

PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT  
COVER SHEET  
BENNINGTON REGION

1. Grant Number: 03150-7069
2. Grantee Name & Address: United Counseling Services of Bennington County  
PO Box 588; 100 Ledge Hill Drive; Bennington, VT 05201
3. Telephone Number: 802-442-5491
4. Project Title: Youth Outreach Program
5. Period of Performance: July 1, 2010 thru December 31, 2010
6. Approved Project Period: July 1, 2010 thru June 30, 2011
7. Period Covered by Report: July-December 2010
8. Author's Name and Telephone number: Lorna Mattern and Tom Campbell, 802-442-5491
9. Date of report: January 31, 2011
10. Comments (if any):

## PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORTING

*The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) primarily focuses on demonstrating accountability and achieving meaningful outcomes for all federally funded programs. Please make sure to include information on the outcomes of your project activities and the impact of your project on improving the lives of Youth in Transition and their families in the Program Progress Reports submitted.*

*One Progress Report for this sub-grant must be submitted for the period from July 1 2010-December 31, 2010*

### Report Contents

#### 1. **Major Activities and Accomplishments during this Period** –

- *Quantifiable accomplishments include numbers of youth/families served, people trained, support groups established, etc.*

The Youth Outreach Program (YOP) has connected with at least 13 youth from the ages of 16-21 who are experiencing serious emotional disturbance. The goal is to direct and support Bennington's young adults to be productive in the community and free from incarceration. The Youth Outreach Program staff actively seeks out connections within the community to help identify youth who need a positive connection.

Areas of outreach include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Engage with the administrative staff at the local high school (Mount Anthony) to identify youth who are in danger of dropping out or getting kicked out of high school. The hope is to engage this at-risk population with staff and their community in order to increase the possibility of earning a high school diploma.
2. Connect regularly with the court and the public defender's office to identify young people who are first offenders. YOP will inform the young adults of the various services that are available to them and help them get connected. YOP is currently working with two youth who have deferred sentences. One youth will complete his sentence in February and his charge will be erased off of his record.
3. Outreach to Turning Point, the local recovery center to engage young people struggling with recovery issues. Several young people connected with YOP through this avenue.

The Youth Outreach Program provides case management and ensures that the youth actively participate in planning their future. YOP provides assistance with obtaining health insurance and supports through Economic Services and helps make health care connections. YOP helps young people connect with the Tutorial Center, the Community High School of Vermont, and the Career Development Center to increase education and training skills. One young person whom staff is working with has only two more tests to pass before he is awarded his GED and another youth who was close to dropping out now has only 4 credits left to graduate. Employment opportunities were made possible through a connection with the Department of Labor.

Staying connected is an important factor in young people's success. One example of how the program has helped youth stay connected is that of a young woman named Kendra. Kendra became involved with YOP and Teens for Change (local advisory) through her participation in the Community Action Series. Kendra was a shy and reserved young woman who rarely spoke

up. By the end of the Community Action series, she was able to stand up in front of a crowd of people and talk about her experience and how it helped her to “find her voice”. Kendra continued to work with Teens for Change (T4C) until she went to college in September. (Kendra is the first in her family to attend college and is doing so through the STEP program at St Joe’s). Kendra came back to help coordinate and supervise the “end of the summer bash” and it became apparent that she missed the connection with YOP. Within a few weeks, YOP staff connected with the Rutland YIT program and scheduled a time to introduce Kendra to their staff and program. Katrina Hollis, Bennington’s Youth Outreach Worker, and her program manager Tom Campbell visited the Rutland site with Kendra. Although there was not a need for another youth outreach worker there, Kendra volunteered to help in any way she could and the connection was made! Staff was also excited to visit another site and talk about accomplishments and share struggles with others.

In July 2010 the Youth Outreach Worker worked with the local parent child center (Sunrise) and the Department of Labor to develop a summer work program. Katrina and a co-worker developed a six week Community Action series. The intent of the work program was to provide young people with the opportunity to learn about their community and develop leadership skills. Four young women participated in the summer work experience, which included visiting local resources. Based on those visits, the young people jointly identified a gap or issue in the community, facilitated a focus group, and planned an activity to address the gap identified through the resource visits and focus group. The issue that was identified was the significant substance use among young people in the community. Therefore the Community Action group planned and facilitated a substance-free “end of the summer bash” at a local park. Activities included dance, a dance revolution competition, a movie, raffles, and good clean fun! The community supported the event with food and raffle donations. An estimated 35 young people attended the activity.

The T4C Advisory Group meets weekly to discuss issues in the community to be addressed and plan positive youth activities. There are typically 10 to 12 participants each week, and the number continues to grow. When Katrina was asked why all these young people continue to come every week, she simply replied, “Because they want to be heard”.

In addition to the “end of summer bash”, T4C planned and coordinated several “give back to the community” events including a “Thanks (for) Giving” dinner that they cooked and served to community partners and volunteers. Approximately 30 people enjoyed the dinner; care packages were delivered to those who couldn’t make it. The young people are actively involved with planning events, including finding a venue, soliciting donations from local businesses, and planning the event schedule.

