

TRANSITION: TEAMS IN ACTION



The Newsletter of the Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative

Inaugural Issue May 2005

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Transition Efforts

YTAT's frameworks are coordinated and aligned with the following initiatives:

- California Child Welfare Services' "[Comprehensive Youth Transition Plan](#)"
- Family to Family's "[Four Core Strategies](#)"
- It's My Life's "[Seven Life Domains](#)"
- Connected by 25's "[A Strategic Approach](#)"
- California Permanency for Youth Project's "[Objectives](#)"
- California State Youth Council's "[All Youth – One System Frameworks](#)"

THE YOUTH TRANSITION ACTION TEAMS INITIATIVE SEEKS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

Too many foster youth are falling through the cracks of the systems meant to support their transition to adulthood. The Youth Transition Action Teams initiative - being launched in California this month, National Foster Care Month - is a statewide effort to ensure better outcomes for current and former foster youth. The initiative is designed to learn from and build upon a number of good efforts already underway in California and around the nation. These include the California Child Welfare Systems Improvement activities, the California State Youth Council's Comprehensive Plan and Campaign for California's Youth, the work of the Youth Transition Funders Group (Connected by 25), the "All Youth – One System" frameworks of the Youth Council Institute, Family to Family, and a selected set of workforce development initiatives focused on foster care populations and other targeted groups that are operational in a number of California communities.

The YTAT initiative, as it is known, draws on the energy and resources of the Department of Social Services, the foundation community, the California Workforce Investment Board, and the Youth Council Institute, and intends to help integrate and expand current efforts to meet the challenges facing communities that are engaged in Child Welfare Systems Improvement. Separately, all show impressive commitments to foster youth; working together in local communities through YTAT will multiply their impacts and improve outcomes for young people. To read more, please visit <http://www.nww.org/ytat/may05newsletterdocs/ytatfactsheet.pdf>.

This inaugural issue of **TRANSITION: TEAMS IN ACTION** celebrates National Foster Care Month and introduces the YTAT initiative. **TRANSITION** will appear bimonthly, and will feature news about the initiative as well as updates from the participating counties. It will also include stories from people and organizations supporting foster youth, information on recent and pending legislation, and notices about resources and conferences. We welcome your comments and suggestions for stories! Please contact YTAT Project Manager, Chris Castillo at New Ways to Work: ccastillo@nww.org or (707) 824-4000 ext.28.

YTAT Partners

California Department of Social Services and State Interagency Team, Casey Family Programs, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the Jewish Community Foundation, the Foundation Consortium for California's Children & Youth, and New Ways to Work

OFF AND RUNNING

Twelve Counties Sign on to the YTAT Initiative

The YTAT initiative engages teams of community leaders (Transition Action Teams) from child welfare, education, workforce development, and other community agencies. These local teams are supported in their work together to leverage local resources and programs to provide an integrated continuum of services and opportunities for transitioning foster youth.

Participating Counties

Alameda, Colusa, Glenn, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Tehama, and Ventura Counties

ON THE GROUND

Innovative Projects Serving Foster Youth

Project HOPE

Alameda County WIB, Department of Social Services Partner to Create a Better Way to Serve Emancipating Foster Youth

By Thou Ny, Employment Consultant for Project HOPE

Alameda County is home to some 700-800 youth in foster care who are between the ages of 16 and 18. Each year approximately 200 to 250 of these youth age out of the foster care system into the labor market. However, national research has shown that some of the youth are likely to emancipate into homelessness and unemployment, which is a serious concern for the Alameda County Workforce Investment Board (ACWIB) as well as for the County's Social Services administrators.

Project HOPE, approximately two years in the making, is one of the first programs in the nation to address the needs of foster youth by connecting the County Child Welfare Services with Workforce Investment Board services.



Aimed at incorporating employment preparation services into the child welfare system, Project HOPE has altered the disconnected landscape between child welfare and the workforce systems. More importantly, it has found a way to bring much needed resources to youth aging out of the foster care system.

Prior to Project HOPE, the County's workforce investment and child welfare systems did not have a history of engagement with each other. Today, both systems are working together, integrating their programs to reduce transition barriers for foster youth.

To learn how Project HOPE was created, please visit www.nww.org/ytat/may05newsletterdocs/projecthope.pdf.

To read about successes in the first two years of the program, please visit <http://www.nww.org/yci/ycideapdfs/AlamedaEmancipatedFosterYouthYCidea.8.04.pdf>.

To contact Project HOPE, please email Rosario Flores at rflores2@acgov.org.

May is National Foster Care Month



This year marks the 17th annual National Foster Care Month, with events taking place in at least 41 states and dozens of communities around the country. The events range from education fairs to news conferences, job shadowing to public awareness campaigns. Did you know that more than 500,000 American children and youth are in foster care?

The National Foster Care Month organizers hope to communicate the message that youth in foster care are the responsibility of all Americans, and that there is much that individuals can do to help them. They also want to acknowledge publicly the important work of foster parents and social workers.

Casey Family Programs is again leading the efforts to promote National Foster Care Month. This year thirteen other national organizations are also partnering with Casey Family Programs to raise awareness of the needs of foster youth.

