

# Youth in Transition (YIT)

## Regional Activities to Achieve Outcomes and Goals

Time Period from July 1- December 31, 2010

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This technical assistance document includes excerpts from all 12 YIT regional progress reports for the time period July 1 through December 31, 2010. The excerpts are organized to convey the scope and variety of activities addressing each of the above outcomes and goals. This may help spread good ideas and strategies across the regions. Information from the regions is blended together unless otherwise indicated. Further detail is available in the regional reports, which can be found at <http://www.youth-in-transition-grant.com>.

## ***Desired Outcomes for Individuals***

### **1. Decreased number of young adults involved in the corrections system (including an increase in the number who are free of incarceration).**

As well as continuing to reach out to existing referral sources, new referral sources were developed at the Juvenile Court system and Restorative Justice....Met with the director of our Community Justice Center to discuss collaboration and let them know about YIT.... Connect with the administrator of the BARJ (Balanced and Restorative Justice) program to become more familiar with system issues with these participants...

Serve on Diversion Board.... Committee member for Women in Transition group, worked with community justice center and other service providers to develop a one – stop – system of care unit for women exiting the correctional system.

*Lamoille:* During this period, a local community partner [a Diversion and Restorative Justice Program], received a grant that supports the hiring of the Criminal Justice Social Worker (CJSW) for one day per week when he is not doing YIT work. The new position involves providing case management re-entry services for youth entering the community from prison. There will be some case overlap between the programs, and thus some young adults intersecting with criminal justice.

The Steering Committee continues to meet [on a monthly or quarterly basis]....*Orange/No. Windsor:* We continue outreach to maximize group participation with a recent focus on Law enforcement: local police, state police and sheriff's department, Restorative Justice and Court Diversion.

*Lamoille:* The following findings came out of the Steering Committee's discussions about the outcome to be Free from Incarceration:

Our initial assessment found that it is often too long to substance abuse assessment after the initial charge. There is an on-going local attempt to fast-track substance abuse assessment for YIT in the local court system; the defense bar is resisting, emphasizing due process concerns. Steering committee members will continue to pursue changes within the court system related to this issue.

Our assessment showed that parents often don't fully understand what happens when YIT enter the system. Many of the families are fragmented, struggling and fearful of the "system". The steering committee discussed the value of family-oriented treatment for YIT families, and the Criminal Justice Social Worker (CJSW) and supervisor agreed to try and incorporate more family-oriented focus into the case management model.

Often no services are mandated when a YIT intersects with criminal justice. These YIT are difficult to engage, and making services a condition of release can provide a "hook" to get them into services and on the right track. The judge ordered one defendant to meet with the CJSW as a condition of release. Steering committee members will continue to pursue further changes such as imposing conditions of release.

The Youth Outreach Program (YOP) is currently working with youth who have deferred sentences.

## **2. Increased number of young adults who are employed.**

*Caledonia/So. Essex:* In regards to employment the members of the Young Adult Advisory Board had the following thoughts:

- This was the biggest barrier: *“Employers want you to have so 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.”*

*Lamoille:* The following findings came out of the Steering Committee’s discussions about the outcome of Employment: It was determined that existing local resources are sufficient to help youth in transition with employment. The major obstacle is in motivating them to engage with existing resources and consistently work to become and remain employed. The goal of the YIT program is therefore to engage local young adults with existing employment resources through intensive case management using motivational interviewing techniques.

*So. Windsor/No. Windham:* New referral sources were developed at the Department of Labor.....In collaboration with the Department of Labor, the YIT project coordinator began instructing Youth Employment Workshops in November. The workshops have been well attended with between 5-15 young adults attending each session. The workshops were designed with young adult input, so the focus lies squarely on the information they want to learn. So far we have covered all the basics from where and how to search for a job, how to dress, resume and cover letter composition, and job retention. Future workshops will include guest speakers from Human Resources, local business owners and young adults who have worked successfully with The YIT Project and the Department of Labor.

*Chittenden:* Actively participates in Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) coalition meetings.... Participated in a CWS webinar training focused on the use of Salesforce in job development and placements.....Attended the CWS Employment Conference (Burlington Hilton site) on November 9, 2010. Connected with clinicians from Reach Up, Economic Services, JOBS Programs in other northern Vermont regions and additional agencies....

YIT/JOBS Program Case Manager has done the following in this reporting period:

- Continued the maintenance of a Now Hiring/Job Postings Board with daily updates of current entry level and other applicable positions listed on craigslist.org, 7Days, JobsInVermont.com and related websites.
- Worked to develop a bread baking apprenticeship/training for a youth who identified baking as a potential career path. The young adult is currently still engaged in the training two days per week.
- Supported a young adult as he applied to and engaged in a Commercial Kitchen Training offered by Sodexo at St. Michael’s College. The young adult completed the six week, two-day-a -week program with positive reviews from his trainers and supervisor, and with a significant increase in culinary skills which can be implemented both in food service employment and in his growing independence.
- Work continues on creatively finding ways to help young adults access needed resources and find viable employment opportunities in the community. Job opportunities in the Milton and Hinesburg area continue to be limited.

- Transportation continues to be an issue of young adults in rural areas...especially for young adults seeking employment during 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts.

