- Leach discussed the impact of the Affordable HealthCare Act (ACA). Youth aging out of foster care are eligible for TennCare until age 26. Youth should go to Healthcare.gov and fill out forms, including checking the boxes related to foster care. This will not be an automatic process if they turn 21 prior to January. Youth who age out from other states are not eligible for TennCare.
- Aguzzi shared information about policy and procedures updates for DCS. He stated Petty had sent out an updated Policy and Procedure Manual prior to the meeting. DCS has made significant enhancements to TFACTS. Updates were needed to include relevant information. Petty will also send out the link to the new website. Aguzzi hopes it is youth friendly. He stated that they are in compliance with the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). This could not have been accomplished without DCS partners and the resource centers.
- He also gave a data update with 544 episodes of extension of foster care from July 2013 until March 2104. As this count can include duplicates/repeats, it represents 525 youth served. There are 257 youth currently active in the program.
- O'Neal expressed her appreciation to Leach and his staff for sharing this information and activities completed by DCS.

### **Update from Resource Centers**

- Monroe Harding (Quatrece McKinney)
  - McKinney stated their program moved to McKendree United Methodist Church last week. They are excited about the transition as it is closer to bus terminal and resource partners. The church will not only provide space but also other resources as well.
  - The GED classroom is available and ready in the space. The program has 15 enrolled and five recently earned their GED.

- There are 18 people in the opportunity passport program and 13 in SHE, which is a sexual health education program funded by a federal grant.
- The center will begin monthly community service projects led by a young person.
- Leach will send data on all the resource centers
- Helen Ross McNabb
  - The previous Resource Center coordinator has moved to a different position. They are in the process of assigning staff. Youth were sad to see her go but will be a part of the selection process for her replacement.
- South Memphis Alliance (Tameka Daniel)
  - On April 5, there was an installation of stakes and blue ribbons across the street from the center to represent the number of youth involved in foster care services.
  - They currently have 21 in Opportunity Passport with a graduation scheduled for next week.
  - Through a partnership with Meritan, the center has an additional location. The center also has a great relationship with Flextronics with a commitment to hire young adults with job experience. Flextronics will consider the center's program to be providing the required experience.
- Chattanooga/Hamilton (Leach)
  - Partnership for Child and Families will be the contract agency for a new resource center in Chattanooga. The program will start taking referrals on May 21.
  - The program already has a banking partner and is working on additional support systems. The Center will host a formal grand opening in late June.
- O'Neal thanked representatives for updates from the resource centers.

**Update from Youth Villages Transitional Living Program (Joseph Goldsmith)**

- Because of the partnership with DCS, YV has served 1,202 youth in this fiscal year is currently serving 584.
- YV completed 434 NTYD surveys.
- Goldsmith also discussed the recently released Transitional Living Study executive summary. He stated that the preliminary results show:
  - Local context shapes youth experiences and resources;
  - Most of the youth who participated in services were engaged;
  - Staff addressed a wide range of topics with youth;
  - Services were administered according to program model; and
  - Additional impacts of the program will be released in early 2015.

- The First Lady recently held an event around music featuring an impromptu concert from three Tennessee youth at the close of the event.
- Aguzzi recognized YV for the work on the NYTD surveys.

**Updates from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant (April Tanguay, Ashley Harrington, Clayton Ramsey and Erica Spencer)**

*See “Youth Recovery” handout*

- Tanguay gave a brief overview for those who were not present at the last meeting. The program started September 1, 2013. The grant funding is \$8.3 million for four years to deliver an evidence-based practice (EBP) to transition-age youth. TDMHSAS chose Adolescent – Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA) as the EBP. The program has sites in Maury and Madison counties. The goal is to reach out to 2,000 professionals.
- Staff is beginning to partner with the System of Care initiatives and will be going to the Georgetown Institutes this July.
- Harrington stated that Centerstone, the Maury county site, has 18 enrolled and four in the enrollment process. They have reached out to 460 professionals about the program. Staff received A-CRA training in January. The clinicians are a third of the way through a process that typically takes a year to complete. She explained how both sites are implementing the process differently. Centerstone is community based while Pathways is clinic based.
- Ramsey provided a handout for the Madison County site managed by Pathways (see handout). They currently have seven enrolled and two in the process. This program will include clinic-based visits mostly but will do some community/home visits as necessary. Their clinicians are also working on certifications. They have reached out to 207 people in 22 presentations.
- Tanguay stated that they are working on marketing materials for the programs and will bring them to the next meeting
- McCorkle mentioned that five adolescent substance abuse residential programs did not receive continued funding through the budget process this year and several will have to close, including the one in Madison County provided through Pathways. The state has had these programs for quite some time.
- O’Neal reminded participants that YTAC is serving as the state level advisory group for the grant. A goal for YTAC and other similar groups is to be open to all who have an interest in working on the issue.
- O’Neal also expressed her appreciation to the presenters for sharing this information with the group.

