

# Transition Planning with Older Youth in Foster Care



Amy West, MSW, MPA  
Policy Coordinator, Child Welfare Program  
Nebraska Appleseed



# Road Map



- Welcome and Introductions
- Introduction to Transition Planning
- The Need
- Law on Transition Planning
  - Federal
  - State
- Creating Transition Proposals
- Role of the CASA Volunteer
- Questions and Discussion



# Introduction to Transition Planning



- What is transition planning?
  - Planning for the transition from foster care to independence 😊
- Why is it needed?
  - Becoming an adult isn't easy for anyone, and youth aging out of foster care face a number of negative outcomes
  - Transition planning ensures young adults are set up for success
- Who is responsible?
  - All of us!
  - Ultimately, DHHS

# The Need



- **Nationally**
  - 2010: 27,854 exited to “emancipation”
- **Locally**
  - 2011: 208 “aged out,” 113 discharged to independent living
- **Survey of attorneys on quality of transition plans in NE:**
  - 72% disagreed that youth “...generally have a written independent living transition proposal”
  - Majority agreed that when transition proposals *were* done, they did not effectively or comprehensively address required areas
    - ✦ Education, employment, health, finances, housing, relationships, and adult services

# Federal Law



- **The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (2008):**
  - Requires that a description of transition services be included in case plans for youth 16+ and that a personalized written transition plan be finalized at least 90 days before a youth ages out (including housing, health insurance, education, community supports, and employment services)

# State Law



- **LB 177 (2011)**
  - All youth age 16+ in foster care **MUST** have a written independent living transition proposal (developed at the direction and involvement of the youth) including:
    - ✦ Education
    - ✦ Employment
    - ✦ Health and health care coverage
    - ✦ Financial assistance (including education on credit card financing, banking, etc)
    - ✦ Housing
    - ✦ Relationship development
    - ✦ Adult services
  - Requires the transition proposal be regularly reviewed by the transition team, including:
    - ✦ The caseworker, GAL, individuals selected by the child, and individuals who have knowledge of services available to the child
  - Requires that DHHS help youth get certified copies of their birth certificate and their social security card before turning 19 (at no cost to the youth)

# Creating Transition Proposals



- Before the Plan
  - Preparation
    - ✦ Understanding and awareness of adolescent development
    - ✦ Throughout the process:
      - Explain concepts
      - Offer thorough overview of available options
      - Empower the youth to direct the process
        - “Do *you* think this plan will help?” “Is there anything missing?”
        - “What do you like/not like?” “What else do *you* need?”
  - Assessment
    - ✦ Assesses youth’s needs and developmental abilities
    - ✦ Helps gauge what supports and services are needed
      - E.g. Casey Life Skills assessment: [caseylifeskills.force.com](http://caseylifeskills.force.com)

# Creating Transition Proposals



- Before the Plan (continued)
  - Transition Teams
    - ✦ **Required:** the youth, caseworker, GAL, individuals selected by youth, and others who are knowledgeable about available services
    - ✦ **Best Practice:** include ALL key people (e.g. foster parents, birth parents and other relatives, other supportive adults and peers)
  - Youth Inventory
    - ✦ Ensures youth are provided important documents prior to case closure
    - ✦ *See Nebraska Appleseed's Youth Inventory*



# Creating Transition Proposals



- Transition proposals should address:
  1. Current status
  2. Future goals (short- and long-term)
  3. Needs/steps to reach goals
    1. Steps to take prior to case closure
    2. Who will help
- *See FosterClub's Transition Toolkit*
- *See Nebraska Appleseed's Transition Proposal Checklist*

# Transition Proposal Components



- **Education**
  - Not just college!
  - Plan to meet educational needs (e.g. college, vocational training)
    - ✦ Financial aid, if applicable
  - Before case closure: copies of records; complete applications for FAFSA, ETV, Former Ward, and others
- **Employment Services and Other Workforce Support**
  - Plan to achieve future career goals
    - ✦ Identify services/resources to assist
  - Before case closure: resume and sample job application; expunge/seal juvenile records

# Transition Proposal Components



- **Health and Health Care Coverage**
  - Plan to maintain health care coverage
    - ✦ Understanding of available services and emergency contact list
  - Before case closure: comprehensive screenings; copies of medical records/diagnoses
- **Financial Assistance**

*Including education on credit card financing, banking, etc.*

  - Plan for budgeting/money management
  - Before case closure: checking/savings accounts; credit history/repair
- **Housing**
  - Short-term and long-term plan, including a back-up plan
    - ✦ NOT a homeless shelter
  - Before case closure: safe, stable, affordable housing; references/co-signer

# Transition Proposal Components



- **Relationship Development**
  - Plan AND efforts made to support important relationships
    - ✦ Biological family
    - ✦ Community supports
  - Before case closure: Permanency Pacts; emergency contacts list
- **Adult Services**
  - Plan to connect youth to needed services
  - Before case closure: apply for relevant services
    - ✦ e.g. SNAP, TANF, SSI/disability income assistance, etc.
- **Other**
  - Transportation
  - Life skills education

# Available Services



- **Statewide:**
  - Project Everlast
  - Youth Connection Newsletter
  - Need Based Fund
  - Rent Wise
  - Nebraska Friends of Foster Care
  - PALS
- **Eastern Service Area:**
  - Branching Out
  - Youth Emergency Services Transitional Living Program
  - Urban League of Nebraska
  - Opportunity Passport

# The Role of the CASA Volunteer



- So what can YOU do?
  - Play an active role in helping develop/oversee transition plans
  - Be familiar with the law!  
*<http://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=43-1311.03>*
    - ✦ Transition plans should be reviewed at every permanency hearing
    - ✦ ALL youth age 16+ in foster care should have a WRITTEN transition plan that includes all of the listed needs
      - If this is not happening, contact the caseworker's supervisor, talk to the assigned GAL/attorney, or recommend in your report that the judge require a transition plan be written
        - DHHS can be held in contempt if they fail to comply with federal/state laws
  - Use the resources to start the process yourself!

# Questions/Discussion



- Any questions?
- Is transition planning happening in your cases?
- Helpful stories/suggestions for other volunteers?

# Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest



Amy West, MSW, MPA  
941 “O” Street, Suite 920  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 438-8853, ext. 121  
[awest@neappleseed.org](mailto:awest@neappleseed.org)  
[neappleseed.org/children](http://neappleseed.org/children)

