



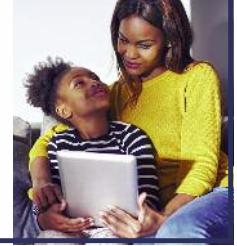
FOCUS



**Newsletter of the
Family Focused
Treatment Association**



**Family
Focused
Treatment
Association**



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Journey of Transition

Sindel's Journey from Homelessness to Aldea's Transitional Housing Program for Non-Minor Dependents

—By Sindel Kegley

I have been in and out of foster care for my whole life. I was born in Washington state where my journey of tradeoffs began. I was in placements all over Washington and Northern California. I felt disoriented, lost and helpless being moved around so often.

It creates a lot of disassociation as an adult when you don't belong anywhere. At the age of 16 life threw some hurdles at me which lead to me running away to Oklahoma with a friend. Life

didn't get any easier and instead grew more complicated and burdensome. The places I stayed at were unstable and unhygienic, I recall one of the homes having bugs all over the place. I woke up one day with a cockroach walking near my face which has traumatized me and heightened my insect phobia. The unstable conditions I was living in resulted in me being homeless and living in



my car for a year and a half from the age of 17-19. The THP Program from Aldea gave my journey stability and a program that truly cares.

I did not want to be a non-minor dependent because I felt that I would not receive much help. However, I decided to give it a try and reach out because I did not want to continue being homeless. I was referred to the Aldea THP program by my county

social worker. I went to the office for my interview with Cerrene and Walter (Aldea's THP+NMD leading staff). My initial reaction was "wow this really is a program." I did not like being told what to do and grew accustomed to being independent after running away. I was not sure how I was going to get used to having rules. Although after I had been in the THP Program I saw

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

A **FOCUS** on
Transitions in
Foster Care

Journey of Transition
Editor's Column
Change Can Improve Your
Agency's Future
Navigating Foster Care to
Adoption Transitions:
Sailing on the C's of Success
Transition Age Youth:
Skills for Life
New Pathways to Success
in Transitioning Maryland
Youth From Foster Care
to Independence

that this was really support and I saw the great potential of the program for me. The THP Program gave me the tools to be independent and yet be able to take care of myself. They worked with me more than twice a week at first to make sure I was settled in and set up. The THP program worked with me with

continued on pg. 2

EDITOR'S COLUMN

—by Beverly Johnson, LCSW

Transition (n.) the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.

Life is all about transitions, those big or small changes that are necessary for us to grow. They can be planful or not. For many youth, transitions can be scary and anxiety provoking and especially so for the youth we serve who may be missing a caring adult or safety net. And for too many of our youth, difficult and unplanned transitions happen far too much. We can all cite the numbers of youth who have experienced more than their share of moves before exiting care on their own and without a safe place to land. The many youth who leave care whose path ends in prison and/or death.

And yet there are many other transitions that result in positive outcomes for youth and are the ones we strive to address. These include the recent transitions in legislation to fund vital supports to youth like extending foster care benefits to youth beyond age 18 years; or providing transition age youth (TAY) resources and supports. And other supports we provide along the way such as pre-adoption support for families. Key supports can include the following:

- Access to safe and affordable housing
- Employment at levels sufficient to cover basic needs
- A mentoring program to promote enduring and supportive relationships
- Training and education for career preparation
- Mental health and physical wellness
- Personal life skills training for successful transition to adulthood
- Training and support to foster parents to assist in healthy transitions for youth
- Youth are involved in all aspects of planning and implementation of services and support

This *FOCUS* edition highlights the ways we support transitions for our youth as they grow into adulthood or in how we help youth and their families navigate adoption. A good segue as I transition from my last year of my 2nd term as a FFTA board member and as chair of the Editorial Committee. I leave you in great hands with Yvette Sanchez, Chair, and Sharukh Chistry, Vice Chair. It has been a great pleasure serving the FFTA and all of you! Much love, as I have so much respect for what you all do to make this a better world—we could use more of that!

Beverly Johnson, LCSW, is the Chief Program Officer of Lilliput Children's Services. She is a member of the FFTA Board of Directors and serves as the Chair of the FFTA Editorial Committee.