**Next Meeting**

- O’Neal discussed the need to meet over the next few months to begin to work on recommendations for the next report due to the general assembly in October.

- Scheduled 2014 meetings for YTAC are:
  - July 31, 2014;
  - September 18, 2014; and,
  - November 20, 2014

**Other Business**

- Acord discussed his agency’s strategic initiative to be more involved with transition age youth. They started an effort to compile information about current services and supports in the Chattanooga area. He stated his agency does not want to recreate the wheel but wants to fill gaps as needed.
- Spinelli encouraged them to engage some youth in this process to determine what the youth believe is needed and to provide input.

**Announcements**

- O’Neal mentioned that Leach is a presenter on a webinar in a couple of weeks. Petty will send out information so interested persons can join the call. Leach stated the webinar is to discuss the state’s postsecondary success. He plans to share information about YTAC recommendations and what others can do to make change happen.
- O’Neal mentioned a Shelbyville Times Gazette article featuring Spinelli’s presentation to a CASA program. Spinelli will also be a part of a national webinar organized by Prevent Child Abuse. Petty will also send out this information to the group.

**Next meeting agenda**

- O’Neal mentioned ideas for the next meeting’s agenda including updates from the TRY grant, Youth Villages, DCS and Resource Centers and beginning work on the report for October. O’Neal would also like to discuss successes from the previous report. Additional possible topics included involving THDA and a panel about housing, Labor and Workforce Development about their services and councils, Vocational Rehabilitation, and information on Specialized Foster Care Review Boards.
- Petty stated the TCCY website has an YTAC page that will have meeting summaries, handouts, and other relevant material to YTAC. ([www.tn.gov/tccy/ytac.shtml](http://www.tn.gov/tccy/ytac.shtml))
- O’Neal shared her appreciation for everyone attending and working to improve services and supports for youth in transition.

Adjourned at 2:47 p.m.



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
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**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

**July 31, 2014**

**12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time**

**Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee**

**937 Herman Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37208**

**Agenda**

**Welcome/Introductions/Acceptance of May Meeting Summary**

- *Linda O'Neal*

**Department of Children's Services and Office of Independent and Transition Living Update –**

- *Mike Leach, Director, Office of Independent and Transitional Living, Department of Children's Services.*

**Update from Resource Centers**

- *Pamela Cash, Youth Connections at Monroe Harding*
- *Helen Ross McNabb (formerly Child & Family Tennessee)*
- *Tameka Daniel, South Memphis Alliance*
- *Chattanooga/Hamilton/Southeast*

**Update from Youth Villages Transition Living Program**

- *Transitional Living Coordinator, Youth Villages*

**Update from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant**

- *April Tanguay, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*
- *Ashley Harrington, Centerstone*
- *Clayton Ramsey and Erica Spencer, Pathways*

**Youth Housing**

- *Toni Shaw, Tennessee Housing and Development Agency*
- *Donna Duarte, Tennessee Housing and Development Agency*
- *Sherry Smith, Tennessee Housing and Development Agency*

- *Don Alexander, Crossville Housing Authority*

**Next Meeting**

- *September 18, 2014*
- *November 20, 2014*

**Other Business**



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
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1-800-264-0904

**Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

July 31, 2014

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time

Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

**MEETING SUMMARY**

Participants:

