

Serving Youth With Mental Health Needs

NCLD/Youth: Independent
Living Center Youth Programs
Leadership Learning
Community

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Presenters

- **Curtis Richards-** National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth

Who We Are & What We Do

National Consortium on Leadership and Disability Youth
National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability Youth

- IEL
- NYEC
- PACER
- Univ. of MN
- Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison

Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department
of Labor

Frameworks

- Guideposts for Success
- Tunnels & Cliffs
- Transitioning Youth with Mental Health Needs to Meaningful Employment and Independent Living

The Stubborn Dilemma

- 15% of high school age population has a disability.
- Between 10% and 12% of adolescents will require treatment for a mental health illness.
- 65% with mental health illness will drop out of school before obtaining a high school diploma.
- Emotional disturbance leads to high percentage of negative consequences (suspension, firing, expulsion, arrest).
- Over 100,000 youth in juvenile detention or correction facilities- at least 65% with a diagnosable mental disorder, 20% with serious mental health disorder.

More Stubborn Dilemma

- Over 500,000 youth are in the foster care system.
- Almost 4 out of 5 foster care alumni have significant mental health disabilities.
- 50% of incarcerated youth have an emotional disturbance, 20% with a severe emotional disturbance, and 10% with a specific learning disability.
- 60% unemployment rate for youth with a disability, 90% for youth with serious mental illness.
- 68% of youth with disability live below poverty level.
- Youth with mental health needs are 3 times as likely to live in poverty.

Youth with Mental Health Needs: Definition

- For the purpose of the Guide
- Includes Mental Health System Identification
 - Externalizing and Internalizing MHN
- Includes Special Education Disability Identification
 - Emotional Disturbance

Signs of Potential Mental Illness

There are several indications that may signal potential mental health needs in youth. One or two alone are not enough to indicate this potential, but combinations of these behaviors coupled with problems getting along with family members or peers or doing well at school may indicate a need for further evaluation. (NAMI)

- Truancy or school failure
- Encounters with the juvenile justice system
- Reckless and risky behaviors
- Persistent crying
- Lethargy or fatigue
- Irritability or grouchiness
- Over-reactions to failure
- Isolation from family and friends
- Separation anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Social phobias
- Repetitive, ritualistic behaviors
- Changes in speech and behavior
- Delusions, paranoia, or hallucinations
- Lack of motivation
- Flat emotional responses
- Disguising low self-esteem with “tough” behavior

Disclaimer on Labels

- NCWD/Y strives to make **youth** the center of all the work we do. In this, we mean that young people are treated as **youth first** with the needs, wants, desires, of **youth**, before their disability, mental health need, or other lens is considered. At no time should labels take the place of asking a young person “so, what is your preference?”

Who Are We Talking About?

- Depressive Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Conduct Disorders
- Hidden Disabilities
- Substance Abuse
- Specific Learning Disabilities

Determining Whether a Youth has Mental Health Needs

- A youth's records, behavior, assessment results, or interview responses may suggest previously unidentified or undiagnosed problems that may affect career planning and career development.
- Many youth with mental health needs receiving special education services are identified in elementary school. In spite of their large numbers, youth who develop a mental health need in adolescence are often not identified at all, although some research indicates that several mental health syndromes tend to appear first during that timeframe

The Tunnel Problem

- Each of the many systems that serve youth has a fixed menu of services or solutions to offer. Because most agency staff members think primarily of the set of solutions within their system, they usually send youth down one of these “service tunnels.” The tunnel may be the most appropriate choice among the agency’s set of options, but may still have an ineffective course of action. Once a youth starts down a particular tunnel, it’s often hard to reverse course and take a different path. Ross and Miller, 2005

Tunnels Include

- Foster Care
- Juvenile Justice
- Mental Health
- Social Security
- Special Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- WIA Youth Services
- Native American Services
- TANF