Case Manager supported clients through countless job applications and the creation of resumes and cover letters. ...Currently 1 young adult attending Job Corp....1 youth was accepted at Job Corps and is working on completing a high school diploma and gaining skills in the health occupations field.

*Washington:* The Cell Phone Pilot program has helped 3 Young Adults this quarter. We gave out two phones plus 2 minute/text cards to 2 Young Adults and purchased a one minute/text card for one Young Adult who already owned the same type of cell phone. These 3 Young Adults fit the criteria of the Pilot program as they were working hard to find jobs and needed contact information so possible employers could call them. All three found jobs. None of them have contacted their case-manager to help pay the second months' bill; we hope this indicates they are paying their utility bills themselves based on their incomes with their new jobs.

*So. Windsor/No. Windham:* The YIT Project and The HCRS Summer Employment Program are collaborating on a grant proposal to obtain funds through the Department of Labor's WIA program to double the size of the current Youth Summer Employment Program. If the proposal is accepted, 6 additional young adults will enroll in the 6-week summer program aimed at providing employment, education and cultural experience for under-served and at-risk young adults.

*Bennington:* In July 2010 the Youth Outreach Worker Katrina Hollis 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. .... YIT will be collaborating with Sunrise to offer a similar employment and learning opportunity to another small group of young people for the 2011 summer, too. It is the hope of the planning team that one of last year's participants will co-facilitate the group with Katrina this year.

*Orange/No. Windsor:* In October, 2010 JOBS was expanded into the White River Junction and Bradford communities. This full-time position is divided between the two towns. In addition to JOBS we have added VtGREEN employment services across the AHS Hartford District. The combined effort of VtGreen with JOBS provides training and employment opportunities for young adults within a "Green" industry.

### **3. Increased number young adults participating in (or who completed) educational programs.**

Increase the youth to be served by reaching out to 8<sup>th</sup> grade drop-outs who never enter high school - many of whom are at least 16 years old by the time they drop out.

*Orange/No. Windsor:* Clara Martin Center has worked with students at risk for dropping out of school as a prevention measure in helping to provide and seek alternative educational options, while providing motivational strategies to continue in school until options can be provided.

Engage with the administrative staff at the local high school to identify youth who are in danger of dropping out or getting kicked out of high school....Meeting with groups of Administrators at Enosburg High School, MVU High School, BFA High School, BFA-Fairfax High School, SOAR Alternative School, Vermont Adult Learning, VSAC, and the Northwest Technical Center.... Brief overview of the YIT project was presented to Chittenden County Guidance Counselors.

Youth Outreach Program (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.....Supported one young adult in re-enrollment with Vermont Adult Learning.

*Caledonia/So. Essex:* We also discussed education as a [youth] group and recognized barriers. 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.

#### **4. Increased number of young adults who have access to, and are using, a medical home.**

*Caledonia/So. Essex:* In regard to access to health care and other state benefits, quotes are provided below to explain the thoughts/feelings of the Young Adult Advisory Board members:

- “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.”

The Youth Outreach Program (YOP) provides assistance with obtaining health insurance and supports through Economic Services and helps make health care connections....Supported one young adult in applying for a continuance of Medicaid and 3Squares. The young adult’s coverage had expired, and this Clinician successfully advocated for an extension without any gap in coverage.

*Lamoille:* The following findings came out of the Steering Committee’s discussions about the outcome of Health Insurance and Access to Care: Four of the 16 cases did not have health insurance upon intake. In all of these cases, the clients were eligible. Therefore, the largest obstacle to enrolling in health insurance is a lack of urgency to seek medical care. The goal of the YIT program is to link local young adults with existing health insurance plans through intensive case management.

Health Care Coverage Questions: The grant manager will create a clear and concise question that inquires about the health care coverage status of young adults. This question will be distributed to case managers in the community for possibly adding to their intake forms.

The steering committee is considering partnering with the district Department of Health to create a “medical home” for YIT clients at a yet-to-be-determined location. The home would be modeled on what Spectrum is currently offering in their Pearl Street Youth Clinic.

*Chittenden:* Involvement in Health Education and Access Linkages (HEAL), which is a multidisciplinary health education strategy based on relationship-building to improve the health education of low income Vermonters. The focus is on nutrition, chronic illness management, stress, child development, women's and men's health, and other issues identified by the community. HEAL engages medical students from the University of Vermont College of Medicine to educate each other and the community and improve the health education of low income Vermonters, including New Americans from the recently resettled immigrant and refugee community.

*Franklin/Grand Isle:* Form partnership with pediatric clinic and work with Dr. Fred Holmes on substance abuse video project. Establish 12 week 12 – step program called “Reel Transformation.”

## **5. Increased number of young adults living in safe & stable housing.**

*Caledonia/So. Essex:* In regards to housing, the Young Adult Advisory Board had the following thoughts:

- Thankfully, all members have stable housing.
- *“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.”*

Stable Housing for young adults continues to be identified as a barrier for success.....Unsafe and unstable housing will make any issue more complex and increase possible police involvement, school dropping-out, and mental health issues....Resources are limited for affordable housing and housing options in the rural communities.... One referral was made to the Spectrum Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Program....1 young adult [from the Orange/No. Windsor region] currently resides in shelter and receives services from NEKYS....