To learn more about National Foster Care Month, please visit www.fostercaremonth.com.

California events include the following activities:

National Foster Parent Association 35th Annual Education Conference, May 9 - 14, 2005, Garden Grove, CA
Workshops, exhibits, and entertainment celebrating National Foster Care Month will be offered. To learn more, please contact Jamie Burns, (800) 557-5238 or jburns@nfpainc.org.

2nd Annual Foster Youth Job Shadow Day
May 17, 2005, San Francisco, CA

This event provides an opportunity for foster youth to explore career options by job-shadowing a professional, followed by a networking lunch for youth, mentors, and the community. It is hosted by the San Francisco Junior Chamber of Commerce, Honoring Emancipated Youth (HEY), and San Francisco's Independent Living Skills Program. To learn more, please visit www.heysf.org.

Ribbon Tying Ceremony

May 23, 2005, Red Bluff, CA

Tehama County will be holding a Ribbon Tying Ceremony to bring awareness to foster care in the community. One ribbon will be tied to the Tehama District Fairgrounds fence for each Tehama County child in foster care. The fence lines one of the busiest streets in Red Bluff. To learn more, please contact Ginny Alford (530) 528-4171 or galford@tcoss.org.

VANTAGE POINT

Stories of People who are Supporting Youth in Foster Care

My ILP College Coordinator Made All the Difference

By Myeshia Grice, California Youth Connection, Chapter Development Director

My first Experiences in Foster Care

I was in the foster care system for six years in a relative placement setting. As I entered the system, I was unaware of the types of services I should have been receiving or the supports that should have been provided to my auntie so that life could be better.

The Independent Living Program Helped Me Reach for Success as an Adult

I feel that life in foster care really changed for me when I became involved in the Independent Living Program (ILP) in San Francisco. I developed a great relationship with my ILP college coordinator who was extremely supportive. I believe she saw who I really was and what my potential could be. She kept asking me what I planned to do when I finished high school – what my direction, goals, desires were. My grade point average was 1.9, and I never believed college to be an option for me, but she was like my cheerleader – “Yes, you can visit college; yes you can do whatever it is you set your mind to do for your life!”



I emancipated myself by the time I was 17-years old and finished high school by this time as well. Since my ILP college coordinator kept cheering me on, I applied to and was accepted at California State University, Hayward. After a while, the California Youth Connection (CYC), the foster youth advocacy organization, hired me.

Where I Am Now

As current Director of Chapter Development for CYC, I supervise outreach staff members who go into various counties throughout California and help members (current and former foster care youth) organize around particular issues that have significant impact on their lives. I sit on several different committees and consult for the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, and I am also co-chair of the State Youth Council.

My Vision for Foster Youth

All children should be provided with the same opportunities, and the foster care system needs to work in the best interest of the child and family. I am a complete believer in the concept of Transition Action Teams. We need our schools, social workers, peers, and community organizations to respond to who we are and to create a framework that wraps around and supports young people in the system of care to grow into strong, healthy, and successful adults who can contribute to their communities when they age out of the foster care system.

To read an extended version of this article, please visit www.nww.org/ytat/may05newsletterdocs/mgrice.pdf.

California Youth Connection (CYC) is an organization for current and former foster youth. CYC is founded on the belief that no one knows the foster care system better than the people who live in it. CYC is dedicated to improving the foster care system by helping current and former foster care youth insert their voice into the dialogue about social work and child welfare practice. To learn more, please visit www.calyouthconn.org.

RESOURCE ROUNDUP

Publications & Materials

Adolescence and the Transition to Adulthood: Rethinking Public Policy

This summary from Chapin Hall's November 2004 conference covers the research presented as well as discussions of the program and policy implications of this research. Topics include education, workforce development, and issues facing several at-risk populations. To view, please visit http://www.about.chapinhall.org/conferences/NovATA/Conference_Summary_Final.pdf.

Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study

Adults who were in the foster care system suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at rates up to twice those of war veterans, according to the study released by Casey Family Programs and its partners. The report stresses the importance of reducing multiple placements for children on their way to a permanent home and other recommendations. To view the report, please visit <http://www.casey.org/MediaCenter/PressReleasesAndAnnouncements/NWAlumniStudy>.

Training Materials for AB 490

Many advocates are citing AB 490 as a model for addressing the educational needs of foster youth. Among other things, AB 490 assures foster youth access to the same academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities as their peers. The National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues has assembled training materials to help put AB 490 into practice. To view the materials, please visit <http://www.abanet.org/child/rc/lji/education/ab490.html>.

CAPITOL STEPS

News about Recent & Pending Foster Care Legislation in California and News about Federal Workforce Development, TANF, & Education Legislation

Recent Foster Care Legislation

Quality Non-Public Schools for Foster Youth (AB 1858)

AB 1858 addresses the fact that some foster youth have reported receiving poor quality education at some non-public group home schools. This bill, signed into law in September 2004, sets standards and mandates oversight for group home schools. The goal is for foster youth in non-public group homes to receive high quality education.