Treatment Interventions

- Home-Based Services (maintain youth at home and prevent out-of-home placement)
 - Child Welfare, JJ, and MHS
- Community-Based Interventions
 - Mild to intensive clinical and social supports to create a network of services for youth and families inside of communities
- School Based Mental Health Services
- Outpatient Treatment and Intensive Outpatient Treatment
- Medication Treatment
- Partial Hospitalization and Day Treatment
- Residential Treatment Centers
- Inpatient Treatment
- Case Management

Meeting the Needs of Youth with Mental Health Needs

- School-Based Preparatory Experiences
- Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Youth Development & Leadership
- Connecting Activities
- Family Involvement & Supports

School-Based

All Youth Need

- Academic programs based on clear standards
- Career and technical education programs based on professional and industry standards
- Curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work, and community-based learning experiences
- Small and safe learning environments
- Support from highly qualified staff
- Access to an assessment system with multiple measures
- Graduation standards that include options

School-Based

Youth with Disabilities Need to

- Use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling
- Access specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school
- Develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations
- Be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff that may or may not be school staff

School-Based

Youth with Mental Health Needs May Need

- Comprehensive transition plans linked across systems, without stigmatizing language, that identify goals, objectives, strategies, supports, and outcomes that address individual mental health needs in the context of education
- Appropriate, culturally sensitive, behavioral and medical health interventions and supports
- Academically challenging educational programs and general education supports that engage and re-engage youth in learning
- Opportunities to develop self-awareness of behavioral triggers and reasonable accommodations for use in education and workplace settings
- Coordinated support to address social-emotional transition needs from a highly qualified cross-agency support team

Career Preparation

All Youth Need

- Career assessments to help identify students' school and post-school preferences and interests
- Structured exposure to postsecondary education and other life-long learning opportunities
- Exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including information about educational and entry requirements, income and benefits potential, and asset accumulation
- Training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills

Career Preparation

Youth Should be Exposed To

- Opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing
- Multiple on-the-job training experiences
- Opportunities to learn and practice their work skills
- Opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to career pathway

Career Preparation

Youth with Disabilities Need to

- Understand the relationships between benefits planning and career choices
- Learn to communicate their disability-related work support and accommodation needs
- Learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training, and employment settings

Career Preparation

Youth with Mental Health Needs May Need

- Graduated opportunities to gain and practice their work skills
- Positive behavioral supports in work settings
- Connections to successfully employed peers and role models with mental health needs
- Knowledge of effective methods of stress management to cope with the pressures of work
- Knowledge of and access to a full range of workplace supports and accommodations
- Connections to programs and services for career exploration

Youth Development & Leadership

All Youth Need

- Mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults
- Peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities
- Exposure to role models in a variety of contexts
- Training in skills such as self-advocacy
- Exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service
- Opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem

Youth Development & Leadership

Youth with Disabilities Also Need

- Mentors and role models including person with and without disabilities
- An understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities

Youth Development & Leadership

Youth with Mental Health Needs may Require

- Meaningful opportunities to develop, monitor, and self-direct their own treatment and recovery
- Opportunities to learn healthy behaviors
- Exposure to factors of positive youth development such as nutrition and exercise
- An understanding of how disability disclosure can be used proactively
- An understanding of the dimensions of mental health treatment
- Exposure to peer networks and adult consumers of mental health services with positive outcomes

Connecting Activities

All Youth Need

- Mental and physical health services
- Transportation & housing
- Tutoring
- Financial planning and management
- Post-program supports through structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies
- Connection to other services and opportunities (recreation, sports, faith-based organizations)

Connecting Activities

Youth with Disabilities Need

- Acquisition of appropriate assistive technologies
- Community orientation and mobility training
- Exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers
- Personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, and others
- Benefits-planning counseling

Connecting Activities

Youth with Mental Health Needs may Need

- An understanding of how to locate and maintain appropriate mental health care services
- An understanding of how to create and maintain informal personal support networks
- Access to safe, affordable, permanent housing
- Access to flexible financial aid options for postsecondary education
- Case managers who connect and collaborate across systems.
- Holistic, well-trained, and empathetic service providers