*Orleans/No. Essex:* The YIT Transition Facilitator attends the Community Partners meeting each Wednesday at the Department of Children and Families along with other community and 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 participated and helped with the Shelter Walk that was held in October 2010.

Given the breadth of the issue, one YIT Steering Committee decided to focus its energy on a smaller set of the population: housing issues for pregnant and parenting young women.... Assisting teen moms with YIT related services (housing, transportation, resources, etc.).

*Addison:* The YIT Steering Committee is concerned about the population of young adults unable to live at home and struggling to graduate from high school....The YIT team has collaborated to offer support and guidance to these young adults on how they may work to find resources amongst their friends and family while they are looking for income and other necessary arrangements for stable housing.... Many of the youth who are struggling with interpersonal difficulties are supported by a tenuous and unstable network of friends and family. The lack of power in these relationships can often exacerbate underlying mental health conditions and interpersonal difficulties.....One way or other these young adults are able to have a roof over their head for much of the winter. However, there is a call for guidance and support from the community members who open their homes to the young people.

One young adult began services with the Youth in Transition grant separated from his family, living in condemned housing, and without any means of self-sufficiency. At the time of this report he has been reunified with his family and is currently working full-time with excellent remarks from his supervisors, all while managing a major mental health condition.

*South Windham:*

1. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Brattleboro Housing Authority and Youth Services to allow Youth Services clients who are homeless and disabled and receiving case management services to apply for and receive “Shelter Plus Care Vouchers” which will provide affordable housing for them as long as they continue in case management

and the case managers attend monthly housing meetings and enter data about client progress in the HMIS system.

2. Five of the YIT Housing Coordinator's new clients were housed either in the SRO (2) or in independent apartments (3) during the second half of 2010
3. The pilot project with youth being housed in an existent SRO with the Windham Housing Trust [aka "The Cobblestone Building"] has been extended. Between July and December 2010 six youth lived in rented rooms in the House. Length of stay for each youth ranged from three to eight months. All of the youth received some housing subsidies or assistance with grant applications to help with housing expenses.
  - a. A weekly "house meeting" at the Cobblestone was instituted to give youth residents a chance to get to know each other better and to voice concerns about the house to the YIT Housing Coordinator who would address them in weekly meetings (which were begun this Fall) with the Windham Housing Trust. At the weekly Windham Housing Meeting the YIT Housing Coordinator is able to update the Housing Trust regarding all youth applicants to WHT housing, which includes the Life Skills House for young mothers, SROs, and one and two bedroom apartments.
  - b. After the pilot phase of the current housing program is completed with 3-5 youth living in the group house with an equal number of adults, we hope to be able to expand the local program to have a house with all-youth residing in one building, with a youth-affiliated resident manager on-site as well. At that time we will be able to adapt the rules to better serve our youth population. (I.e., we hope to amend the minimum age for residents to be 16 instead of 18).
  - c. One youth lost his job while in the SRO and has had a hard time finding a new source of income. How to keep youth housed when they are not able to meet their financial obligations is a challenge we are still working on. Applying for new jobs and engaging in volunteer work are two areas we count towards "productive time" for young adults to get a rent subsidy, but we are still working on how to best serve some youth who are not able to meet expectations for rent or work commitments.
4. The Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator has remained an active member of the HELP Fund committee (a multi-agency board which determines emergency funds for housing for Windham County). Four of the YIT Housing Coordinator's clients received grants from the HELP fund for their security deposits so they could move into stable housing.
5. During the second half of 2010 Youth Services explored two local non-profit agencies as partners to support youth housing in our community. The one option did not work out, but the second option will provide short-term housing in a two bedroom apartment owned by our local shelter as a transitional option. Youth will be housed in the "Morningside" apartment by February 2011.
6. Youth Services has hosted monthly multi-agency YIT team meetings focused on housing (and bi-monthly meetings on employment as well) throughout the grant period.
7. On December 4, 2010 the YIT Housing Coordinator participated in a community awareness event called "No Lasting Home", a fundraiser to help community groups that serve those



who face homelessness. The event was nearly sold-out and generated a lot of publicity about local housing challenges....Youth Services' housing work was mentioned in an article about the "No Lasting Home" event; it appeared in the Brattleboro Reformer Ovation (December 2-8, 2010).

8. The Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator also had a letter to the editor published in the Brattleboro Reformer (December 25-26,2010) regarding a grant from United Way that helped secure financing for the HMIS database system that enabled Youth Services to work with youth in getting Shelter Plus Care vouchers.

*Washington County:* The intake team and Michael Curtis (the Children's Director for Washington County Mental Health Services, the regional system of care fiscal agent for YIT) met with the Housing Consultant on July 28, 2010 and began the process of looking for more housing for young adults in Washington County. The Housing Consultant showed us many buildings as potential sites for a group model of supportive housing for young adults....The current best option comes with some challenges. It is a motel in need of renovation, and it may be registered with the State as a historic building, which would make renovation more difficult.

## 7. Increase in young adults' strengths and protective factors.

## 8. Improved mental health for young adults.

*Caledonia/So. Essex:* The YIT Transition Facilitator is currently defining the gaps in services and trying to identify why youth are not connected with mental health services...The Young Adult Advisory Board members discussed and completed a questionnaire about mental health services. It is shown below and includes their thoughts and comments.

