

Northeast Kingdom Youth Services
24 Bagley Street
St Johnsbury, VT 05819
Youth In Transition Grant #03150-7050
Program Progress Report

Progress Report due by January 31, 2011 (covers work done from July 1-December 31, 2010)

Report Contents

1. Major Activities and Accomplishments during this Period – Report both quantifiable and non-quantifiable accomplishments for the General Expectations and Regional Goals listed in Attachment A of the grant award (see pages 3-5):

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

The following accomplishments have been made in the past 6 months:

1. 22 youth who have engaged with the YIT program.
2. 8 Common Studies have been completed.
3. 8 Discharge Summaries were completed.
4. 4 6-month follow-ups have been completed.
5. The Youth Advisory Board has met on the following dates:

- July 28th- The participants in the Living Room for a workshop titled “Healthy Relationships, taught by Henekis Stoddard from Umbrella.

This workshop was an open discussion about the following topics:

1. What to look for in a relationship
 2. What to avoid in a relationship
 3. What are “Red Flags” in a relationship
- August 30th- The members discussed what they felt to see to be the barriers/concerns/gaps in the areas of : Caring Relationships, Access to Health Care (as well as other benefits such as Reach-Up and 3squaresvt), Employment, Education, and Housing
 - September 29th- The members discussed mental health services and they completed a questionnaire.

- October 27th- Members discussed how to develop the Individual Life Plans. They spent time speaking about the Individual Life Plans (ILPs). They looked at an array of templates and decided we would “pull” ideas from a few of the plans and create our own. They discussed genograms (like a family tree) to identify family members, but the members stated wanting the genogram to include friends as well as family. We discussed that sometimes friends are considered “family.” I will comprise the template and show the young adults and then we will make changes accordingly. I will show the template to other participants that are not a part of the YAAB, but are participants of the YIT program. This will happen throughout the next few months.
- November 23rd- This meeting was scheduled for members to attend the LIT at Northeast Kingdom Human Services to meet and talk with team; however the LIT team had to cancel that meeting.
- December 8th- This meeting was designed to bring together the other area Youth Boards or boards-in-progress to combine ideas and to see the possibility for just one board. Sue Teske facilitates the Youth Advisory Council which is youth ages 6th grade-up that work together to write and submit grants and who also put together the Youth Town Meeting, make food for First Night, attend leadership activities and help to get their voice out in the community. Her council meets every other Monday from 5:30-7:30. We determined that the Youth Advisory Board would collaborate with the Youth Advisory Council for leadership and community activities.

We then went onto to asking the youth in the room what they feel a Youth Advisory Board should do/accomplish. These were some of their ideas:

- Incorporate a big brother/big sister program in this area
- Youth educate youth on life experiences
- Improve relationships between youth in care and their social workers
- More activities in the area that include youth of all ages, status, and abilities
- Increase awareness of abuse and more support for families
- Help with policy changes at DCF
- Educate public where to go for services/support
- Recruit more youth to the Youth Advisory Board

The Youth Advisory Board will meet again in January, 2011.

The YIT facilitator continues to have good, positive, and productive relationships with local and statewide community agencies/partners. Re: local: schools/educational locations (St.Johnsbury Academy, Lyndon Institute, Caledonia School, Blue Mountain Union School and Adult Basic Education) and local agencies (such as Department of Labor, Department of Children and Families [to include Economic Services]) and

churches. Re: statewide: this facilitator has a good connection with VSAC (Vermont Student Assistance Corporation) and Department of Children and Families in regards to state benefits including health insurance, Reach-Up, and 3squaresvt.

The YIT Facilitator has spent a significant portion of the time in this position connecting the youth to the appropriate agencies that will help them. The following connections have been made.