Family Involvement

All Youth Need Families and Caring Adults who Have

- High expectations that build upon the young person's strengths and interests
- Been involved in their lives and assisting them toward adulthood
- Access to information about employment, further education, and community resources
- Taken an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners
- Access to medical, professional, and peer support networks

Family Involvement

Youth with Disabilities Need Families and Caring Adults who Have

- An understanding of their youth's disability and how it affects his or her education, employment, and daily living
- Knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation
- Knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations available
- An understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals

Family Involvement

Youth with Mental Health Needs also Need Families and Caring Adults who

- Understand the cyclical and episodic nature of mental illness
- Offer emotional support
- Know how to recognize and address key warning signs of risky behaviors
- Monitor youth behavior and anticipate crises without being intrusive
- Access supports and resources
- Extend guardianship past the age of majority when necessary

Successful Program Strategies



Recovery Model

10 fundamentals

- Self-Direction
- Individualized and Person-Centered
- Empowerment
- Holistic
- Non-Linear
- Strengths-Based
- Peer Support
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Hope

“Mental health recovery not only benefits individuals with mental health disabilities by focusing on their abilities to live, work, learn, and fully participate in our society, but also enriches the texture of American community life. America reaps the benefits of the contributions individuals with mental disabilities can make, ultimately becoming a stronger and healthier nation.” - US Department of Health and Human Services

Transition to Independence

“TIP” Model

- Engage young people through relationship development, person-centered planning, and a focus on their futures
- Tailor services and supports to be accessible, coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and built on strengths to enable the young people to pursue their goals in all transition domains
- Acknowledge and develop personal choice and social responsibility with young people
- Ensure that a safety-net of support is provided by a young person’s team, parents, and others
- Enhance a young person’s competencies to assist them in achieving greater self-sufficiency and confidence
- Maintain an outcome focus in the TIP system at the individual young person, program, and system levels
- Involve young people, parents, and other community partners in the TIP system at the practice, program, and community levels

Guidelines for Youth Service Professionals

- Staff must be youth-centered, addressing the strengths, needs, and preferences of the youth with MHN and his or her family members.
- Services must be individualized, focusing on each person's unique personal, educational, and employment profiles.
- Staff must provide an “unconditional safety net” of support to the students the serve.
- Transition services must be provided in a manner that ensures continuity of effort and support from the student's perspective.
- Services should be outcome-oriented, emphasizing activities that will promote student achievement in education, employment, and independent living.

Addressing Individual Barriers

What Works at Service
Delivery

Experiences from the
Transition-Age Youth Program
and the Oregon Family
Support Network

NCWD/Youth Case Study

- The Village Integrated Service Agency's Transitional Age Youth program- *Long Beach, CA*
- Options- *Vancouver, WA*
- Our Town Integrated Service Agency- *Indianapolis, IN*
- The Transitional Community Treatment Team- *Columbus, OH*
- YouthSource- *Renton, WA*

Common Challenges

- Mistrust by youth of organized programs, especially if perceived to be driven by a public system or adults
- The stigma attached to traditional mental health therapy
- Low self-esteem and self-worth
- Low societal expectations on the ability of youth to succeed
- Traditional employment models that do not maximize individual strengths
- A lack of appropriate transitional housing in the community

Common Operational Principles

Design Features

Design Feature 1

- **A Place to Call Their Own**
 - A distinct program identity, including a separate physical location, promotes attachment and engagement of youth
 - Youth feel strongly that co-location with adult mental health services prematurely exposes them to their own possibly depressing and un-inspiring futures
 - Youth do not want to feel that they are transitioning into the adult mental health system, rather the adult world of living independently

Design Feature 2

- **Staffing Choices that Maximize Engagement**
 - Staff patterns should reflect a blend of knowledge of mental health and work development strategies that are appropriate to different ages and developmental stages
 - Staffing choices should reflect a balance between the expertise and guidance that adults can provide with the peer support and sense of youth ownership that youth can provide
 - Professional development of all staff is essential and should include gaining knowledge of community resources youth need to become successful adults