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.

*During our discussion of this, youth felt as though Mental Health Services are accessible, but **good** mental health services are not always easy to find.*

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

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

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

*One youth strongly agreed that some youth who do not re-engage with therapy were not able to feel comfortable with a therapist in the past and therefore are less likely to try again. Another youth chose the "middle" of the scale because he feels that youth do not engage in mental health services 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?

*They felt that they could name 3 therapists but not necessarily 3 "good" therapists.*

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

- *"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."*
- *"They may not feel comfortable with their therapist or they may have had negative memories with past therapists."*
- *"Their schedules become too hectic or they lose insurance."*
- *"Because they didn't help them or disliked them because they don't understand."*

Here are some other concerns raised by the young adults:

- *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.*
- *“I like when therapists take you out of the office and you go for a walk and talk.”*
- *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.*

Three YIT clients began therapy with counselors to help them cope with life trauma.

The YIT facilitator will reach out to the Recovery Center.....Outreach to Turning Point, the local recovery center to engage young people struggling with recovery issues. Several young people connected with the Youth Outreach Program (YOP) through this avenue.

Attended an Adolescent Brain Development and High Risk Behaviors training on October 8, 2010. Gained much applicable knowledge about the effects of substance use on brain development and tendencies of adolescents toward other high risk behaviors.

Attended a training focused on the implementation of aromatherapy in client treatment. Then explored the use of aromatherapy techniques for down-regulation and the management of anxiety and stress with two clients.

*Addison:* On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, CSAC will host training on Motivational Interviewing with a young adult focus. This training will be offered for free to CSAC employees and (as space allows) to YIT personnel from other service areas; it may also be open to the public for a \$25 fee.

## **Goals for Strengthening Regional Systems of Care**

### **1. Young adult leadership is developed in VT.**

**Leadership Groups of Youth and Young Adults:** *Caledonia/So. Essex:* December 8<sup>th</sup> - This meeting was designed to bring together the area youth boards or boards-in-progress to combine ideas and see the possibility for just one board. Sue Teske facilitates the Youth Advisory Council for youth ages 6<sup>th</sup> grade-up who 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 Young Adult Advisory Board for leadership and community activities. We then went onto to ask 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.

*Addison:* The next major step to implementation of the YIT grant is to arrange for the first meeting of an Addison County youth council. The difficulty in implementing this portion of the grant has been in generating the interest necessary to move forward with youth who are interested in participating. To pull from existing pockets of youth leadership in the service area requires some idea of what the youth council may be responsible for. While this content can be generated by the youth advocate, it is antithetical to define the role of the council without input from the members. Looking forward, finding the right candidates for the council is within striking distance and the first steps of defining the roles and relationships associated with the council as obtainable during the next reporting period.

Participated in the Youth Advisory Council on Foster Care at Spectrum; an effort to help shape the direction and participation of the current board.

*Orleans/No. Essex:* ONE YIT Transition Facilitator attended 2 DCF trainings on implementing youth boards and working with youth and young adults. The training date for the first one was July 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> and the follow-up training took place November 10, 2010....Other regional YIT staff also participated in the Local Youth Advisory Board Training at the VT Tech Campus in Randolph; reporting, advice and sharing from all counties in VT about the progress of their local youth advisory boards....Some young adult YIT leaders also participated – e.g., the Youth Advisory Project members attended a Youth Advisory Board workshop in Randolph, VT in October ....This follow-up training is where YIT and Youth Development Program (YDP) members came up with an action plan to help move forward on the Youth Advisory Board (YAB)...The ONE YIT Transition Facilitator in coordination with YDP will be conducting a community meeting with area agencies to help create a youth advisory board that should be

sustainable. After the initial meeting YIT Facilitator will look for nominated youth and then have the first YAB meeting.

*Bennington:* 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 Teens For Change (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. 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 Hollis [the Youth Outreach Worker] was asked why all these young people continue to come every week, she simply replied, "Because they want to be heard"....The Youth Outreach Worker and Coordinator worked with the local radio station to promote the T4C program and events and, hopefully, to develop a T4C radio show some time in the near future.

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....Peer Leadership Retreat: the Youth Outreach Program (YOP), YDP, and the Southshire 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.

Kendra became involved with the YOP and T4C 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 T4C until she went to St. Joseph's College in September. (Kendra is the first in her family to attend college and is doing so through the STEP program). 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 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.

*Rutland:* The youth advisory council is slowly forming with limited interest by young adults in transition. We are continuing to creatively engage YIT to become involved. For example, going to youth concerts to perform outreach and visiting alternative schools to establish relationships

with YIT.... “YAC” or Young Adults for Change, the youth advisory council and leadership group was established, named and meets weekly to plan service learning projects and special events as well as to provide input into daily Rutland YIT programming. “YAC” or Young Adults for Change will meet every Wednesday from 1-2 PM (Center). YAC will coordinate service learning projects about making healthy choices starting with the Martin Luther King Day of Service. YAC will collaborate with the Youth Development Committee coordinating service learning projects and other programs of their design.