Phil Acord	Timothy Hickman	Steve Petty
Dave Aguzzi	Briana Johnson	Clayton Ramsey
Don Alexander	Jacqueline Johnson	Toni Shaw
Julia Barlar	Mary Jones	Keisha Shervington
Liz Blasbery	Dustin Keller	Shawn Smith
Pamela Cash	James Kelley	Sherry Smith
April Carthom	Richard Kennedy	Ned Solomon
Tameka Daniel	Kristy Leach	Erica Spencer
Emma Davis	Mike Leach	Tawny Spinelli
Donna Duarte	Melanie Malabanan	April Tanguay
Karin Freyer	James Martin	Amy Thomas
Joseph Goldsmith	Melissa McGee	Keri Virgo
Darci Halfman	Mary Meador	Winona Yellowhammer
Ashley Harrington	Linda O'Neal	
Ginger Harris	Jack Parks	

**Welcome and Introductions (Linda O'Neal)**

- O'Neal welcomed the group, expressed her appreciation for those attending, and asked for introductions.
- She thanked Dustin for completing the meeting summary and Steve for his work on the report to the legislature and meeting coordination.

**Acceptance of May Meeting Summary (O'Neal)**

- O'Neal asked members to review the May Meeting summary and asked for revisions or edits.

- **IT WAS MOVED (SPINELLI) AND SECONDED (HARRINGTON) TO ACCEPT THE MAY 2014 MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Department of Children’s Services and Office of Independent and Transitional Living Update (Mike Leach)**

- Leach stated the office has served 624 youth in fiscal year 2014 compared to 564 youth in 2013. There were 282 active youth at the time of the meeting. Average time for retention of youth is 232 days or the average equivalent of two semesters in college. Leach plans to review the reasons for this shorter retention average by region.
- Data for the 2014 fiscal year will be available for the next meeting.
- Leach discussed the new website featuring a video by Genesis Hardin and a foster parent video.
- DCS is working on a teachable moments foster parent training. The department hopes to have this available at the foster parent conference.
- Leach is working with the University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS) to revise the foster parent handbook.
- The federal grant-funded Teen Outreach Program about personal responsibility is expanding into Omni foster care continuum and G4S. This program has been available in congregate care settings.
- There will be a “Walk to Beautiful” event in Chattanooga on October 24 featuring Jimmy Wayne. Wayne will serve on a panel and talk about his journey.
- Ginger Harris discussed her efforts in reaching out to youth who did not accept the extension of foster care services. She has spoken with 397 youth to let them know about available services. Some students have returned to receive the educational voucher and others have been connected to community resources such as housing and insurance. She is continuing to reach out to homeless shelters.
- Leach mentioned Harris also contacts youth who are 21 to 25 about getting expanded Medicaid through TennCare.
- O’Neal thanked Leach and Harris for their reports. She looks forward to data to help with the October report.

**Update from Resource Centers**

- Monroe Harding (Pam Cash)
  - Cash stated the program has completed its move to the third floor at McKendree United Methodist Church. The new space is a great fit for the program as it is downtown near the bus depot and the church is very supportive.
  - *The Contributor* (Nashville’s Newspaper published and sold by individuals who are homeless) is on the fourth floor of this building. Cash is working on a partnership with them to hire several of the young adults.

- The thrift store has been merged with the church's clothing closet. The center still has hygiene items for the youth as the church does not have those items.
  - There are currently 80 active participants in the Opportunity Passport program. Twelve people have completed the High School Equivalency (HSE) Degree and 22 are currently in classes.
  - Cash discussed new funding for the Stepping Stones program designed to be a seamless transition for HSE to college or employment. The program will take youth to job fairs and college tours.
- Helen Ross McNabb (Keisha Shervington)
    - Shervington has been in her position for about two months. The program currently has 30 interested and 18 attended a recent meeting about Opportunity Passport.
    - K-Town youth in action and Youth Circle are working with the program. The Youth 4 Youth Board has stable participation and is working on a foster care handbook.
    - The program has 93 youth enrolled overall and 61 active.
    - Leach mentioned Shervington has been very successful in a short period of time.
- Independent Center for Achievement and Mastery (Jack Parks)
    - Parks introduced himself and his agency, Partnership for Children and Families, as the newest contracted Resource Center, in Chattanooga. He is attempting to create a one-stop shop for youth, including leadership, job development, literacy programs, and involvement with other programs such as LIHEAP or energy assistance.
    - The contract began June 15 and youth participation will begin in August.
    - O'Neal welcomed Parks to the group and stated she looks forward to future reports about their ongoing progress.
- South Memphis Alliance (Tameka Daniel)
    - Daniel stated the program is beginning a partnership with the youth board to enhance youth engagement. Youth will go with staff to local agencies to learn about their services. This will help better prepare youth to understand the issues they may face independently.
    - The program has partnered with Meritan and Omni to have classes around the city and decrease transportation issues. They have also applied for federal IDEA funding to help youth.