Design Feature 3

- **Mental Health Intervention without the Stigma**

- A personalized approach that allows a meaningful trust relationship between professionals and clients
- Honest discussions between professionals and clients that allow the clients to initiate self-exploration
- “Anywhere, anytime” treatment, i.e., counseling and mental illness management that is integrated into daily activities
- Effective strategies for serving transition-age youth with mental health needs include providing access to mental health treatment without the stigma of traditional therapy, and outreach and follow-up to keep the youth engaged or to re-engage them if needed

Design Feature 4

- **Assessment and Service Planning Processes that Build on Individual Strengths**
 - Utilization of a specific assessment and service planning process assists clients in addressing their current status and future goals across multiple life domains
 - Programs should distinguish between skills, talents, and gifts

Design Feature 5

- **Employment- Preparing For It, Finding It, Keeping It**
 - Identify and build on the young adult's strengths and interests
 - Expose clients to jobs and career paths
 - Teach clients that all individuals must set career goals and design step-by-step processes to get there
 - Provide opportunities for temporary work experiences and immediate income
 - Individualized exposure to work and employment pathways is critical for all youth, regardless of the severity of their condition. Meeting youth “where they're at” increases the chances of employment success

Design Feature 6

- **Housing as a Critical Part of the Service Mix for Older Youth**
 - Establish partnerships in the community for the use of transitional housing units
 - Utilize Federal or other grants to subsidize the expense of housing



Systems Factors that Affect Program Design & Sustainability

Theme 1: Local Collaboration and Service Alignment Creates Networks of Care

- Familiarity with other systems and providers can lead to discoveries about “true” versus “mythical” regulations. Programs should assume nothing about restrictive regulations and always check the relevant legal source
- Interagency advisory and/or community forum structures can be used to align local efforts to assist transition-age youth and create the infrastructure for a network of care
- Memoranda of agreement are tangible examples of local collaboration between agencies and programs and can specify conditions of partnerships. They can be constructive mechanisms to integrate services for the benefit of youth with mental health needs

Theme 2: Identifying, Accessing, and Leveraging Funding Streams

- States have lots of flexibility in how they utilize Medicaid funding. Programs serving transition-age youth have a significant stake in knowing which optional Medicaid services their states cover, and if and how Medicaid waivers might benefit their clients. Waivers are a powerful tool for overcoming “eligibility cliffs”.
- Under the Chafee Independence Program, states can choose to continue Medicaid eligibility up to age 21.
- HUD’s Shelter-Plus-Care grants go to local programs to provide rental housing assistance for homeless individuals. It may be available to youth with serious mental health conditions if the program sponsor is capable of providing the range of services needed

Theme 3: State Capacity for Systems Change

- States have the authority to improve services to transition-age youth with mental health needs through a variety of mechanisms:
 - State Legislation
 - Medicaid waivers
 - Amendments to state Medicaid plans
 - State Incentive Grants (SIGs) to fund coordination of state systems to benefit youth with mental health needs

Youth Guided Individual

- Youth is engaged in the idea that change is possible in his or her life and the systems that serve him or her.
- Youth need to feel safe, cared for, valued, useful, and spiritually grounded.
- The program needs to enable youth to learn and build skills that allow them to function and give back in their daily lives.
- There is a development and practice of leadership and advocacy skills, and a place where equal partnership is valued.
- Youth are empowered in their planning process from the beginning and have a voice in what will work for them.
- Youth receive training on systems players, their rights, purpose of the system, and youth involvement and development opportunities.

Youth Guided Community

Community partners and stakeholders have:

- An open minded viewpoint and there are decreased stereotypes about youth.
- Prioritized youth involvement and input during planning and/or meetings.
- A desire to involve youth.
- Begun stages of partnerships with youth.
- Begun to use language supporting youth engagement.
- Taken the youth view and opinion into account.
- A minimum of one youth partner with experience and/or expertise in the systems represented.
- Begun to encourage and listen to the views and opinions of the involved youth, rather than minimize their importance.
- Created open and safe spaces for youth.
- Compensated youth for their work.

