

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN TRANSITION

Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood is challenging. This transition can mean many things to many people — leaving home, going to school or work, buying a house or starting a family. These transitions aren't easy in the best of circumstances. And for individuals with serious mental health conditions or addictions, this transition can be even more challenging.

The “transitional age” is defined differently by many groups and can range anywhere from 14 years old to 29 years old. It is during these years that individuals, receiving public services and supports, make the transitions from adolescence to adulthood and in many cases face some major challenges when it comes to aging out of child-serving systems and benefit programs and into adult serving programs. This often means that the youth will need to find new health care professionals for health and behavioral health services while navigating the complex world of benefits to determine if they are eligible in the adult programs. Moving through this transition can be challenging, and many youth in Ohio could use more help.

Transitional youth are the ones in need of the most help because they are at the point in their life where they can either drown in poverty and depression or get the help they need to turn their life around to become productive members of society... Transitional youth need the most funding, the most care and attention. Laws that are keeping this from happening need to change.

—quote from an Ohio young adult with a mental illness

as written in, *Paving the Way for Young Adults in Ohio's Mental Health System*

Facts

- Of the total population served by Ohio's community mental health providers, 25% are between the ages of 14-25 (Ohio Department of Mental Health, 2009).
- 22% of transition age youth nationally experienced homelessness after leaving foster care (Congressional Research Service. “Youth Transitioning From Foster Care: Background, Federal Programs, and Issues for Congress,” May 2008).
- 54% of transition age youth nationally had clinical levels of at least one mental health problem and 20% had three or more mental health problems (Casey Family Programs, The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, 2003).
- There are approximately 8,200 youth and young adults in Ohio prisons, representing 22% of the total incarcerated inmate population (Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, 2009).
- Young adults aged 18-25 had the highest rate of current use of illicit drugs in 2009. Among young adults, 18.1% used marijuana, 6.3% used prescription-type drugs nonmedically, 1.8% used hallucinogens, and 1.4% used cocaine (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2009).
- 33% of transition age youth had household incomes at or below the poverty level, which is three times the national poverty rate (Casey Family Programs – The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, 2003).
- On average daily, 250 unaccompanied youth are homeless in Ohio (Coalition On Homelessness and Housing In Ohio, 2009).
- Over 33% of transition age foster care youth receive neither a high school diploma nor a GED, compared to fewer than 10% of their same-age peers (Casey Family Programs – The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, 2003).

Supporting Transition

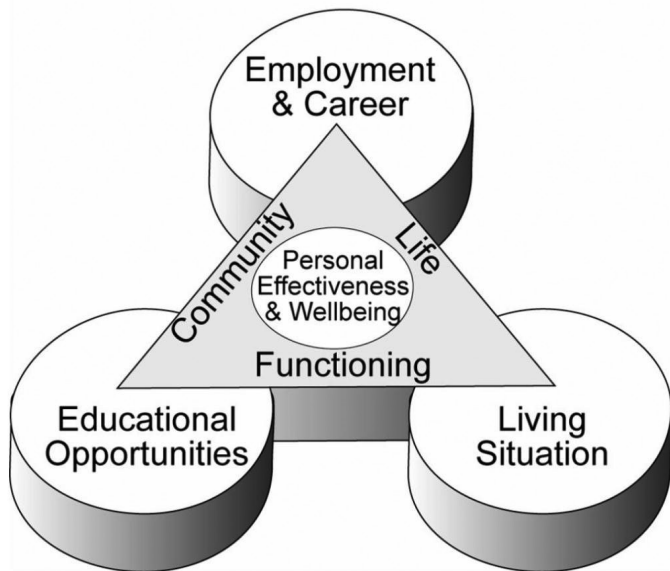
In recent years, more light has been shined on the challenges faced by youth and young adults in transition. Programs have been developed and implemented to target services and supports for this population. These programs are driven by many different systems with varying areas of focus: housing and independent living skills, ensuring a smooth transition from child serving to adult serving health and behavioral health services, education and employment skills, engaging youth to plan for the future, benefits coordination, and some of the best focus on comprehensive transition planning and support.

Recently, the Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council formed a Steering Committee to focus on this issue. The final report from this group, the *Youth and Young Adults in Transition Strategic Planning Report* made recommendations for how Ohio could improve resources, services and supports for youth and young adults. The priorities identified in this report focus on the following:

1. Establishing a comprehensive system of sustainable resources by aligning agencies' policies and processes. Example: develop cross-system eligibility requirements, support pooled resources and joint planning.
2. Enhance communication by developing a plan to better interact with youth utilizing a multi-media approach. Example: utilize social networking, blogs and texting to communicate with youth.
3. Empowering youth and families with tools for successful transition. Example: provide training for youth to become self-advocates, equip youth with independent living and employment skills.

This work is ongoing and agencies at both the state and local levels continue to look for ways to work better together to provide youth and young adults in transition with the most appropriate services and supports — in a way that is both effective and efficient.

Transition Domains



The Transition to Independence Process (TIP) model developed by the National Network on Youth Transition is nationally recognized for its focus on improving outcomes for youth in transition by focusing on the transition domains shown above.

Health Care Coverage

Policymakers in Ohio and at the federal level have recognized that health coverage is an important part of the transition to adulthood. For this reason, the federal government and Ohio's government have taken steps to help young adults remain on their parent's health insurance during their time of transition.

Federal Dependent Coverage: Young adults (ages 19-26) who cannot get benefits through their employer are eligible to remain on their parent's plan.

- The Federal law states that an older dependent must be treated just like any other dependent. If the employer pays a portion for a dependent, it must also pay that portion for older age dependents.

In Ohio, dependent coverage has been extended to unmarried children up to age 28.

- For dependents between ages 26 and 28, the full cost of coverage can be assessed to the parent. This coverage is only tax deductible under state law.

* Neither state nor federal law requires the child to live with or be financially dependent upon their parent.

Sources:

National Network on Youth Transition
Ohio Family and Children First Council

Ohio Department of Mental Health
The Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health

Ohio Department of Insurance