*Franklin/Grand Isle:* YIT Leadership Group is committed to educating, mentoring, and fostering leadership skills in at risk youth. The group meets weekly, in addition to participating in steering committee meetings, public events, and more....[Will] continue to expand and develop the Youth Leadership group....Met with diverse youth groups throughout the county in an effort to collaborate efforts, such as: New Connections (youth in recovery group), BFA (student group), service rendered (St. Albans, and Burlington youth groups), former youth center youth board (common grounds youth center).

Transportation continues to pose a barrier for robust youth participation in the weekly leadership meetings. Public transportation in Franklin and Grand Isle counties is very limited. Ebony Nyoni uses her vehicle or the agency van to transport youth to and from the weekly meetings. Some youth are located in Grand Isle County or other border areas next to New York State and Canada, and some are located on the border with Chittenden County. After weekly group meetings, Ebony has to transport one set of youth into St. Albans City and then go back and retrieve those youth who have greater distances to travel. Ebony and youth continue to advocate in various public forums for more public transportation accessibility.

*So. Windsor/No. Windham:* The Youth Advisory Project is up and running. Its membership consists of 11 general members and 4 elected officers- President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The elected officers and two adult advisors met to put together bylaws to govern the group and provide a framework for sustainability. The at-large membership voted to adopt the bylaws ...The group meets at least twice a month to work towards its mission: *to empower, improve and connect the lives of the area's youth*. So far, the group has gone on a field trip to Six Flags; organized local hiking excursions; hosted 3 teen movie nights; hosted a Holiday Party for teens; completed community service projects for the Springfield Parent Child Center, the Springfield Parks and Recreation Department, and the Turning Point Recovery Center; raked leaves for two elderly town residents; and conducted two successful fundraisers that netted the group a total of \$495....The Youth Advisory Project is actively recruiting volunteers through social networks. In addition, a Facebook page was constructed for the YIT Project and for the Youth Advisory Project..... A partnership with Adventure Tours of Bellows falls has been forged....The Youth Advisory Project is planning some enrichment activities for early 2011.

**Youth and Young Adults on Committees and Boards** -We are excited to have youth in attendance [at the regional YIT Steering Committee] who are willing to share their stories.

We plan to invite at least two youth to join us in an advisory committee to help develop and revise the vision and reality of a youth-residence in Brattleboro.

The YIT Housing Coordinator took...three local youth to join a state-wide meeting to plan the state-wide Young Adult Voice Movement Conference to be held at UVM in Burlington on May 27 and 28, 2011.

**Events with/for Youth and Young Adults:** *Franklin/Grand Isle: 1<sup>ST</sup> Annual Regional Conference:* On this day participants were able to receive valuable information and resources available throughout the community. The participants reached a total of 88, not including exhibitors and guests. Special guest included Cameron Mack. There were over twenty five exhibitors and facilitators for nine round table discussions, including Caring Communities, NCSS Adolescent Services, Vermont Adult Learning, Community Justice, Care Net, AHS, Center Point, VT Cares, Outright VT/RU12, VT Green, Spectrum, Valley Vista, Voices against Violence, AmeriCorps, Tobacco Coalition, NFI, VSAC, DCF, JOBS. We also had The Drug Free World Foundation host a series of educational videos related to illegal drug use amongst youth. After the conference, Michelle Boslun, South Windham YIT Housing Coordinator, reported that one of the youth from her group decided to stop doing drugs as a result.

EAT N BLOG is a project to collect youth voice from throughout the Franklin and Grand Isle communities. Using laptops, we are able to meet with youth sub-cultures and get them to type about their experiences. So far, Ebony Nyoni has worked with the Learning Together group composed of teen moms on this project. She also uses EAT N BLOG to connect with youth who don't have reliable transportation.

**Further information about YIT Grant young adult involvement can be found on the Young Adult Involvement page and in the progress reports from the Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health posted on <http://www.youth-in-transition-grant.com>.**

**Desired Outcome #6 for Individuals: Increased number of young adults who have caring & supportive relationships.**

*Caledonia/So. Essex:* The Young Adult Advisory Board, on July 28, met in the NEKYS 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.

October 27<sup>th</sup> - Members discussed how to develop 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 they wanted the genogram to include friends as well as family. We discussed that sometimes friends are considered “family.” The YIT Transition Facilitator will compile the template and show the young adults and then make changes accordingly. The Facilitator will show the template to other YIT participants who are not a part of the Young Adult Advisory Board throughout the next few months.

**Regional Goal #2 for Strengthening Regional Systems of Care: Families/adult allies support young adults.**

During this reporting period, a parent peer advocate joined the steering committee for a small per-meeting stipend.

*Chittenden:* Bob DiMasi was hired as the Parent Transition Resource Consultant. During the first months on the job, he focused on connecting with families in Milton, Winooski and Burlington. In each of these locations he made contact with the following organizations: schools, community-based family organizations, mental health providers, restorative justice centers and other grass roots organizations that provide natural community supports for families....So far Bob has made connections with several families, one of which resulted in a referral to a Young Adult Navigator to assist a teen who has dropped out of school. Several other parents received information about the program through a school meeting, an Act 264 meeting, and casual conversation. Bob is currently working to set up parent information sessions.