Journey of Transition

| continued from pg. 1

my budget and my life goals. They worked with me on independent skills using their Forward to the Future Independent Living Skills guides and activities. I was given a THP binder with resources, information, and my Forward to the Future guide and activities to work on weekly. We mapped out my life goals and worked on them every week. The Forward to the Future program was a great tool to support my plans and goals. They helped set me up with my doctor appointments and they would even drive me to my meetings or appointments. I now have a planner on my phone and this is where I keep my appointments. I would receive weekly and sometimes daily texts just saying hi and making sure I did not need anything for the day. But on the other hand, they were supporting me with my independence. The THP program creates a place to grow.

When I moved into the duplex and in that same week was hired at Red Rock Café which the THP program supported me to obtain a job. The THP program assisted me with creating my resume and cover letter. I then enrolled in Napa Valley College with the support of the THP program. I was able to decorate my own space and have a real home with curtains and even a backyard where I had my first barbecue. I remember Cerrene and Walter coming by each week and more to check to see if I needed anything for my new home. Cerrene brought me pictures for the walls, and a new rug. This was such a delight to have someone care so much and take the time to think of the little things such as pictures for the walls. I will say most of all that Cerrene and Walter took the time to know me. I remember one time they brought cookies and just sat and talked. This was big to me. I remember back when I used to live in my car waking up in the middle of the night because I had to use the restroom but having to wait until the morning when places opened for me to use their bathroom. This was just one of many struggles

I remember one time they brought cookies and just sat and talked. This was big to me.

continued on pg. 3

Journey of Transition | continued from pg. 2

I faced while being homeless. Having a stable place to live has been life changing. Being in the THP program has gifted me housing and the things I need to succeed. I can now focus on my future, my goals, and my mental health knowing that I have proper food, shelter, and safety with the support of the THP program. I am determined to finish school at Napa Valley College, I am interested in psychology and sociology. I hope to transfer to a 4-year university and someday be a life coach of some sort. Cerrene and Walter would meet with me to discuss my goals and how to map these out. I remember one-time Cerrene and I looked up on the internet different careers in the mental health field and what I would need to achieve them. We mapped out this and we check in about this during our weekly meetings. I feel very blessed to be where I am today, I am thankful for Aldea's THP program and everything it has provided me for my journey. Despite my unstable and depressing past, I am hopeful for my future. I know that the THP program is there for me 24/7 with moral, emotional, and personal/ vocational growth. I would say to the youth that are looking for a program the THP program would be one that would support, guide, and they are truly dedicated to you and your future. I will say to call the THP program a program is not true, it is a great home to be independent. I am blessed and grateful for the Aldea THP Program. ☀️

Despite my unstable and depressing past, I am hopeful for my future.



Sindel at her high school graduation on May 17, 2019



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CHANGE CAN IMPROVE YOUR AGENCY'S FUTURE

Children in foster care change homes an average of four to six times every two years according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. That's a lot of changes for an adult let alone a child. Social service agencies today face more pressures due to constant changes in their job duties. Some changes involve documentation revisions, shifting compliance requirements, revised or complex billing needs, additional reporting or outcome measures, and so much more.

Providing care has grown to include not only serving clients, but handling more paperwork requirements, billing and collecting funds while working within a strained budget, minimal resources, and changes to federal and state regulations. Fortunately, there are ways to ensure that changes are implemented well. Constructive change can save agencies time and money, as well as improve service quality and better outcomes.

Optimization of the process for serving clients is one of the key benefits to using an electronic health record (EHR) system or care management solution. Whether an agency is changing from a paper system or switching from another platform, the EHR choice becomes an investment in the agency's future. A good web-based software allows agencies to be more efficient. They can complete their job duties remotely from anywhere Internet is available, and improve the care quality of their clients, offering better outcomes.

Searching for the right care management solution can be daunting. There are many to choose from, and many offer similar features. For example, let's say you are a supervisor for a foster care agency. What are some tools that could help make your job a little easier?

- Checking on your team's job duties at any time would help you gauge their needs, as well as know whether they are documenting on a regular basis.
- Sending a HIPAA compliant internal message to a troubled staff and having it automatically documented will help encourage the staff as well as reduce steps for the supervisor.
- Getting a real-time report of which foster families or beds are available at any hour.
- Receiving the most high-priority incident reports immediately helps manages a critical situation before it is escalated even further.