1. 1 youth has completed a GED.
2. 2 youth are enrolled in college full-time.
3. 1 youth is enrolled in a training program in the nursing field.
4. 6 of the 7 Diversion participants who were referred to the YIT program have successfully completed their contractual requirements with the assistance of the YIT facilitator.
5. 1 youth is engaged with substance abuse services.
6. 1 youth was accepted at Job Corps and is working on completing a high school diploma and gaining skills in the health occupations field.
7. 18 youth have maintained stable housing. 2 of those have gained their own independent housing in the past 6 months. 8 of those have maintained their own independent housing that they had when they began working with the YIT program. 8 youth are in a stable living situation with family members.
8. 1 youth has completed a high school diploma.
9. 4 youth are attending high school.
10. 7 youth are employed. 2 are employed full-time. 5 are employed part-time.
11. 20 youth have health insurance.
12. 9 youth receive 3squaresvt.
13. 1 youth navigated through the Social Security System to successfully change payee.
14. 6 youth are actively engaged with mental health services. 4 youth are actively searching for appropriate mental health services.
15. 11 youth are licensed drivers.

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

The YIT facilitator has attended the following trainings since July 1, 2010:

- “Say It Straight”- Intensive Training of Trainers Workshop- August 9-12, 2010
- “ OUR 2010 Summit on Sexual Violence: A Community Response to Sexual Violence, Strengthening Our Response,”- September 22, 2010
- “Learning and Sharing Day about Building the Young Adult System of Care,”- September 23, 2010
- “Young Adult Partnership,”- November 10, 2010

- “How to Have Difficult Conversations to Productively and Positively Work Through Coordinated Services Planning and Interagency Team Conflicts,”- December 14, 2010

Since the YIT Facilitator has been working in this position, activities and initial outcomes and goals from the grant that have been tracked are listed below.

- Reach out to young adults with SED who are out-of-school at least through teen centers, recovery centers, homeless youth programs, and by intercepting them at critical intervention points with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
 - ✓ This has been done by the YIT facilitator’s office being located in the living room at Northeast Kingdom Youth Services. It is also being done due to the YIT facilitator’s connection with the other programs at Northeast Kingdom Youth Services. Those programs are Diversion, Transitional Living, Youth Development, and Parent Education.
- Improve access to mental health services for the young adults most at risk for poor outcomes and use the power of the courts to increase their likelihood of use of those services.
 - ✓ This is a work in progress. The YIT facilitator is currently defining the gaps in services and trying to identify why youth are not connected with mental health services.
- Provide cross-system case management and individualized service plan development, ensuring that young adults are engaged for planning for their own futures.
 - ✓ This is being worked on by the YIT facilitator’s weekly meetings with youth who are enrolled in the YIT program. A cross-system case management is being maintained by the YIT facilitator’s contact with all of the other agencies that the youth are engaged in. The Individual Life Plans are still in the development stage.
- Link and/or provide young adults and their families/adult allies with:
 - ✓ Access to health care
 - ✓ Education
 - ✓ Employment
 - ✓ Housing
 - ✓ Caring Relationships
 - ✓ These areas are addressed and worked with youth each contact with the YIT facilitator.
- Cooperate with the required National and State Evaluation Studies, including collect data for the Common Study.

- ✓ Common Studies are completed with each youth who begin work the YIT facilitator.

2. Problems – Describe any deviations or departures from the original project plan including actual/anticipated slippage in task completion dates, and special problems encountered or expected. Use this section to describe barriers to accomplishment, actions taken to overcome difficulties, and to advise DMH of any needs for assistance.

We have encountered a barrier in regards to our Steering Committee. When YIT was established and ready for implementation there were a variety of community partners that would be expected to participate in the monthly LIT meetings. Those agencies are Vocational Rehabilitation, Community Justice Center, NEKHS, JOBS program, Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, VT Federation of Families, Department of Health, Agency of Human Services, St. Johnsbury School, Northeast Kingdom Youth Services, Department of Corrections, and Department for Children and Families' Family Services Division.

We have not seen a great portion of these agencies attend; therefore we have been working with the chairperson of the meetings to try to bring these members back to the table. Their participation is needed to better serve the transitioning youth in this community and helps to further our holistic approach of service delivery.

Our work with 22 youth, and community connections demonstrate our achievements in completing the goals set forth in this grant.

The YIT facilitator has gathered the following information in regards to barriers within the system of care for youth/young adults from youth mostly from the Youth Advisory Board meetings. The information provided below is also any barriers that have been seen by the YIT facilitator.