- O’Neal thanked all the presenters for the resource centers for their work and being here at YTAC. She looks forward to their reports and other information for the October Report to the Legislature.

**Update from Youth Villages (YV) Transitional Living Program (Joseph Goldsmith)**

- Because of the partnership with DCS, YV served 1,304 youth in fiscal year 2014 representing the most served by YV in a single year. Of these youth, 185 graduated or received HSE and two graduated from college
- YV surveyed 661 youth and completed 548 NTYD surveys. This represents 48 percent and the state is in compliance.
- Goldsmith mentioned the YV scholars program. This program provides extra support for youth in a four-year college program. These youth must have a job and complete community service. YV provides a mentor from the leadership staff. There are 16 new YV scholars and 40 total scholars in the program. Thirty of these youth are from Tennessee.
- YV hosted the final morning of the National Policy Tour recently visiting Tennessee. All participants toured YV programs.
- Leach described how they met with a TL program participant who discussed how budgeting was an issue for her but she has many goals. Leach mentioned she had applied for insurance in January but had not heard a response. Leach was able to get her insurance in two days. He said it was great to watch the YV staff discuss this with her.
- Petty said Natalie, the YV staff person leading the tour, was fantastic. The youth had a large car payment that made her budget challenging.
- Aguzzi provided some recent data about the YV program. These youth exited custody at 17 or older up to 21. YV had 779 episodes of care representing 773 youth. This is significantly higher than prior years.
- Of all youth in DCS extension of foster care, 52 percent (364) received YV TL services. Of all youth receiving YV TL, 43 percent were extension of foster care participants. YV has private funding to help serve non-DCS extension youth.
- Aguzzi is hoping to have more regionally based data about participants and a follow up to the baseline surveys conducted in 2011 to see progress.

**Updates from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant (April Tanguay, Ashley Harrington and Clayton Ramsey)**

*See “Youth Recovery” handout*

- Tanguay gave a brief overview for those who were not present at the last meeting. The program started September 1, 2013. The grant funding is \$950,000 a year for four years to deliver an evidence-based practice (EBP) to transition-age youth. TDMHSAS chose Adolescent – Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA) as the evidenced-based practice. The program has sites in Maury County at Centerstone and Madison County at

Pathways. The goal is to reach out to 2,000 professionals. TRY focuses on a harm reduction model, not an abstinence model.

- A new brochure has been created and available for outreach distribution.
- Staff attended the Georgetown Training Institutes in July. The grantees were encouraged to collaborate with their System of Care grantees. TRY has already begun meeting with SOC staff and working with the TA Center. Total enrollment in the initiative nationwide is 128, and Tennessee has 48 enrolled.
- The federal project officer stated Tennessee is the best project nationally and other sites should follow the state's lead.
- TRY staff are working on suicide prevention training and LGBTQ trainings for staff and youth.
- Tanguay has been working with TCCY on a resource map to see where funding overlaps with other departments. Because of the resource mapping project at TCCY, this has been an easy process, unlike the experience in other states.
- She hopes to have outcomes and evaluation data at the next meeting.
- Harrington stated that Centerstone, the Maury county site, has 23 of 25 enrolled and plans to expand to surrounding counties. The other two have been referred and are waiting to be enrolled. Considering Centerstone's program is community-based, expansion just increases travel related costs for clinicians.
- Centerstone has hired all the clinicians and three of five are almost complete with A-CRA training.
- Harrington stated the program is working with the community anti-drug coalitions in the area. She is willing to provide presentations about the project. If you are from an agency in the area and would like to know more about the project, please let her know.
- Ramsey said Pathways has 16 of the 25 enrolled and is exploring options for a community-based model similar to Centerstone to expand to surrounding counties.
- He has been working with juvenile court officers, guidance counselors and principals. Pathways would like to intervene with these youth prior to court system involvement.
- Pathways is partnering with the Aspell Recovery Center. The Center is using A-CRA with youth in the appropriate age range. All clients have shown a reduction in drug use from baseline.
- Those youth transitioning from A-CRA to ACC have been doing well. This takes the youth from a treatment model to a community model.
- O'Neal reminded participants that YTAC is serving as the state level advisory group for the grant. A goal for YTAC and other similar groups is to be open to all who have an interest in working on issues impacting transition-age youth.
- O'Neal also expressed her appreciation to the presenters for sharing this information with the group.