We can go on and on about all the tools available within an all-encompassing case management solution. Some of the most commonly used tools and features include:

- Smart client tracking which is the heart of case management software.
- Reporting and outcomes help provide statistics needed for funding purposes, as well as keep the agency on track for success.
- Electronic approvals make it easy for all parties to sign and approve necessary documents so it can move along faster through a process.
- Dashboards help executives gauge quickly their requirements information as well as help staff stay in the know of their job and agency pulse.
- Custom form builder allows agencies to create templates of required forms or documents that can be completed easily by staff.
- Document management allows agencies to keep electronic records of all documents required on a client such as birth certificates, school documents, etc.
- Financial services within a case management solution improves the billing cycles, measures costs of programs and alleviates resources spent, especially if the software allows for automated billing and performance analysis.

A web-based, care management solution should also help support the revenue cycle management seamlessly, integrating the clinical/care programs with the financial goals of the organization. By adding a robust online, care management solution, agencies are one step closer to leveraging technology, which is an important strategy for any social service agency to implement in order to continue their impact on client's lives.



KaleidaCare partners with agencies to support initiatives for change, ensuring that changes are implemented appropriately, that they are long-lasting, and that the results of the change are positive. We have developed a list of elements common to successful initiatives and have found that preparation is the key to success. If you'd like help getting started or want more information, please email info@kaleidacare.com.



NAVIGATING FOSTER CARE TO ADOPTION TRANSITIONS: SAILING ON THE C'S OF SUCCESS

—by Karen L. Celedonia, MPH, and Brianna Hancovsky, MM

Transitioning from foster care to adoption can be an overwhelming time for biological families, foster families, and youth. Foster to adopt programs give youth in the foster care system a sense of permanency through the possibility of an eventual adoption. Many youth in the foster care system have sustained varying degrees of trauma, which makes it even more important to ensure the best outcome for potential adoptions. Therefore, knowing beforehand what can be done to increase the likelihood of successful adoptions is in the best interest of both youth and parents. To understand the factors that contribute to successful transitions from foster care to adoption, we spoke with staff in a foster to adopt program at a social impact organization that coordinates adoptions in Pennsylvania. In our discussions with staff members, we noticed a few key themes that emerged concerning successful transitions: commitment, communication, connection, and collaboration. These C's of Success can help calm the choppy waters of the adoption process and set the course for smooth sailing for a youth finding a place within a new family.

COMMITMENT

Commitment to the youth throughout the adoption process is vital to a successful transition. A family's choice to not give up in the face of adversity can make all the difference during a time that can be "a mix of emotion," as described by one program staff member. Commitment can also take the form of foster and adoptive families investing time in receiving the necessary training to be the best parents they can be for the youth. It is very important that foster and adoptive parents understand the varying degrees of trauma that a youth might have had in her or his

past and how traumatic experiences affect brain development. This understanding is gained through training to educate the foster and adoptive parents about the nature of trauma, which includes behavioral and mental health disorders that a youth might have. Possessing the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately to escalated behaviors and symptoms is especially important during the adoption transition process: Youth with behavioral or mental health disorders often exhibit an increase in behaviors and symptoms during the time of transition.

COMMUNICATION

Foster parents should feel comfortable contacting the foster care provider with any questions throughout the adoption process, utilizing the provider for support and as a translator and liaison with caseworkers and judges. Open and ample communication between parents and providers is especially important during transitions that are either rushed or delayed. Sometimes county workers encourage foster families to adopt a child before they have even met, which can be intimidating and chase the foster family off. Or in other instances, the adoption process is drawn out for months and months. Cases that are either rushed or protracted are vulnerable to complications, but if constant communication between parents and the provider occurs along the way, these cases can become success stories. When asked what has helped cases like these achieve success, one program staff member said that an open line of communication between parents and providers was the main factor contributing to their success. The same program staff member also stressed the importance of consistent messaging when communicating with parents.

continued on pg. 6

CONNECTION

Program staff emphasized the importance of youth being able to stay connected with their biological family. One program staff member said that “when youth don’t have the opportunity to maintain contact with their bio-family, that’s what I’ve seen contribute to a failed adoption.” Foster and adoptive parents should strive to keep an open connection between the youth and the youth’s biological family. Although a post-adoption contact agreement (PACA) can be put into place to outline the nature of communication between the biological family, the youth, and the new adoptive family, the way in which this agreement is honored affects the quality and quantity of contact between the youth and the biological family. One program staff member spoke about the necessity of foster and adoptive parents having an authentic acceptance of the biological family and the importance of the biological family’s continued presence in the youth’s life post-adoption.