At the August 30th Youth Advisory Board, the three members made the following comments about the following areas:

In regards to caring relationships their thoughts/concerns/gaps were as follows:

- They all commented that good relationships are important whether it be family or a boy/girlfriend. One member feels that couples' therapy is also important and she would like to see more therapists in this area provide that service.

In regards to access to health care and other state benefits, quotes are provided below to explain their thoughts/feelings:

- “The process takes too long when you really need the assistance soon. Also they don’t give you enough to buy the things you need for your family.”
- “When you barely make enough money to support yourself, but they tell you it’s too much to get any help at all.”
- As a group we discussed this further and they stated that they all felt as though it is very difficult to access these services, because they were unable to reach them by phone or get an appointment in a timely fashion.

In regards to education their thoughts about barrier within this system were as follows:

- “I am a 17 year old mother and I can’t sign for my education because I am under 18, but I can parent my child. I need to get emancipated.”
- We also discussed as a group and recognized barriers in education. You can’t get a college loan under the age of 23 without using your parents’ income information; many youth are not living with their parents after the age of 18. Many youth are not going to college and better their skills, because they can’t afford to pay.

In regards to employment the members of the group had the following thoughts:

- This was the biggest barrier according to the members at this meeting. All three reported that employers want you to have some much experience, but many are not willing to give you the job therefore you can’t get the experience.
- “Not enough jobs are available right now. And because of all the layoffs there are even less jobs for teenagers who aren’t as qualified as a 30 year old.”
- “Employment is only an issue because of lack of transportation. It is also rough living on one income.”
- In regards to housing the group had the following thoughts:
 - We discussed the barrier of housing, thankfully, all three members have stable housing.
 - One member did state, “The prices of rent for apartments are so high that it makes it hard to have money for that and other bills and for items like food and shampoo.”

Other Barriers:

Even though, 50% of the youth in the YIT program are licensed drivers, transportation is still a barrier, because most of them do not have a vehicle, access to a vehicle, or finances to maintain a vehicle.

During our September 29th, Youth Advisory Board meeting, the members and I discussed their thoughts/views/barriers that are within the mental health system/services. I gave the youth a questionnaire about mental health services. It is shown below and includes their thoughts and comments. This questionnaire was also distributed to a few other youth that are not participants of the Youth Advisory Board.

Mental Health Services Discussion/Questionnaire
Youth Advisory Board Meeting
9/29/10

Please rate the following questions:

1= strongly disagree and 10=strongly agree

1. Mental Health Services are easy to access in your community

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One youth rated this “1”

Two youth rated this “8”

One youth rated this “9”

One youth rated this “10”

During our discussion of this, both members felt as though the Mental Health Services were accessible, but **good** mental health services is not always that easy to find. This was a consensus as well for other youth who completed questionnaire.

2. You have been able to find a therapist that you are/were happy with (if applicable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One youth rated this “1”

Two youth rated this “2”

One youth rated this “3”

One youth rated this “10”

Youth commented that they have difficulty finding a therapist that they can trust. They feel that in order to discuss your problems with someone you must be able to be a relationship and trust him/her.

3. Most youth ages 16-22, do not want to access Mental Health Services due to past experiences

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One youth rated this “5”
Two youth rated this “8”
Two youth rated this “10”

When we discussed this one youth strongly agreed, because she felt that some youth who do not re-engage with therapy is mostly based upon the fact that they are not able to feel comfortable with a therapist and therefore they are less likely to try again. Another youth was in “middle,” because he felt that yes, youth do not engage in mental health services because of past experiences, but also because they just don’t believe they need help.

4. Can you think of 3 good therapists (or therapists people speak highly of) in your community?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One youth rated this “1”
Two youth rated this “3”
Two youth rated this “4”

They felt that they could name 3, but not necessarily 3 “good” therapists

5. Sometimes youth begin engaging in Mental Health Services and then stop, why? Please explain.

- One youth stated, “Because they have no patience. When I went to a therapist I expect results after the first or second time going. Now I realize the process is not like that.”
- One youth stated, “They may not feel comfortable with their therapist or they may have had negative memories with past therapists.”
- One youth stated, “Their schedules become too hectic or have loss of insurance.”
- One youth stated, “Because they didn’t help them or disliked them because they don’t understand.”

