



PROMISING FOSTER YOUTH TRANSITION PRACTICE

Youth Transition Action Teams Initiative Leveraging Community Resources to Ensure Successful Transitions for Foster Youth

Mendocino County Youth-Led Transition Plan & Conference

Submitted by: Mendocino County SELPA

Community: Mendocino County, California

Key Partners:

Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency (Mental Health, Public Health and Social Services), Mendocino County Juvenile Probation, Mendocino County Office of Education (SELPA, TPP, Workability, Foster Youth), Nuestra Casa Family Resource Center, Mendocino County Youth Project and Redwood Children's Services (Youth Resource Center). These partners make up the Youth Embracing Transition to Independence (YETTI) Council, a sub-committee of Mendocino County Children's System of Care (CSOC). CSOC is overseen by Policy Council for Children and Youth (PCCY). There is also a reporting relationship and overlapping membership between the YETTI Council and the WIA Youth Council.

Subject: Cross-System Partnerships, and Career Preparation

All Youth – One System Element: Community Services and Support, Career Development

Function: Convene Leaders and Promote Policy, Build Awareness, and Create Linkages and Connect Systems

The Challenge:

Anecdotally, it is viewed that if youth have identifiable goals, realistic time lines and people to help them get where they want to go, their outcomes for transition will be improved. They will be contributing members of the communities in which they live. They will have the ability to take advantage of resources as individually appropriate, including housing, education, medical, mental health, and employment.

In the 2007 Mendocino County Status Report on Children and Youth, compiled by the Policy Council for Children and Youth along with the Child Abuse Prevention Commission, only 24 of 134 foster youth age 16-20 stated that they were employed, 8 were enrolled in college or higher education and 24 had completed vocational training and 66 were enrolled in ILS services. Data is not available to compare these numbers to the non-foster youth population.

The challenge was to provide tools to caring professionals working with transition age youth that would put youth in the driver's seat of their transition planning process and improve the overall outcomes for youth of this age in the county.

The Practice and Evidence

In the fall of 2007, the YETTI (Youth Embracing Transition Towards Independence) Council launched a pilot to prepare and support youth-designed and led transition planning conferences. The YETTI Council's goal is to grow this program to scale in order to support the transition process for all agency-served youth in Mendocino County.

The Details

The process for establishing the program:

When the YTAT Foster Youth Focus Series took place in 2007, key staff from several agencies across the county, including partners from Health and Human Services, Education, and several community-based organizations, saw this as an opportunity to take the next steps towards forming an interagency council focused on the needs of transition aged youth. Following the first Focus Session, building on a foundation laid by the Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency work group, they formed the YETTI Council. The YETTI Council is a sub-committee of the Mendocino County Children's System of Care (CSOC). This new council was created to focus on services to high risk transition aged youth (youth being served by Mental Health Services, Social Services, Probation, Special Education, and other community based organizations).

Transitioning youth meet with their case carrier or manager to review their current transition plan (IEP or ILP). Next, youth participate in a training to support their self-advocacy skills so that they will be prepared to lead their transition planning session and conference. The training includes an explanation of process, self-advocacy skills, review of script, creation of a list of who to invite, completion of the Transition Conference Form, and a role play of the transition meeting.

Following the training, the youth work with their case carrier or agency staff to identify who they would like to be involved (along with those legally mandated) and work to coordinate their transition meeting. Prior to the transition meeting date, the youth rehearse their script with involved staff. On the day of the transition meeting, the youth leads his/her IEP/Transition Conference.

The YETTI Council hopes that the pilot will give teachers and other care providers the support they need to implement youth-led transition planning for all transition aged youth.

Evaluation:

The YETTI Council is currently developing an evaluation tool for youth and providers to complete to help refine the practice prior to growing to scale. They also plan on collecting follow-up data to determine what impact the implementation of viable, meaningful transition planning has on the employment and post secondary education status of youth one to two years out of school.

What's Next for this Promising Transition Practice?

As they move forward following this pilot, the Mendocino County team is looking at creating a transition interview document that all of the agencies could use, and which would assist youth in preparing for the transition conference or IEP/ITP. From this, different agencies will still have their own individualized plans, but will be able to extract commonly used information from the shared preparation document.

Where to go for more information:

Carol Kuhling Barrett
WorkAbility I / TPP Program Manager
Mendocino County SELPA
2240 Old River Rd.
Ukiah, CA 95490
707-467-5171
cbarrett@mcoe.us