*Washington:* On Sept 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010 the Vermont Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health (VFFCMH) and collaborative partners held a Family and Individual Leadership conference at Lake Morey. Sandra Spencer, Executive Director of the national Federation of Families, was the first keynote speaker. The Washington County System of Care Team Leader (SOCTL) was asked to be a part of a parent panel discussion group with members from two other families. The panel’s stories provoked many questions from the audience and informed people of avenues for help which some didn’t know existed.

The SOCTL participated in her first national Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health conference in Atlanta, GA in November 2010. She gained insight about how other regions/states are moving forward with family leadership and got information on how to build Youth and Family Advisory Groups.... In December the SOCTL also attended training on Advocacy and Collaborative teaming in Randolph, VT, with family members and self-advocates.



She is now planning an event called "Family Round Tables" for March, 2011 to help engage parents and family members in developing one or more Family Advisory Group(s) for the region....We will invite families we have worked with in the past plus new families who could benefit from this event. We will provide them with a nice dinner and conversation about what is working for them in this region and what is not working for them. The evaluation form for the event will include a place for attendees to say whether or not they would like to continue meeting and form a Family Voice Advisory Group. Ideally there would be Family Advisory Groups in several Washington County cities and towns; we will start with Montpelier and Barre and see where this grows.

**Further information about YIT Grant family involvement can be found on the Family Involvement page and in the progress reports from the Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health posted on <http://www.youth-in-transition-grant.com> .**

### **3. Workers use caring practices known to be helpful for young adults and families.**

**Outreach:** The plan is to continue visiting staff meetings and getting referrals from other agencies in 2011.

Trained with the Peer Outreach Workers at Spectrum to do Street Outreach, including provision of basic needs and information of services provided.

*Caledonia/No. Essex:* [Connecting with youth and young adults] has been done by the YIT Transition Facilitator's office being located in the Living Room at Northeast Kingdom Youth Services (NEKYS). It is also being done due to the YIT Transition Facilitator's connection with the other programs at NKYS. Those programs are Diversion, Transitional Living, Youth Development, and Parent Education.

*Addison:* The YIT grant has been successful in creating outreach opportunities where transition-aged youth (TAY) traditionally congregate. The Youth Advocate has started having a weekly presence at the Middlebury teen center as well as the Hub located in Bristol. Already this has had the impact of allowing some young adults who may have been reluctant to access transition- aged services from being less intimidated when consulting with the Youth Advocate at a later date.

*Orange/No. Windsor:* Our program continues to hold a weekly Life Skills and a new monthly "pizza and movie night" in the Bradford area. The collaboration between YIT and the Teen Association in Bradford co-locating activities at the Teen Center has helped to keep young adults closely connected to their communities.

*Rutland:* Total unduplicated youth served: 159  
Total visits to the Center: 359  
Street Outreach Contacts: 201

The Center is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 11 AM – 2 PM  
Basketball/ Open Gym is every Tuesday from 5:30-7 PM (gym)  
Rock Lab is offered every Thursday from 5:30-7 PM (Center)  
VOAP (Vermont Outdoor Adventure Program) field trips are offered every Friday from 11:30-3:30 PM (Center)

*Franklin/Grand Isle:* During this time we heard a presentation offering up solutions for the restoration of a community youth center....Community meetings for youth center proposal... Research for community youth center feasibility and attainment....Development of revised youth center proposal with sustainability.... Participated in community meeting established to describe Boys and Girls Center movement....Toured Chill Out center model at the University Mall in South Burlington....Will support community steering committee to finalize youth center proposal, and pursue funding streams.

**Brochures/Resource Guides:** *Washington:* There are a significant number of young adults who fit the qualifications of the YIT Grant who are not currently receiving services through the Mental Health or Runaway and Homeless Youth Agencies because they are not on Medicaid....Courtney Bridges will help the System of Care Team Leader produce a brochure about the Washington YIT Grant for sharing with the staff members of other agencies during outreach visits. This may lead to more referrals of young adults for help from YIT.

*Lamoille: YIT brochures:* (focused on health benefits, general YIT program, housing and pathways to educational completion). These brochures are currently in draft format and need further development and steering committee consideration. Also, short sayings with prompting questions such as 'Do you need housing?' will be added to the Criminal Justice Social Worker's business cards at next printing.

*Rutland:* Revised pocket guides with additional resources and new flyers (basketball, rock lab, The Center) were created and dispersed during community outreach and street outreach.

*Orange/No. Windsor:* Designed the "A Young Adult's Guide to YIT" brochure to increase community awareness of YIT services and supports.....The Peer Navigator has collaborated with The Junction and Easter Seals to update a local resource manual for young adults. This resource manual provides information to young adults regarding local services and programs that may be of use for them transitioning into adulthood.

*Chittenden:* There are still many young adults in the community who are not accessing services or utilizing existing resources. This further validates the need for an online resource center for transition age youth to fully understand the scope of services and resources available in the community. Planning continues with the Center for Technology in Essex to develop a comprehensive, easily accessible online resource guide specifically geared towards young adults.

The YIT facilitator will be a member of the committee held at NEKYS to incorporate youth voice into the NEKYS Facebook page.