**Youth Housing (Toni Shaw, Donna Duarte, Sherry Smith and Don Alexander)**

*Refer to PowerPoint entitled “Tennessee Housing Development Agency”*

- O’Neal welcomed those presenting about housing for transitioning youth. She explained at past meetings participants had asked for topical meetings around some of the common issues with transitioning.
- Shaw, who works with the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA), provided an overview of THDA and the Community Programs Division. She walked participants through the PowerPoint. More information about THDA and its programs can be found on the website at [www.thda.org](http://www.thda.org)
- THDA is holding a housing summit on September 3-4, 2014.
- Duarte passed out cards about rental housing and how to locate rental housing. She encouraged participants to email her at [dduarte@thda.org](mailto:dduarte@thda.org) for more information.
- Youth should be eligible and should be encouraged to live in housing tax credit properties. She discussed the market for transitioning youth housing. Contractors do not typically want to build one-bedroom units for these youth. Program is for anyone meeting the criteria. Youth currently attending college are now encouraged to live in these properties.
- Smith discussed options to paying for and building rental housing. THDA has emergency solutions grants providing temporary funds to pay deposits, rent, back rent or charges, legal mediation, case management, credit repair, etc.
- She also stated TDHA 2014 funds are expected to be released in January 2015 pending board approval. Fiscal year 2013 funds were just awarded. TDHA will have grants up to \$100,000, with no matching funds required, earmarked for youth transitioning out of foster care. The application will be available online and due October 3, 2014, depending on federal approval of the plan. There will also be \$2.7 million open for grants ranging from \$35,000 to \$100,000 with 50 percent in-kind or cash match required.
- Alexander, with the Crossville Housing Authority, discussed a program serving 1,150 families in Upper Cumberland. He stated public housing is less than 30 percent of his inventory. He has had past issues with unreported transitioning youth moving in with current renters. This is an issue because all adults must be reported on the lease agreement.
- He currently has 325 public housing units with 89 percent occupied by persons with a mental disability. He has 300 people on his waiting list and 75 percent want a one-bedroom unit. His program is working to tear down big units and repurpose them for smaller units. Some of these units will be set aside for transitioning youth.
- He encouraged participants to advocate for a continuous funding stream for the Housing Trust Fund operated by THDA.
- Kelley updated participants about the TennCare Select Behavioral Health Advisory Committee. The committee is working on a series of videos/webinars for youth transitioning from foster care. One of these videos will be about housing, so he asked for anyone willing to present to talk with him.

- Leach thanked all those for presenting about housing for transitioning youth, and mentioned a joint letter from HUD and HHS encouraging providers to serve this population.