Education WORKS! (SB 1939)

SB 1939 acknowledges the fact that 95% of foster youth want to pursue their education past high school, but fewer than 25% actually do; many foster youth simply do not have access to the necessary information. Signed into law in September 2004, this bill supports foster youths' right to access information on higher education. The goal is for foster youth to access the information they need to pursue post-secondary education.

Transitional Housing for Foster Youth Fund (AB 427)

AB 427 addresses the need that emancipated foster youth have for safe and affordable housing and supportive services. The Fund was established with the passage of AB 427 in 2001 and provides funding for housing and services for emancipated foster youth through age 20. The goal is to help emancipated foster youth make a successful transition to sustainable housing.

Postsecondary Education: Outreach & Assistance for Emancipated Foster Youth (AB 2463)

AB 2463 also acknowledges the fact that only 25% of foster youth pursue postsecondary education. Passed in 1996, the legislation includes outreach, access, and retention services for foster youth. The goal is to encourage foster youth to enroll in a state university or a community college.

Proposition 63 Mental Health Services Expansion, Funding

Proposition 63, a voter initiative, acknowledges the shortage of effective mental health services in California. Approved by voters on November 2, 2004, Proposition 63 requires the State to expand services and develop innovative programs and integrated service plans for mentally ill children, adults and seniors. It will finance these services by taxing individuals who make over \$1 million a year. Planning for implementation is currently underway. The goal is to serve the needs of California's mentally ill residents fully.

Pending Foster Care Legislation

Dependent children: Out-of-Home Placements (AB 1412)

AB 1412 acknowledges that not all youth in foster care receive the same level of oversight and support. AB 1412 would expand provisions to include any child who is ten years of age or older and who has been in an out-of-home placement. The goal is to give every youth in foster care adequate case management and support.

Foster Children: Social Security Assistance (AB 1633)

AB 1633 acknowledges that not all blind and disabled children in foster care who are eligible for Social Security survivorship- and supplemental-security-income benefits receive them because the State does not have a program in place to manage those benefits. AB 1633 would require the State Department of Social Services to appoint a representative payee for each foster care beneficiary who cannot manage or direct the management of his or her benefits. The goal is to make sure that the eligible children and youth receive their benefits and have them managed reliably.

Federal Workforce Development, TANF, and Education Legislation

On the federal level, the Workforce Investment Act, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the Career and Technical Education Program are all being reauthorized. To read more, please visit www.nww.org/yaci/spr05reporterdocs/ycireporterspr05.pdf and follow the links to articles on these programs.

The FY06 budget is also under negotiation. To read more, please visit www.nww.org/yaci/spr05reporterdocs/nyecfy06.pdf.

YTAT Tools and Frameworks are Available

To view the YTAT Tools and Frameworks, please visit www.nww.org/toolchestpages/fytatools.html

UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Pathways to Adulthood 2005

May 18-20, 2005 (Atlanta, GA)

The conference will focus on the latest issues and trends concerning independent living and transitional living programs, emphasizing economic opportunities for older youth in care.

For more information, please visit nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/npta05/npta05call.htm.

Youth Engagement Initiative One Day Training

May 26, 2005 (Orange County, CA) and June 8, 2005 (San Jose, CA)

This one-day training led by Edward De Jesus will introduce the Youth Engagement Initiative (YEI).

YEI is an entirely new method for connecting with youth and then using youth to produce more positive program outcomes for their peers and programs alike. For more information, please visit

www.calworkforce.org/CWA/conferences/Training.php?contentID=549.

ACSA/CCSESA 10th Annual School-to-Career Academy

June 29 – July 1, 2005 (San Diego, CA)

The 2005 School-to-Career Academy focus is: "School-to-Career - The View from the Summit: Rigor, Relevance & Relationship." The Academy will showcase model programs, effective practices, and experiences, especially those that address key areas of NCLB such as research based practices, highly qualified teachers, high performing students, and evaluation/assessment. For more information, please

www.ca-clearinghouse.net/stc/calendar/showcal.cfm.

About YTAT

The Youth Transition Action Team Initiative focuses on bringing together the resources of the workforce, education 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.

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 system enhancement goals, particularly in the area of youth permanency.

For more information about the YTAT initiative, please contact

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103 A Morris Street
Sebastopol CA 95472
(707) 824-4000

www.nww.org

or New Ways to Work
The Thoreau Center
1016 Lincoln Boulevard Suite 221
San Francisco, CA 94129
(415) 995-9860

NEW CONNECTIONS Timely Sources of Information

New Strategic Vision for the Delivery of Youth Services now available In Booklet Form

www.nww.org/ytat/may05newsletterdocs/dolyouthvisioobooklet.pdf

New Training Employment Guidance Letter on Common Measures

www.nww.org/ytat/may05newsletterdocs/tegl28-04.pdf

Youth Policy Action Center

www.youthpolicyactioncenter.org

Proposition 63 State Implementation Information

www.dmh.cahwnet.gov/MHSA/default.asp

California Institute for Mental Health Info on Proposition 63 Implementation

www.cimh.org/mhsa.cfm

