

TRANSITION: TEAMS IN ACTION



The Newsletter of the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative

Volume 5 October 2007

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2007 Foster Youth Focus Series Launched

Over 50 practitioners, leaders, and foster youth came together in June and again in September where they identified legislative, regulatory, and practice barriers to preparing foster youth for self sufficiency. Teams also spent time working on goals they set for themselves in June. These goals addressed at least one of the following topic areas:



- Systems Collaboration
- Independent Living Program Enhancement
- School and Work-Based Learning Activities

In the past five months, the nine teams working on these goals have made progress in putting their plans into action. A statewide convening will be held in November to further discuss policy barriers, possible solutions, and provide teams with the opportunity to network with more counties. For more information about the Foster Youth Focus Series contact Alyssum Root at (707) 824-4000 ext. 29 or aroot@newwaystowork.org

Youth Transition Action Team Initiative Moves Ahead

Over the past year, the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative has partnered with Casey Family Programs to invite additional counties to join the YTAT network. The network has grown from 12 teams in 2004 to 18 teams statewide this year. YTAT has provided teams with a wide range of supportive services ranging from individualized coaching to statewide facilitated events. All teams are working proactively to partner across systems in order to provide excellent services to foster youth transitioning out of care. Look for more information about the work some of the YTAT teams are doing in the [On the Ground](#) section of this newsletter. To see a list of all the current YTAT teams, see the [YTAT Highlights](#). For more information about the YTAT initiative, contact Charlene Mouille at (707) 824-4000 or cmouille@newwaystowork.org.

YOUTH TRANSITION ACTION TEAM 2007-2008 CALENDAR

- **November 14th:** Foster Youth Focus Series: Focus Session Three
- **January 8th-9th:** California Foster Youth Employment Summit

Download a PDF version of the YTAT calendar [online](#) at www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytadocuments/YTATCalendar2007.pdf

SAVE THE DATE!!!

Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit
January 8th and 9th, 2007
Sacramento, CA

For more information, visit www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/events/2008FosterYouthCareerDevelopmentEmploymentSummit.pdf

When a Youth Worker Turns Policy Wonk

Reprinted with permission from the June 2007 issue of *Youth Today* (www.youthtoday.org), written by Nell Bernstein.

A few years ago, Amy Lemley spent her days working with foster youth and telling people about them: Charisse had her baby, Donnie signed his first lease. Today, she stands in a conference room filled with business clad service providers and real estate developers, and talks about the giant PowerPoint slide behind her that asks, “What is THP-Plus?”

Don’t worry, this story is not about the PowerPoint presentation—although the slides explained an innovative transitional housing program that Lemley is trying to implement. It’s about Lemley’s

own transition from nonprofit entrepreneur and service provider to policy wonk and political operative. While youth work routinely includes public advocacy, Lemley is one of the few who have left the front lines of

service delivery for a full time mission to improve those services by working the corridors of government. Her journey shows why some people make the move, what they bring to the task that others can’t, and the adjustments they have to make.

“It is challenging,” says Robin Nixon, who began her career running programs for homeless and foster youth,



and is now director of the Washington-based National Foster Care Coalition. She says that immediately after she took her first advocacy job, as youth services director at the Child Welfare League of America, “I felt like I was going from this real community activist job to spending a lot of time at a desk.”

Read the full article at

www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/WhenaYouthWorkerTurnsPolicyWonk.pdf

[ork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/WhenaYouthWorkerTurnsPolicyWonk.pdf](http://www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/WhenaYouthWorkerTurnsPolicyWonk.pdf)

Want more stories like this for only \$25.00 a year? This article was excerpted from the June 2007 *Youth Today* newspaper and they have extended this special offer to YTAT network members. We only need 10 subscribers in order to qualify for the \$25.00 annual rate! To take advantage of this discount, send the following information to Alyssum Root at (707) 824-4000 ext. 29 or at aroot@newwaystowork.org by **November 17th, 2007**:

- Name
- Title
- Organization
- Mailing Address
- Phone Number
- Email Address

- Please indicate if you also want to receive *Youth Today's* weekly electronic newsblast which lists grant opportunities

For more information about *Youth Today*, visit www.youthtoday.org.

**Back issues are currently available online free of charge, but soon will only be available with a paid subscription.*

YOUTH CORNER

Youth Perspective

The Inside Scoop: Participating in a Work Training Program

Michael Doswell was 18 when he took a friend's advice and walked into the Foothill Employment and Training Center (FETC) in Los Angeles, CA. He had already completed an eight month training program where he earned his Veterinarian Assistant certification. He decided he did not want to continue in that field, and found a job in a pizza shop after that.



Michael wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and become a nurse, but did not feel that it was realistic to pursue this dream yet. He thought he might like working with children in recreational settings in the meantime.