### **Other Business**

- Considering school is about to start, O'Neal asked if participants had questions for Mary Meador who directs education for DCS.
- Meador explained for the youth development centers and private providers, school is year round. DCS youth will be a part of the education electronic system similar to other youth, including attendance, report cards, transcripts and other records. This will make records easier to receive and send. Control over credits and other requirements will be locked into the system and the credit recovery system will be available to YDCs and private providers.
- YDCs have all new computers through a technology grant. DCS is now being treated equally and is considered a school system.
- Education specialists are required to attend foster care review boards to help youth in their final year. Specialists review all new foster youth for past IEPs and help review and update the IEP. The new system access will have these items and make it easier to navigate.
- She explained how the GED process is now called the High School Equivalency Test and the pass rate is higher. She can help students find a testing center if needed.
- She would like to see legislation requiring counties to graduate foster youth who meet minimum state requirements but not the county's higher requirements.
- DCS had over 400 high school graduates last year.
- O'Neal thanked Mary for her time and said ongoing challenges with record transactions have discussed by YTAC. She is glad to hear about possible changes.
- O'Neal mentioned a highlight of YTAC meetings has been when youth present about challenges they have had with the system. Emma Davis is here and will talk with us; O'Neal expressed thanks to Melissa McGee for inviting her to attend.
- Davis stated she is here to represent youth who do not qualify for extension services but still need support due to not having a stable home environment. She reported it is difficult to be on your own and support yourself. She would like to know about programs where she might be eligible. She is applying to start at Lipscomb this fall and currently works in a retail store. She is looking for a second job, and hopes to live off campus because it is cheaper.
- Goldsmith stated YV would be willing to help her with the TL program.
- James Martin asked what could we do to help youth like her from getting caught in the middle.

- Davis said services should be easier to find and should be promoted to students. Social media is one way, but in some cases service providers do not know about other available services.
- O’Neal thanked Davis for talking with the group, adding it is always inspiring when youth share their experiences.

### **Announcements**

- Leach updated the group about Tennessee Promise, as not all youth qualify. He will send the requirements to the group.
- O’Neal reminded the group about the next two meetings dates of September 18 and November 20. The next meeting will be focused on recommendations for the October report to the legislature. We will also want to discuss successes that have occurred.
- McGee mentioned the System of Care Conference in September. The conference will feature a youth track and encouraged participants to bring youth. There will also be a presentation about A-CRA.
- Soloman appreciated the topical meeting about housing and inquired if transportation might be a major challenge and a possible topic for the next meeting.
- O’Neal stated this is a challenge and might not have as many options as housing. She asked for suggestions from participants for options in this area. She encouraged participants to email Petty ([steve.petty@tn.gov](mailto:steve.petty@tn.gov)) if they have additional options for meeting topics.
- O’Neal shared her appreciation for everyone attending and working to improve services and supports for youth in transition.

**APPENDIX C**

**TCA 37-2-417**

**TCA 37-2-601**

*“I am happy that I decided to participate in EFC because at first I didn’t want another team of DCS people to deal with but now I am happy because the service is beneficial to me. My new team treats me good and respects me as a young adult. I am still in high school but can’t wait to go to college”. B.H.*

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\*\*\* Current through the 2014 Regular Session \*\*\*

Title 37 Juveniles

Chapter 2 Placement of Juveniles

Part 4 Foster Care

Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-2-417 (2014)

**37-2-417. Tennessee's Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act of 2010.**

(a) This section may be known and cited as "Tennessee's Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act of 2010."

(b) The department of children's services is authorized to develop a program to provide services to youth who are transitioning to adulthood from state custody. Services may be provided on a voluntary basis to any person who is at least eighteen (18) years of age but less than twenty-one (21) years of age, who was in the custody of the department at the time of the person's eighteenth birthday and who is:

- (1) Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- (2) Enrolled in an institution which provides postsecondary or vocational education;
- (3) Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment;
- (4) Employed for at least eighty (80) hours per month; or
- (5) Incapable of doing any of the activities described in subdivisions (b)(1)-(4) due to a medical condition, including a developmental or intellectual condition, which incapability is supported by regularly updated information in the permanency plan of the person. In such a case the person shall be in compliance with a course of treatment as recommended by the department.

(c) Services may also be made available to any person who meets the requirements of subsection (b) but refused such services at the time of the person's eighteenth birthday if at any time the person seeks to regain services prior to the person's twenty-first birthday.

(d) The advisory committee established in § 37-2-601 shall serve as an advisory committee for programs and services established by this section.

(e) The commissioner of children's services shall establish policies and procedures in order to create and implement this program.

(f) The department is authorized to seek federal funding or to participate in federal programs developed for this purpose.