Connections to available resources in the community are also crucial for the sustained success of adoption transitions. Parents should be aware of and make use of the resources present in the community to assist them with parenting, addressing specific needs of the youth, and providing quality care to the youth. Having strong connections to community resources will help parents feel supported and feel that they are not alone on their new journey as adoptive parents.

COLLABORATION

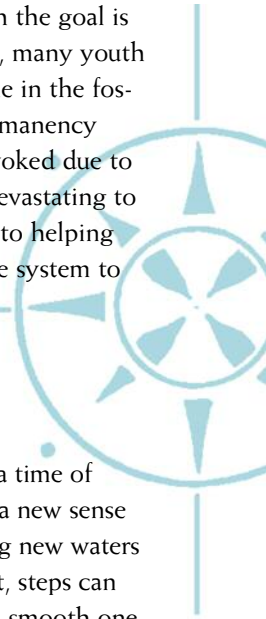
Successful transitions from foster care to adoption happen when all parties involved are working as a unified team toward the best possible outcome for the youth. In addition

to the involvement of the foster and prospective adoptive parents and the foster care provider, other parties often are involved in the lives of youth and biological parents, such as child protective services and/or the court system. When these invested parties fail to work together in the best interest of the youth, a systems barrier to successful adoption is created, stymieing the long-awaited prospect of permanency for the youth. Youth are placed in foster care with the possibility of future adoption after options such as reunification and kinship care have not worked out. Although the goal is to avoid moving the youth from home to home, many youth experience multiple moves throughout their time in the foster care system. To be so close to achieving permanency through adoption only to have it delayed or revoked due to a lack of systems collaboration is all the more devastating to the youth. Collaboration, therefore, is essential to helping youth successfully transition from the foster care system to an adoptive home.

CONCLUSION

Transitioning from foster care to adoption is a time of change filled with the hope of permanency and a new sense of family for youth and parents. Though treading new waters often elicits as much apprehension as excitement, steps can be taken to help make the journey to adoption a smooth one. Sailing on the C’s of Success can help support foster care to adoption transitions and guide youth and families toward successful adoptions.

Karen L. Celedonia, MPH, is a Research Coordinator at Pressley Ridge. Brianna Hancovsky is an Evaluation Coordinator at Pressley Ridge. Both serve on the FFTA Editorial Committee.



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Transition Age Youth: Skills for Life

—by Danielle Martinez, LMFT

The increasing focus on transition age youth (TAY), ages 16–24, is important and necessary. TAY are navigating the developmental years of growing out of childhood and into adulthood. Brain development in TAY is incomplete, leading to limitations in decision making, impulsivity, risk taking, and emotion regulation. These years are important for individuation and development of an autonomous self. These are individuals on whom we should all be focused to be able to provide support, care, and direction as they navigate early adulthood.

No two stories are the same, and we know that youth in foster care often have endured so much early in life. The Family Care Network (FCN) takes pride in meeting these youth where they are and working with them to uncover passions they didn't know they had and to identify and pursue goals in meaningful and honorable ways. FCN is ready and willing to offer support, and we know that it takes a collaborative effort of various county agencies, community foundations, service groups, and private donors to make it happen.

It is enlightening to work with these youth who want to ensure a positive future for themselves. Those we serve are inquisitive, courageous, vulnerable, brave, and genuinely dedicated to not only themselves but also the community that is helping to support them. They crave support and guidance, and although they sometimes experience a stumble along the way, they are resilient and motivated to help themselves and often each other.

FCN understands the importance of assisting during this transition period and therefore works to provide safe, local, and affordable housing. With three Transitional Housing Placement programs, FCN helps those in care develop the life skills necessary to become self-sufficient and helps youth develop a community-based support system to maintain them in their community and avoid homelessness or incarceration post care.

continued on pg. 8

Transition Age Youth: Skills for Life

| continued from pg. 7

inquisitive
courageous
vulnerable
brave
dedicated

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PLACEMENT PROGRAMS

Transitional Housing Placement Program for Minor Foster Children (THPP-M) is a structured, intensive program for foster youth ages 16–17 who are preparing to leave the foster care system. This program helps youth find independent housing and provides substantial one-on-one rehabilitation and case management, support, instruction, and guidance.

Transitional Housing Placement Program for Non-Minor Dependents (THPP-NMD) is a placement option for foster youth ages 18–21 who are provided affordable housing and a wide range of supportive services, including one-on-one life skills development and case management support, in order to successfully establish permanency and self-sufficiency.