When he went to FETC, Michael was surprised to be offered a job which paid over minimum wage and where he could advance to fill a Youth Advocate position. Staff at the center offered Michael the opportunity to bolster his computer skills by training him to work in the computer lab at the One Stop where FETC is housed. For more information about Michael's experiences, visit www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/youthcornermichaeldoswell.pdf

ON THE GROUND

Innovative Approaches from Around the State

Tulare County YTAT Team's Innovative Program Wins Statewide Recognition

Congratulations to the Tulare County YTAT Team! Their *Tulare County Youth Transitions Program* has earned the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) *Challenge Award/Most Replicable Program Award*. They were chosen out of 260 programs competing for the CSAC Challenge Awards, and will be featured on CSAC's website, in the *California Counties* magazine, and in the 2007 Challenge Awards program directory.

Tulare County's strong partnerships across systems have resulted in both employment and leadership development opportunities for vulnerable youth. Partners include youth, Community Services and Employment Training (CSET), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and Probation. Together, these groups have worked to open Extra Help positions in Tulare Works (in

the department of Health and Human Services), and create a new job title, "Trainee," specifically designed for youth participating in the Youth Transitions Program.

The Youth Transitions Program serves all WIA eligible youth with an emphasis on foster youth. The program serves about 35 youth continuously, some of whom go on to interview and attain permanent county positions. Others find permanent positions with local businesses after completing the program. Youth may keep their Trainee positions for up to 2 years for over 1500 hours each year. For more information about the Youth Transitions Program, visit www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/TulareCountyYTATInnovativeProgram.pdf

San Diego Issues Innovative Joint RFP

San Diego County has successfully issued a joint RFP to provide Independent Living Skills and Career Preparation services to foster youth throughout the county. The program will be funded by the San Diego Workforce Development Partnership and the County Child Welfare System (within the Health and Human Services Department). The team worked together to design program parameters and to resolve the challenges associated with braiding two major funding streams. The

program itself will utilize a two tiered system in which all foster youth can receive integrated ILP and career preparation services. Tier two will offer more individualized, intensive opportunities for career and independent living skills development. Soon a promising practice with more information about San Diego's joint RFP will be posted on the New Ways to Work website at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat.html.

San Francisco Task Force Releases Policy Recommendations

Committees and working groups from the Mayor's Task Force on Transitional Youth met more than 60 times to review information and data, come to agreement on priorities, and hash out policy recommendations to support San Francisco adolescents. The group has now officially adopted 16 of those recommendations which address problems of fragmented policies and programs through a comprehensive, integrated approach towards disconnected transitional age youth.

A report outlining the work, findings, and recommendations of the Task Force will be released in early August and available online at www.dcyf.org. Contact Marlo Simmons at (415) 554-8421 or marlo@dcyf.org for additional information. For more information about these policy recommendations visit www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/SanFranciscoRecommendationsPressRelease.pdf

POLICY MATTERS

News about Federal Legislation and Proposed California Foster Care Legislation

The Graduation Promise Act

Congress can play a vital role in addressing America's dropout challenge by passing the proposed Graduation Promise Act of 2007. This Act would establish a federal commitment to partner with states, districts, and schools to raise graduation rates. The new Act would seed and scale up effective strategies and school designs for keeping high school-aged students in school and achieving at a high level of academic performance. And it would put these proven strategies to use immediately in the nation's worst-performing high schools.

The [Graduation Promise Act](#) authorizes \$2.5 billion in new funding to:

- Create a federal-state-local secondary school reform partnership focused on transforming the nation's lowest performing high schools.

- Build capacity for high school improvement and provide resources to ensure high school educators and students facing the highest challenges receive the support they need to succeed.
- Strengthen state systems to identify, differentiate among, and target the level of reform and resources necessary to improve low performing high schools and ensure transparency and accountability for that process.
- Advance the research and development needed to ensure a robust supply of highly effective secondary school models for those most at risk of being left behind, and identify the most effective reforms.
- Support states to align their policies and systems to meet the goal of college and career-ready graduation for all students.

To read the full article, visit www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/GraduationPromiseAct.pdf

Update on California Legislation

Bills Currently Moving Through the Legislature:

Employment

- *AB 671 Civil Service Preference: Foster Youth*
Establishes a state civil service hiring preference for foster youth.

Education

- *AB 1578 Foster Youth Higher Education*
This is a comprehensive bill to ensure that California foster youth receive the academic preparation, financial assistance, and campus-based support services they need to access and succeed in higher education.

Transitions

- *AB 184 Independent Living Program (ILP) Parity*
This bill allows foster youth to be adopted at age 14 or older, or be in a non relative guardianship placement and retain eligibility for ILP services.