Youth Guided Policy

- Youth are invited to meetings.
- Training and support is provided for youth on what the meeting is about.
- Youth and board are beginning to understand the role of youth at the policy-making level.
- Youth can speak on their experiences (even if it is not the perfect form) and talk about what's really going on with young people.
- Adults value what youth have to say in an advisory capacity.
- Youth have limited power in decision making.
- Youth have an appointed mentor who is a regular attendee of the meetings and makes sure that the youth feels comfortable to express him/herself and clearly understands the process.
- Youth are compensated for their work.

Youth Directed Individual

The young person is:

- Still in the learning process.
- Forming relationships with people who are supporting him or her and is learning ways to communicate with team members.
- Developing a deeper knowledge and understanding of the systems and processes.
- Able to make decisions with team support in their treatment process and has a understanding of consequences.
- In a place where he or she can share his or her story to create change.
- Not in a consistent period of crisis and his/her basic needs are met.

Youth Directed Community

- Youth have positions and voting power on community boards and committees.
- Youth are recruiting other youth to be involved throughout the community.
- There is increased representation of youth advocates and board and committee members throughout the community.
- Everyone is responsible for encouraging youth voice and active participation.
- Community members respect the autonomy of youth voice.
- The community is less judgmental about the youth in their community.
- Youth are compensated for their work.

Youth Directed Policy

- Youth understand the power they have to create changes at a policy-making level.
- Youth are in the place where they understand the process behind developing policy and have experience being involved.
- Youth have an enhanced skill set to direct change.
- Youth have an understanding of the current policy issues affecting young people and are able to articulate their opinion on the policy.
- Policy makers are in a place where they respect youth opinions and make change based on their suggestions.
- All parties are fully engaged in youth activities and make youth engagement a priority.
- Youth receive increased training and support in their involvement.
- There is increased dialogue during meetings about youth opinions, and action is taken.
- There is increased representation of youth and a decrease in tokenism.
- Equal partnership is evident.

Youth Driven Individual

- The youth describes his or her vision for the future.
- The youth sets goals for treatment with input from team.
- The youth is aware of his or her options and is able to utilize and apply his or her knowledge of resources.
- The youth fully understands his or her roles and responsibilities on the team.
- The youth and all members of the treatment team are equal partners and listen and act upon youth decisions.
- The youth facilitates open lines of communications, and there is mutual respect between youth and adults.
- The youth is able to stand on his or her own and take responsibility for his or her choices with the support of the team.
- The youth knows how to communicate his or her feelings.
- Youth are mentors and peer advocates for other youth.
- Youth give presentations based on personal experiences and knowledge.
- The youth is making the transition into adulthood.

Youth Driven Community

- Community partners are dedicated to authentic youth involvement.
- Community partners listen to youth and make changes accordingly.
- Youth have a safe place to go and be heard throughout the community.
- There are multiple paid positions for youth in every decision making group throughout the system of care and in the community.
- Youth are compensated for their work.
- Youth form and facilitate youth groups in communities.
- Youth provide training in the community based on personal experiences and knowledge.

Youth Driven Policy

- Youth are calling meetings and setting agendas in the policy-making arena.
- Youth assign roles to collaboration members to follow through on policy.
- Youth hold trainings on policy making for youth and adults.
- Youth inform the public about current policies and have a position platform.
- Youth lead research to drive policy change.
- Youth have the knowledge and ability to educate the community on important youth issues.
- Youth are able to be self-advocates and peer advocates in the policy making process.
- Youth are compensated for their work.
- Community members and policy makers support youth to take the lead and make changes.

Resources

- National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth- www.nclld-youth.info
- National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth- www.ncwd-youth.info/
- Tunnels and Cliffs- http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/mental_health.html
- Transitioning Youth with Mental Health Needs to Meaningful Employment and Independent Living- http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/reports/mental_health_case_study_report.pdf
- Office of Disability Employment Policy- <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration- <http://www.samhsa.gov/about/>

Wrap Up & Adjourn