Transitional Housing Placement Plus Program (THP+) is a supportive housing program for transition age youth, ages 18–24, who are not in foster care. Participants are provided with affordable housing, case management, and one-on-one life skill development assistance.

These programs have the following goals:

1. Assist transition age youth (TAY) in securing appropriate housing
2. Improve TAY's ability to secure and maintain meaningful employment
3. Promote educational achievement, advancement, and/or vocational training
4. Assist TAY in gaining the skills to access critical community services and establish essential community connections for meeting personal needs
5. Assist TAY in gaining necessary life skills to successfully live independently

Our programs also use the *Skills for Life* book developed and published by FCN, which is incorporated into every youth's monthly case plan. This book is used as a workbook and support for learning and developing specific life skills that youth need to incorporate into their lives.

Each client served in Transitional Housing is also provided an opportunity to receive mental health services through FCN or, in some circumstances, the county, both of which provide intensive care coordination and individual rehabilitation support and are linked with additional community resources—for example, drug and alcohol services,

commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) support groups, parenting classes/support, public health, medical providers, and the like.

Since the implementation of Housing Support Services, FCN has housed more than 1,200 youth between the ages of 16 and 24, and our programs have success rates of 90% (THPP-M), 90% (THPP-NMD), and 95% (THP+).

In addition to Housing Support Services, FCN offers Education Support Services. The purposes of these services are to improve academic attendance, performance, and stability and to enhance each youth's ability to lead a healthy and well-adjusted lifestyle. The programs also aim to help youth develop attainable goals for their future and to help them develop the skills necessary to reach their goals.

EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAMS

The Independent Living Program (ILP) began in 2011 and empowers former and current foster youth through education, life skills training, advocacy, workforce development, and community collaboration to become self-sufficient and to secure permanency in all aspects of their lives. This FCN program is unique in that it uses a four-pronged approach:

1. Working with youth individually through assessment, skill development training, counseling, coaching, and individual learning activities
2. Working with groups of youth through life skill development classes and activities
3. Working with caregivers and staff to enhance their ability to assist youth in developing skills
4. Brokering services and creating community linkages, such as job development resources, community college participation, mentor recruitment, finding locations for job shadowing, and the like

Our service delivery model is based on Youth Development Strategies, empowering youth and shifting dependency on the "system" to self-sufficiency and community connectivity. Our ILP programs have served more than 5,000 foster youth, with an overall success rate of 95%.

Transitional Age Youth Financial Assistance Program (TAY-FAP) provides financial assistance to any ILP-eligible foster or former foster youth. The special emphasis of the

continued on pg. 9

program is on enhancing enrollment in higher education or vocational training so that youth served become self-sufficient. The TAY-FAP has served 265 youth, with an overall success rate of 85%.

The Youth Employability Program (YEP) began in 2015 and works to connect foster youth ages 16–18 with career mentors, community resources, and workshop trainings to develop strong career goals and paths.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

"TAY Housing provided me an opportunity to live independently with the support of my team who were always eager to teach me new life skills, such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, and maintaining employment. My team encouraged me to find my passion and never lose sight of my personal goals. ILP supported me with bus passes until I was able to get my driver's license and eventually my own car. TAY-FAP supported me financially, supporting some of my college education. I will forever be grateful for FCN."

"I owe so much to my TAY housing case manager and ILP worker. They both supported me at every team meeting and met with me regularly to help me in achieving my goals. I have never met two more caring or supportive people in my life and hope that I can show them that all of the things I was taught are being used today and will be for the rest of my life."

"I struggled in TAY housing with following program rules and it took me participating in the program three times. My team was so supportive in helping me to stay on track and

get back on track when I was making poor choices. My team stood by me every step of the way, were patient and understanding, and supported me with connecting me with community resources to help with my marijuana use. I am now living on my own, am participating in Drug and Alcohol services, have a full-time job, and am doing great!"