UCS hosted a “Meet and Greet” with the Burnhams, a local boy band who just returned from a national tour opening for Justin Bieber. T4C along with 80 youth and community members attended the free musical event. Burnham sang songs, posed for pictures and signed autographs. It was very exciting to be part of such an event. T4C is hoping to hold a fundraising concert with Burnham sometime in the future.

The program staff attended several trainings including the September 23<sup>rd</sup> YIT Day of Sharing and Learning, Bridges out of Poverty, and CPI. YOP staff participate in several community based committees including the Southshire Partnership for a Health Community.

*Non-quantifiable accomplishments should be listed in chronological order. Describe any draft/final products in this section. **T4C dance flyer***

2. Problems – none to report at this time.

3. Significant Findings and Events – *(For special notice to Principal Investigator, State Outreach Team for Youth in Transition, Federal Project Officer, etc.. This should include any changes in staffing, including of persons, time spent, and/or responsibilities. Attach resumes and qualifications of new staff.)*

The original YIT grant proposed that a new Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) be identified every 12-18 months to allow youth the opportunity to work within their community and learn leadership skills. Most recently, the decision was made to continue to keep the Youth Outreach Worker in her current position. Katrina Hollis is well respected and well known in the community and she has made positive connections with partners and youth. Rotating in a new YOW would be disruptive to the process and quite possibly quell the palpable energy behind Youth Outreach and T4C.

Creating leadership opportunities for youth continues to be a primary goal of the program, therefore a plan has been put in place to make sure young people learn self confidence, leadership, advocacy skills. The plan includes the continuation of the Community Action Series and the development of a teen leadership weekend. Please see Section 6 for further details.

4. Dissemination activities – *Briefly describe project related inquiries and information dissemination activities carried out over the reporting period. Itemize and include a copy of any newspaper, newsletter, and magazine articles or other published materials considered relevant to project activities, or used for project information or public relations purposes.*

The Youth Outreach Worker and Coordinator worked with the local radio station to promote the program and events. It is still the hope of the program to develop a T4C radio show some time in the near future. **The T4C also produced a dance flyer.**

5. Other Activities – *Briefly describe other activities undertaken during the reporting period.*

Other activities included connecting with the Rutland YIT Program and collaborating with the Southshire Partnership for a Healthy Community in order to support each other's efforts and reduce redundancy. Several exciting events have been planned through the collaboration. See section 6 for details.

The Youth Service Council of key YIT stakeholders continues to meet monthly to discuss transition-age youth issues in the community. The meetings have been well attended by local partners. One of the many issues identified by the group is the lack of safe and secure housing for transition-age young people. Unsafe and unstable housing will make any issue more complex and increase possible police involvement, school dropping-out, and mental health issues. Given, however, the breadth of the issue, the group decided to focus its energy on a smaller set of the population: housing issues for pregnant and parenting young women.

6. Activities Planned for Next Reporting Period – *Briefly describe the project activities planned for the next reporting period.*

Peer Leadership Retreat- YOP, YDP, and the Partnership are offering a peer leadership opportunity for 22 young people. A leadership weekend will be held from April 1-3, 2011 in New Hampshire where youth will learn leadership and team building skills through an adventure based process. The weekend will be free-of-charge to the young people, including lodging, transportation and food. The group of young people will bring their new skills back to the community with the plan of attending a Town Select Board meeting to discuss adding a youth to the board.

The Summer Youth Employment Community Action Program planning is underway. We will be collaborating with Sunrise again this year to offer an employment and learning opportunity to a small group of young people. It is the hope of the planning team that Kendra will co-facilitate the group with Katrina.

T4C has “commissioned” a young woman to create a Logo for the group. She is a young artist who created a banner for the group last year. We are very excited to see what she comes up with!

T4C and YOP are working hard to plan the next event, a dance at the Moose Lodge to be held on February 17<sup>th</sup>. The dance will include a DJ and Karaoke, dance, dance revolution competition, prizes, food and drinks. The Moose is donating the space, soda, and clean-up. The Moose have been very welcoming to the youth and UCS. They have donated their space, time and resources to the youth, who feel they belong. The Moose are a great asset to the efforts being made by T4C and YOP.

We continue to work on developing a Facebook page for T4C. We have been working with YDP and the Southshire Partnership to combine efforts and resources and reduce redundancy. Two specific areas that have been identified to work on is creating an over-all Facebook page that would encompass all the efforts being made. The second area is to develop one Youth Advocacy Board, such as T4C that everyone supports and “feeds into” with the goal to create sub-boards when specific tasks need to be accomplished. For instance, the Youth Development Program has difficulty recruiting foster youth to participate in their group/board. The thought is that the stigma of being a foster youth prevents youth participation. The trouble is that a board of foster youth is needed to provide feedback to Family Services. The hope is that if there is a broad-spectrum board, more foster youth will participate and, when there is a need to gather a sub-group of foster youth, they will be available.