Here are some other comments from youth:

- Therapists need to focus on issues that lead to the mental illness such as depression, not just the depression.
- School counselors do not work, because you do not feel as though they honor confidentiality (ex: they would tell other teachers about your issues) and you may not feel comfortable if your issue deals with a teacher in the school.
- They feel as though therapists do not pay attention when they are talking to them
- One member stated, “I like when therapists take you out of the office and you go for a walk and talk.” She felt that sitting in an office is not appealing.
- Waiting lists are incredibly long for youth in regards to accessing mental health services. Many times the therapists they want to see put them on a waiting list that is months long.

6. There is a lot of “stigma” in regards to receiving mental health services. What does stigma mean or what do you think it means?

- One youth quoted, “I think that stigma has to do with bad thoughts towards mental illness.”

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.)

We are on track and do not have any changes to report at this time.

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.

When NEKYS’ fund developer is meeting with foundations who we are seeking a funding source from, often during those meetings, questions of YIT arise. The fund developer will explain the program during those meetings. Those particular foundations are:

- VT Community Foundation
- BUFKA Foundation
- VT Women’s Fund
- United Way

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

- The YIT facilitator participated and helped with the Shelter Walk that was held in October 2010.
- The YIT facilitator attends the Community Partners meeting each Wednesday at the Department of Children and Families along with other community agency members from: DCF, NEKCA, Umbrella, Gilman Housing, etc. This meeting is designed for members to discuss families and/or individuals who are in need of monetary assistance for housing and/or heating and electrical expenses.
- The YIT facilitator was a member of the Restorative Retreat committee held at NEKYS.
- The YIT facilitator has attended a few meetings to plan and discuss the details for the 2011 Working With Youth Conference to be held in May 2011.
- The YIT facilitator will be a member of the committee held at NEKYS to incorporate youth voice into the NEKYS Facebook page.

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

The YIT facilitator will continue to work on the objectives and goals set forth in the grant. These particular areas/goals are:

- 1) Build consensus among different stakeholders in the systems of care about reasonable expectations for young adults of transition-age with mental health and/or co-occurring substance abuse challenges and services/supports to help them.
- 2) Adopt one or more evidence-based practices that are consistent with and build upon the JOBS program in the region.
 - ✓ The YIT facilitator has been incorporating the TIPS model into daily work with participants.
- 3) Respond competently to the religions, cultures, and languages of young adults and their families/adult allies.
- 4) Operate in accordance with continuing input from key stakeholders (including youth and family members) within the regional systems of care.
- 5) Increase social marketing efforts to reach eligible youth/young adults and their families.
- 6) Increase the focus of youth to be served by reaching out to 8th grade drop-outs who never enter high school many of whom are at least 16 years old by the time they drop out.
- 7) Continue with the monthly Youth Advisory Board meetings and build upon the leadership abilities of the members. Have the members become more involved with the community and having their voice be heard.
- 8) The YIT facilitator will strive to work more collaboratively with case managers within NEKYS to assist their participants with system issues.
- 9) The YIT facilitator will reach out to the following:
 - ✓ The Recovery Center
 - ✓ The towns of Gilman/Lunenburg

- ✓ Connect with the administrator of the BARJ (Balanced and Restorative Justice) program (located at Northeast Kingdom Youth Services) to become more familiar with system issues with these participants.
- 10) YIT facilitator will make sure each participant has a plan of care for their work with the YIT program.
 - 11) YIT facilitator will work with Transitional Living Administrator to help plan and coordinate an activity at the Youth Town Meeting.
 - 12) YIT facilitator will begin attending the planning committee for the Young Adult Voice Movement. Youth will also participate in these meetings.
 - 13) YIT facilitator will continue to reach out to schools and educate the staff about the YIT program.
 - 14) The March 2011 Northeast Kingdom Youth Services newsletter will contain an article about the YIT program. The YIT facilitator will provide information for this article about the program.