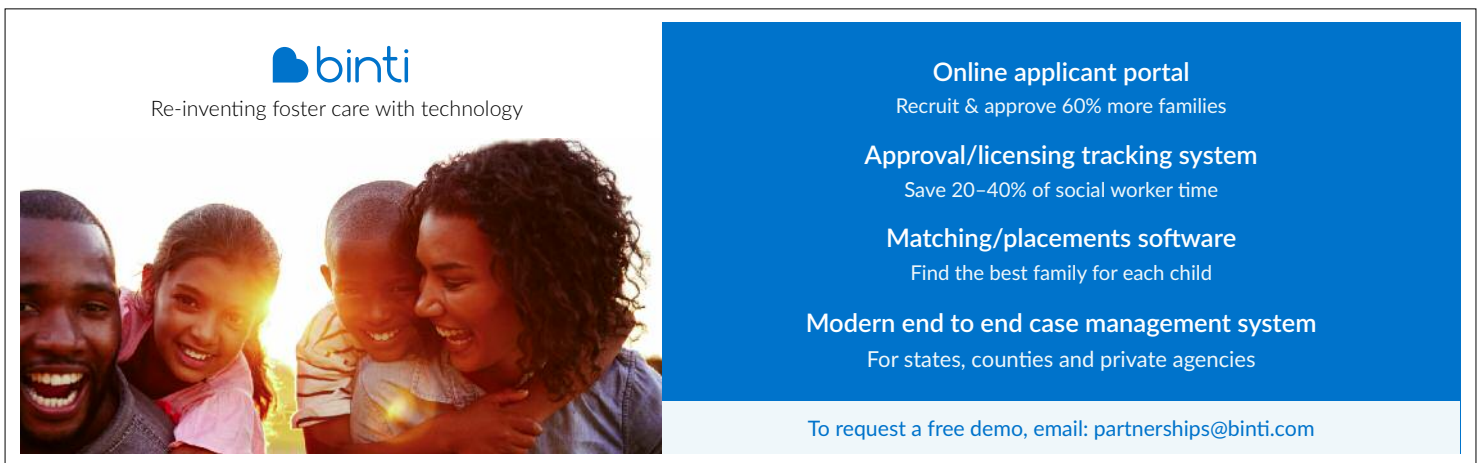
CONCLUSION

The young adults we serve are an inspiration to us all, and each is individually celebrated and acknowledged monthly during Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings. We often hear about the "success" stories of TAY participants, but it's important that we acknowledge that sometimes a youth needs several tries in a TAY housing program to finally succeed and complete goals. Working together and supporting these young adults in making difficult life decisions is part of the process. Having patience and understanding and allowing each individual's personal journey to unfold is both powerful and beautiful.

FCN's programs are designed to support and not enable, to develop real-life skills and critical thinking, and to prepare youth for change, all of which are important life lessons. The summer months are often a time when our foster youth make significant life changes and are off to new places and experiences. So, I encourage each of you to be a champion and do what you can to develop strong, independent, well-equipped, resilient individuals who are motivated and excited about their bright futures.

Danielle Martinez, LMFT, is the Foster Care Services Manager at Family Care Network.

caring eager supportive inspired powerful passionate



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New Pathways to Success in Transitioning Maryland Youth From Foster Care to Independence —by Kimberly J. Lohrfink, PhD

Nina W. entered the foster care system at the age of 12. Although she has experienced tremendous adversity, she always finds a way to remain hopeful and committed to her own success. Prior to entering New Pathways in December 2018, Nina found herself in foster homes where she had foster parents who were kind and supportive but could not provide the level of support Nina needed to take her ambition and success to the next level. With the support and guidance of New Pathways staff, Nina was able to complete a certification as an EKG technician at Montgomery Community College. After completing this certification, Nina was able to gain employment as a medical assistant. Nina is currently gaining another certification as a clinical medical assistant and plans to enroll at Bowie State University. Her goal is to become a surgical nurse.

Nina with her certificate.



Founded in 1976 as a group home, New Pathways, a program of Pressley Ridge, has become a leader in the provision of independent living services in the Baltimore area for youth aging out of the Maryland foster care system. New Pathways is licensed through the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) but takes a unique approach to working with transition age youth, ages 16–21. The mission of New Pathways is to offer a pathway to success to Maryland’s disconnected youth who are homeless, in foster care, or not connected to education, employment, or training opportunities. New Pathways provides services in three areas: Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and Prince George’s County. The percentages of youth ages 16–19 living in these areas who are disconnected are 5%, 13%, and 7%, respectively (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, n.d.). The mission of New Pathways embodies the beliefs that each youth has his or her own pathway or journey from adolescence to adulthood and that the role of the caseworker is to guide youth in this discovery as they transition into becoming adults.