**Peer Workers:** We were able to hire a Peer Outreach Worker in Aug. 2010....During this reporting period, a youth outreach worker was hired as a 1-day per week grant staff member. ... One more staff was hired as Outreach Coordinator for 3 hours/ week.... The agency is committed to the role of Peer Mentor and to coming to a better understanding and implementation within the next reporting period.....We have not been able to move forward as quickly as anticipated to contract with a Youth Advisor position. We have two resumes from young adults and hope to receive more so we can contract this position this winter. Once contracted, the Youth Advisor will help with the WEST program, build the Youth Advisory Group, and work with the System of Care Team Leader on the Family Advisory Group.

**Case Management:** Continuing to provide intensive case management to at-risk young adults in the community. ...Work individually with youth on daily basis to help meet their needs.... We continue to engage and connect young adults to local services and agencies which include mental health and substance abuse programs, teen and young adult drop-in centers, vocational rehabilitation, local recovery centers, primary care offices, to name a few. Approximately 45% of these young adults [at least in one region] have no history of services within the system of care.

**Care Team:** *Chittenden:* Leadership Team will be working to develop a transition plan that can be embedded in the Act 264 process.

*Lamoille:* A YIT care review team of direct service providers has been assembled that meets monthly to discuss individual youth in transition cases and review systems issues that impact YIT in the local community. Further, the Criminal Justice Social Worker has started initiating

case team meetings for individual case coordination and review as needed....There will be further development of the “care team” – i.e. direct service providers – and facilitating their goal setting process. The focus of their work together over the next year will be to work on one goal they agree is most important and which they can collectively impact within one year.

*So. Windsor/No. Windham:* A group of 5-10 local young adult service providers including representatives from local high schools, Vocational Rehabilitation, the JOBS Program, the Youth Development Coordinator, and the Department of Labor continue to meet once a month to discuss cases and the appropriate services to best serve each young adult. This collaboration has been successful in streamlining the process for young adults to be matched to the appropriate services.

*So. Windham:* Inter-agency YIT ACT teams have been meeting at least every two months to address youth issues related to housing and employment.

*Washington:* The current regional YIT plan is to have the case-managers on the Intake team who are working with this age group fund the needed services first through their own agencies. Because the System of Care is working well in this region, this approach has limited the YIT numbers....The Intake Team still consists of a sub-team of LIT ....The Intake team meets monthly and uses the parameters and guidelines for the team. We meet to discuss potential youth and young adults who might benefit from the YIT flex funds..... The Intake Team still uses its “YIT Parameters” form to hold us accountable to how we work together. It describes our purpose, responsibilities, use of flexible funding and procedures to carry out the process. We still use this form to write up our monthly meeting notes.

**Therapeutic Approaches:** An incentive program has been incorporated into the direct services model being used by the Criminal Justice Social Worker; this program offers small incentives (e.g. granola bars) when clients meet case goals.

Our program recently applied for and received a grant from the Woodstock Learning Trust for financial assistance for “Transitional Age Youth” (16 – 21 years of age) who want to participate in our Adventure-Based Programming and who truly cannot afford it.

In October the YIT Transition Facilitator attended a Bob Bertolino, PH.D training called Thriving on the Front Lines. The training was about strength based practices for youth care workers, front lines staff, supervisors; this training was provided through Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP).

The YIT Transition Facilitator attended the following events about therapeutic approaches:

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

Some YIT regional staff attended a training focused on the Act 264 Meeting process on November 15, 2010. Others attended the Behavioral Interventionist Conference and/or CPI training.

#### **4. System of Care partners gain cultural and linguistic competence (CLC).**

*Franklin/Grand Isle:* Ebony Nyoni participated in a meeting with state YIT representatives and leaders of the Abenaki community to share history, concerns, and possible solutions..... She also participated in an UNDOING RACISM training with community members from throughout the state and beyond.

*Bennington:* Youth Outreach Program and other regional YIT staff attended Building Bridges Out of Poverty training.

*Chittenden:* Hina Rizvi, the JOBS case manager focusing on multi-cultural youth, sadly moved onto another job in October. In her time before her departure, Hina was able to make connections with several youth and enroll them into the YIT Common Study. She also strengthened connections with the O'Brien Teen Center, the Connecting Cultures Program, and Burlington High School. ...Fortunately, another YIT/JOBS Case Manager for multi-cultural youth was hired and started on December 1, 2010. Her name is Linda Li, and she comes with a MSW from the University of Vermont, experience as a Chinese interpreter (current), and previous work with adults with mental health issues.

One area of concern identified by Linda Li is that many service providers in the area are unaware of services that already exist for multi-cultural families and lack an understanding of how to access these services, such as interpreters, support groups, and parenting groups. The hope is that the outreach by staff from the YIT grant can help raise awareness of resources already in place, and that this grant can help reduce the stigma of accessing these services. Linda Li has been working diligently on presenting to organizations and groups in the area. For example:

- Presentation at the Refugee Health Committee for outreach and referral purposes.
- Discussions with the Boys and Girls Club to set aside time and space to meet with multi-cultural youth in the space and provide pizza while talking about services available.
- Collaboration with Karen Fondacaro, PhD, Director of the Behavior Therapy and Psychotherapy Center at UVM, and her Connecting Cultures Program to provide a support group for multi-cultural transition age youth.
- Presentation to the Parents Group of the Association of Africans Living in Vermont to explain services available for transition age youth.
- In conjunction with other partners, develop a comprehensive list of resources specifically for minority youth: information pertaining to refugee and immigrant work permits, personal rights, important links, names and contact information of organizations, mentoring, info on different trainings such as ESL classes, employment trainings. This could either be part of or a link on the online resource center that will be developed....Work is already being done to translate the YIT brochure into several languages.