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY REPORTING

The San Francisco Chronicle recently reported on the challenges many foster youth face and several related bills on the governor's desk. Read the article, *Foster care overhaul-some say long overdue-on governor's desk* at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/09/29/MN3ESFF84.DTL>

Bill Signed Into Law:**Permanency**

- *AB 714 Adoption: Release of Information*
This bill allows the release of information regarding foster youth who have previously been adopted.

Bills Awaiting the Governor's Signature:**Education**

- *SB 123 High School Exit Examination*
This bill requires a school district or state special school to grant a high school diploma to a pupil with a disability who is scheduled to graduate from high school in 2008, has not passed the high school exit exam, has not received a high school exit exam waiver, and meets other specified criteria.
- *AB 216 Special Education: Nonpublic, Nonsectarian Schools*
This bill requires that the educational materials, services, and programs provided by nonpublic, nonsectarian schools, are consistent with the pupil's Individualized Education Program.
- *SB 219 Pupil achievement: Academic Performance Index: alternative education*
This bill would require that the API include additional information regarding test scores and other accountability data of pupils who were referred by the school or school district of residence to an alternative education program and school district dropout rates. It would also require a committee to recommend to the Superintendent and the state board certain matters relative to the assignment of the accountability data on pupils in alternative education programs.
- *AB 597 Career Technical Education: Web Site Pages*
This bill makes the State Department of Education responsible for the creation of comprehensive, easy to access, user-friendly Web site pages with specified information about opportunities and programs available in the state on career technical education in elementary and secondary schools.
- *AB 622 High School Equivalency Certificates: Confined Persons*
This bill would add a person who is at least 17 years old, has accumulated a certain number of units of high school credit, and is confined to a state or county hospital or to an institution maintained by a state or county correctional agency, to the list of persons eligible for a high school equivalency certificate.
- *AB 1540 Student financial aid: Cash for College Program*
This bill establishes the Cash for College Program under the administration of the Student Aid Commission, and would authorize the commission to allocate funds for support of local Cash for College projects designed to accomplish prescribed goals. The

bill would continuously appropriate voluntary contributions or donations received into the fund to the commission for purposes of the program.

Transitions

- *AB 508 Food stamps: eligibility: drug felonies.*
This bill provides that a person convicted of any drug felony shall be eligible for aid under the Food Stamp Program.
- *AB 1300 The Family Connection and Young Offender Rehabilitation Act of 2007*
This bill expands the purpose of the Division of Juvenile Programs within the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to include the provision of comprehensive education to young offenders, in addition to training, treatment, and rehabilitative services which shall be designed to promote family ties, in addition to community restoration and accountability, and to produce youth who are law-abiding and productive members of society.
- *AB 1331 Foster youth: Federal Benefits*
This bill requires a county to screen each foster youth in foster care who is at least 16 ½ to 17 years old in order to determine whether the youth is eligible for federal SSI benefits.

Permanency

- *AB 149 Expanding Searches for Relatives*
This bill requires that the California Department of Social Services and stakeholders draft best practices for using technology to help counties in identify all relatives, non-relatives, and extended members at the earliest possible moment for the foster child.
- *AB 298 Foster Care: Relative Placement*
Requires that relative caregiver cannot be pressured to adopt to prevent the child from being removed from the relative's care.

Health Care

- *AB 1687 Confidential information*
This allows health care providers to disclose medical information to a county social worker, probation officer, or any other person who has legal custody or care of a minor for the purpose of coordinating health care services provided to the minor.

Mental Health

- *SB 785 Foster Children: Mental Health Services*
This bill improves access to mental health services for foster children living outside of their county of origin by requiring the California Department of Social Services to develop improved procedures.

Systemic Reform

- *AB 1453 Foster care: residentially based services*
This bill requires CDSS to develop a plan to reform the current group care foster system to a system of residentially based services.



ABOUT THE YOUTH TRANSITION ACTION TEAM INITIATIVE

The Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) Initiative focuses on bringing together the resources of the workforce, education, philanthropic, and child welfare systems to better prepare adolescents who are current or former foster youth to achieve economic, educational, and employment success as they transition into the adult world.

Youth Transition Action Teams are made up of leaders from the child welfare, education, workforce development, and other local systems, working together to improve transition outcomes for youth touched by the child welfare system. Teams are also charged with assisting their county in achieving their child welfare enhancement goals, particularly in the area of youth permanency.

Youth Transition Action Teams partners include: Casey Family Programs (Initiative Sponsor), California Department of Social Services, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Jewish Community Foundation (for the Los Angeles County Team), Peninsula Community Foundation's Center for Venture Philanthropy (for the San Mateo County Team), The San Francisco Foundation (for the San Francisco County Team), The Child and Family Policy Institute of California, and The Foster Youth Employment, Training, and Housing Taskforce

For more information about the YTAT initiative, please contact Charlene Mouille at cmouille@newwaystowork.org or (707) 824-4000.

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