Transition Planning with Older Youth in Foster Care

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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
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!
    ![Nebraska Legislature Website](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?