**Further information about YIT Grant cultural and linguistic competence (CLC) activities can be found in the progress reports from the statewide CLC Coordinator posted on <http://www.youth-in-transition-grant.com> .**

## **5. Local communities (including young adults) change their perceptions of young adults and of mental health issues, reducing stigma.**

*Caledonia/So. Essex:* Asked as part of a questionnaire for young adults about mental health services: There is a lot of “stigma” in regards to receiving mental health services. What does stigma mean or what do you think it means? “*Stigma has to do with bad thoughts towards mental illness.*”

*Washington:* Courtney Bridges (State YIT Social Marketing Coordinator) and the Washington County System of Care Team Leader enlisted three schools to join the WEST [We Eliminate Stigma Together] Program. We have been working since late Oct. with Williamstown high-school. They have selected an Adult Advisor and a Student Advisor for their project and have 9 students involved. They will debut their event in 2011 though brainstormed some activities to do prior to 2011. They believe these activities will begin to make other students aware of the stigma around mental health disorders. In December Twinfield Union high-school also came on board. They are rival schools with Williamstown, which may have played a part in getting them involved! Their creativity and enthusiasm in planning their event are contagious! They have picked an Adult Advisor who is going to work the program into his class. Maple Hill - a small, private, alternative high school - will join Twinfield for their event.

USE OF THE HIGH-LOW PROJECT: *Franklin/Grand Isle:* This exhibit was hosted by NCSS at the Historical Museum during the month of November. The exhibit was first viewed by participants of the Youth in Transition Conference. Many youth and community members were captivated by the reality of the exhibits. The reception was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, and attended by members of the community including Ted Mable, Todd Bauman, Andrea Yandow, and members of the NCSS Board..... *Orleans/No. Essex:* The YIT Facilitator helped organize and execute the High-low Project exhibit that NEKCA was hosting during the month of December.... *Addison:* During the month of January YIT representatives partnered with Addison County Parent Child Center (ACPCC) and the Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP) to bring the High-low exhibit to downtown Middlebury. The showing in Middlebury was incredibly well attended. Additionally it provided for an opportunity for the boards of CSAC and the ACPCC to help with the opening event, and hopefully, will lead to greater collaboration and communication going forward. YIT representatives also worked to encourage Mental Health Clinicians from CSAC to bring clients to the exhibit and discuss the stories presented. The feedback from this approach was that it led to a number of dialogues and discussions from these clients that had previously been unexplored.

**Further information about YIT Grant social marketing can be found on the Social Marketing page and in the progress reports from the Vermont Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health posted on <http://www.youth-in-transition-grant.com> .**

## **6. Effectiveness of the System of Care for young adults with SED is evaluated.**

A full case management caseload has been an obstacle for enrolling young adults into the Evaluation at the rate necessary to meet our yearly benchmarks.

The case managers have been successful in enrolling clients for the Common Study; however, many clients tend to hold back with the larger study. One challenge has been that the interview must occur when the client is new, which means that clients may be giving more optimistic answers as there has not been any time for rapport building. For clients where English is not their first language, the evaluation questions are often challenging. In one instance, a young man shifted his answers based on a conversation he had with his older sister in their native language.

*Lamoille:* For local evaluation, the Criminal Justice Social Worker (CJSW) completes a Self-Sufficiency Matrix (SSM) instrument for each case upon entry and exit. The SSM rates the level of risk in 15 different domains on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest level of risk). At entry, YIT cases demonstrated a risk level of greater than two (safe/stable) in the following nine domains (# represents an average level of risk out of five for all YIT clients): employment (3.93), transportation (3.07), life skills (3.07), access to services (3), family (2.92), mental health (2.96), alcohol and drug use (2.33), social (2.29) and safety (2.29).

At the time that cases disengaged from services, the following five domains remained at an average of above two for YIT cases: family (3.2), mental health (3), transportation (2.8), access to services (2.2) and life skills (2.2). Based on comparing the self-sufficiency matrix at entry and exit, the YIT program *[appears to have]* decreased the risk level and had a strong positive effect in the following areas: legal, employment, social, safety, life skills, access to services, education, health insurance and basic needs.

During this reporting period, the Steering Committee determined that each monthly meeting should focus on a different outcome area impacting YIT in the local community. Relevant community partners in each of the outcome area were invited to visit the steering committee meeting during the 1st hour for a focused outcome area discussion. The hour-long meetings had the following format: review of existing data/what currently exists in the community (20 minutes), what is working and what obstacles YIT face (20 minutes) and what the group can do (20 minutes). The group convened meetings on the following outcome areas so far: September (employment), October (free from incarceration) and December (education).

**Further information about YIT Grant evaluation can be found in the progress reports from the statewide Evaluation Team posted on <http://www.youth-in-transition-grant.com> .**