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\*\*\* Current through the 2014 Regular Session \*\*\*

Title 37 Juveniles

Chapter 2 Placement of Juveniles

Part 6 Extension of Foster Care

Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-2-601 (2014)

**37-2-601. Establishment of extension of foster care services advisory council.**

(a) (1) The executive director of the Tennessee commission on children and youth shall establish a non-funded, voluntary, extension of foster care services advisory council, which shall be responsible for:

(A) Identifying strategies to assess and track effectiveness of extension of foster care services and the operation of resources centers authorized by this part; and

(B) Identifying the following:

(i) Strategies for maintaining accurate numbers of children served by extension of foster care services;

(ii) The number of services provided by the department of children's services;

(iii) The number of children who accept these services;

(iv) Reasons why children do not accept these services; and

(v) The number of children who continue their education and the number who do not.

(2) The advisory council shall report no later than October 31 of each year to the Tennessee commission on children and youth, the civil justice committee and health committee of the house of representatives and the health and welfare committee of the senate, making recommendations for the continuing operation of the system of extension of foster care services and supports.

(b) The department of children's services and other state agencies that provide services or supports to youth transitioning out of state custody shall participate fully in the council and shall respond to the recommendations put forth by the council as appropriate.

**37-2-602. Determination of whether youth applicants for assistance were formerly in state custody -- Identification by state agencies on agency forms -- Sharing of information.**

(a) All state agencies that administer cash or in-kind assistance, or both, to youth eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) years of age within the course of normal business shall make reasonable efforts to determine if an applicant for assistance has ever been in the custody of the state. If the applicant has been in state custody, the state agency shall share information with the applicant regarding possible services to be provided by the department of children's services, other state agencies and community partners.

(b) State agencies shall modify agency forms to identify youth who have been in state custody as the agencies' forms are otherwise revised and updated.

(c) The department of children services may share services information for former foster youth and youth transitioning from state custody through already established models such as, but not limited to, web sites, emails, verbal notifications or other printed material.

**37-2-603. Establishment of resource centers to provide or facilitate assistance.**

(a) The private, nonprofit community is urged to establish a network to provide information, assistance, services and supports to persons from sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years of age who were in foster care on the person's eighteenth birthday and persons from sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years of age who have been in foster care at any time after the person's fourteenth birthday.

(b) The resource centers shall provide or facilitate the assistance necessary to:

(1) Deal with the challenges and barriers associated with the transition into adulthood and early adult years;

(2) Support post-secondary education, vocational training and job skills development for such person;

(3) Find and retain employment, housing, transportation, parenting and family support, health care and mental health care; and

(4) Navigate systems and procedures that impact the person's education, employment, health and mental welfare and basic needs.

(c) These services shall be available at any time until the person reaches twenty-four (24) years

of age regardless of whether the youth elects to remain in a voluntary extension of foster care arrangement with the department or the youth chooses to terminate any relationship with the state.

**(d)** The resource centers shall be supported in part by the department in the community where the centers are located, subject to the availability of funds specifically appropriated for this purpose. The department is authorized and encouraged to share staff with the resource centers, as well as provide financial support.

**37-2-604. Preparing foster children for independent living.**

In preparing a foster child for independent living prior to the child reaching eighteen (18) years of age, the department shall provide information on the resource centers established pursuant to this part to all children over sixteen (16) years of age in foster care. The information shall include the address of the nearest resource center and services available from the center. Each child shall be encouraged to maintain periodic contact with resource center personnel and to provide current and accurate residence and contact information to the resource center. Ninety (90) days before a child leaves state custody the department of children's services shall notify the child of all information, services, web sites and assistance available for post-custody.

**37-2-605. Construction of part.**

Nothing in this part shall be construed to require a person to have maintained continuous contact with the resource centers or the department in order to be eligible to receive services from the resource centers or the department.

*“When the reality and urgency of the situation set in, I had to learn quickly. I learned how to listen and understand new things and ask good questions because there was so much at stake. “Michael helped me a lot. Without his help, I’d probably be homeless and without my daughter.”*

*Alexis*

*“Because of extension of foster care, I have been able to attend school at a lower cost and further my education.” ~ Kenneth*

*Extension of foster care has helped me to obtain stable housing, which I was very worried about before. ~  
Jacquez*

*“She never gave up on me. Vickie kept pushing me to do more and accomplish more.” ~ Rainey*