The New Pathways program currently serves approximately 70 youth in foster care in two different apartment-based independent living programs (ILPs) with headquarters in Towson and Greenbelt, Maryland. Independence Plus is a program for individual male and female youth ages 17–21 within the child welfare or juvenile services systems. Second Generations is a program designed for pregnant and parenting youth ages 16–21. According to Nancy Strohming, Associate Director and Grants Manager, New Pathways stands out in its “willingness to innovate in an area with very little research. We have been working just with this age for over 40 years.”

Research on youth aging out of the foster care system nationwide shows that foster

continued on pg. 11

New Pathways to Success in Transitioning Maryland

Youth From Foster Care to Independence | continued from pg. 10

youth have higher levels of homelessness, incarceration, and unemployment and lower educational achievements than those young people in the same age group who were not in foster care (Courtney et al., 2007). According to Mark Mittelman, Executive Director of New Pathways, the biggest challenges facing the youth who are exiting the foster care system are “finding affordable housing [and] day care and trying to make it with a nonsustainable wage. Without stable housing and a living wage, their lives are not stable.” New Pathways combats these challenges through a three-member team approach to independent living. Each youth who enters the New Pathways program is assigned to a team that consists of a transition team coordinator (social worker), a community support specialist, and a career coach. Each of these team members plays a critical role in

aiding the youth to successfully transition to independence.

Foster care and the system of care have changed radically in the past 10 years in terms of the mental health and behavioral needs of the youth in care. When asked about these changes, Mittelman responded, “At one time ILPs (independent living programs) would only accept youth who were ‘ready’ for independent living. As the foster population of youth in Maryland has dropped by 50%, the youth left in care have much more behavioral needs, and we are now accepting youth who are not prepared for ILPs. As higher levels of care are no longer readily available, it is stretching all ILPs to take on greater risk without adequate supports in place.”

The majority of youth come to the New Pathways program with a history of traumatic experiences that can make it challenging for them to achieve sta-

bility and self-sufficiency. Having a licensed social worker as the transition team coordinator provides an expert resource to youth and the other staff in dealing with many of the complex psychosocial challenges that create barriers to a youth’s ability to become self-sufficient.

In addition to the licensed social worker, each youth receives a community support specialist (CSS) upon enrollment. The CSS is responsible for working directly with the youth in the youth’s living space, focusing on the youth’s capacity to learn good tenant and roommate behavior and to navigate safely in the neighborhood as the youth shops and goes to school or work.

The youth’s participation in career development services is a mandatory component of the program because it is seen as a critical part of the youth’s future success. Career development staff work with youth to prepare them for obtaining a job and furthering their education by facilitating the learning of pre-employment skills, as well as the introduction to career and postsecondary education options. A career coach is a core service member of the team and is responsible for meeting weekly with the youth for planning and documentation activities in the employment and education sector of the program. The Career Development department is what really sets New Pathways apart from other ILPs. Typically, these types of services are not integrated into an independent living program but, rather, are often offered by a separate organization. The integration of career development at New Pathways provides continuity and ease of access to these services. According to Christine Powers, Admissions Coordinator for

continued on last page

Foster care and the system of care have changed radically in the past 10 years in terms of the mental health and behavioral needs of the youth in care.



New Pathways to Success

in Transitioning Maryland Youth From Foster Care to Independence | continued from pg. 11

New Pathways and prior Parent Trainer for the Second Generations program, "The classes and the individualized job search services are not available in any other independent living program. In addition, the assistance in determining a career path and locating appropriate educational programs is an enormous asset, as is helping youth obtain the maximum amount of funding they are entitled to for postsecondary education. The whole process of applying for financial aid can be overwhelming, and without assistance, many of our youth would not be adequately funded for school."

According to Mittelman, another thing that makes New Pathways unique in the realm of independent living is that staff "subscribe to a theory of change that has required us to look at our data and outcomes regularly to make adjustments to our program model." Because of this approach, and in spite of the challenges mentioned earlier, New Pathways youth are doing well on several key outcomes.

In Fiscal Year 2018, New Pathways youth enrolled in secondary education at almost twice the rate as the national average for youth of the same age in foster care. In addition, after six months of participating in the program, 78% of New Pathways youth achieved employment. With a strong mission, dedicated staff, and hard work from the youth, the New Pathways program has been able to help put disconnected youth like Nina on a path to future success.

References

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Kimberly J. Lohrfink, PhD, is an Evaluation Coordinator at Pressley Ridge. She serves on the FFTA Editorial Committee.

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