

Strengthening Youth Custody & Transition Services Advisory Committee

Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 23, 2022
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Attendees: Jason Charles, Amy Synar, Jennifer Dority, Jason Johnson, Penny Sanders, Elisa Thompson, Kim Behrens, Michael Chongwa, Amy Martin, Jennifer Boyer, Kathy Taylor, Carol Miller, Erica Robinson, Tony (James) Willis, Katie Sosanya, Renee Sansom-Briscoe, Jonathan Stoll, Falen LeBlanc, Janelle Bretten, Annabel Smith, Triton Mayberry, Danielle Dill, Nicole George, Ellen Lohrenz

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 by Chair Jason Charles.

II. Workgroup Updates

- **Mentoring Workgroup:** The workgroup's goal is to find evidenced based training, tools, and supports to make available for mentoring programs throughout the state.

The workgroup reported on their meeting with the Institute for Research and Training (IRT INC) to develop Oklahoma specific online training with a focus on mentoring vulnerable populations i.e., youth in foster care, youth with disabilities, or OJA involvement. IRT has 3 standard training modules (**Building the Foundation, Building & Maintaining the Relationship, and Ethics & Safety**) that can be customized with an Oklahoma specific URL and branding, and which is ready to be utilized now. OCCY would be the parent organization, but community partners would have access to their mentor's information for data collection and analysis. This could be the first step in an Oklahoma specific training with the goal of adding training modules for special populations as funding becomes available. IRT INC has the experience and expertise to develop additional trainings.

Other discussion: DRS & OKSA discussed their peer mentoring programs and the need for a mentoring hub to help improve staff capacity and mentee supports.

- **Essential Documents/Resources Workgroup:** This group is working on making sure youth transitioning out of state custody have the essential documents they need to find employment, housing, and transportation.

The workgroup had a meeting with Hawaii's [HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative](#). This organization in partnership with Annie E. Casey Foundation utilized Youth Leaders with lived experience to collaborate with key Child Welfare staff to increase the number of youths leaving foster care with their essential documents.

Several OKSA employees participated in a 10-week Silver Linings Academy training program that helps participants learn how to complete an action plan to improve service delivery for transition age youth. OKSA participants are gathering information and conducting key informant interviews with child welfare staff to form recommendations to present to leadership for improving the number of youths receiving essential documents.

- **Policy Workgroup:** This group has two main goals: 1.) SNAP enrollment for those turning 18 years old and transitioning out of state custody and 2.) financial literacy education and tools which allow youth in custody to obtain and manage their own bank account.

Currently AFS is collaborating with OKSA to streamline internal process to increase the number of transition age youth applying for SNAP benefits. AFS will assign a worker to assist youth transitioning out of state custody with applying for SNAP. OKSA and OJA will provide the AFS worker with a list of youths leaving custody each month and help coordinate scheduling appointments.

III. Partner Announcements

- Triton Mayberry reported that COJC's Vocational Technical training is expanding to offer more trainings to youth, including mechanics, welding, wood working, etc. Some of the skills learned in these programs would be used to build kennels for the BARK (pet grooming) program. Triton also reported that the facility is undergoing many upgrades to become a centralized, state of the art campus which will eventually house operations from two other facilities. Progress may be viewed on this video link: <https://youtu.be/KuG4TXMt7Dc>.
- Amy Martin (www.stepuptransition.org) reported they currently have space available for youth in transition to enroll in their transitional living program.
- Jason Johnson reported no movement on transition age youth need for affordable auto insurance premiums, potential charitable or private funding would be most beneficial. Jason is a board member of Fostering Sweet Dreams (www.fosteringsweetdreams.com) who provides bedding for foster families or families in reunification. Jason reports that transition age youth could receive services as well. They can also provide car seats, dressers, strollers, bedding, etc. to kinship and unexpected foster care placements. FSD may be reached at fostersweetdreams@gmail.com or 405-697-4744

IV. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 11:07a.m.