

Grant #03150-7033

Youth in Transition Plan Implementation for the South Windham Region

1. Major Activities and Accomplishments during this Period

- The Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator began work at Youth Services on January 20th, 2010.
- The Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator has provided case management services to ten youth clients beginning with the first in February, 2010.
- A trial partnership between Youth Services and the Windham Housing Trust was established in March 2010.
- In April three youth moved into the Cobblestone SRO (Single Room Occupancy) building that is operated by Windham Housing Trust. This is a pilot phase of the youth housing project. A fourth youth already lives in the building and a fifth youth will be moving in July 2010.
- After a six month trial period (by October 2010) the youth residency period will be reviewed and WHT will determine if they are ready to offer the whole Cobblestone building for youth housing
- The Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator has joined the HELP Fund committee which is a multi-agency board which determines emergency funds for housing for Windham County.
- On June 15, 2010 the Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator testified at a southeastern Vermont regional meeting of Vermont legislators about gaps in mental health care services that are available to youth with mental health needs

2. Problems

- One challenge is that due to our having a mixed age house during the pilot phase we need to have youth living there under the guidelines of the Housing Trust (we want to have youth-specific guidelines but can not do that until the lease is in Youth Services name and all rooms are filled with young people from our program.
- One youth lost his job while in the SRO and has had a hard time finding a new source of income. We have arranged a short-term solution to keep him housed but it is not a long term solution.

3. Significant Findings and Events

- April 18, 2010 Youth Services hosted a concert to raise awareness and funds about Youth Homelessness. Folk singer /activist Mark Erelli was the main act at the show. Executive Director Allyson Villars and Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator Michelle Bos-Lun both spoke at the event.

- Youth Services has hosted monthly multi-agency YIT team meetings focused on housing (and bi-monthly meetings on employment, education, and caring relationships as well) throughout the grant period .
- One *significant finding* that we are discovering is that it is a challenge to run the “pilot” phase of the program with Windham Housing Trust in a mixed age facility. Before offering us a house that will be entirely youth, WHT wanted to try having a few youth in one of their existing SROs, this has made the SRO less desirable for some youth who don’t want to live with older residents. We are eager to complete our pilot phase (in October 2010) and look forward to transitioning to a full youth housing model.

4. Dissemination activities

News of the Youth Services housing work or the work of the Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator appeared in the Brattleboro Reformer (March 2010), a cover story in the the Commons (May 2010), front page coverage in the Weekly Commons (June 2010), and the spring 2010 issue of Counterpoint.

Youth Services also has a Street Outreach Program, which consists of 2 Outreach Coordinators (one in Brattleboro, one in Bellows Falls) and 7 Peer Outreach Workers. These staff are responsible for disseminating information about the new housing program both on the street as well as at weekly drop-in nights to youth in the community. Case managers also regularly attend multi-agency meetings in which housing information and issues are addressed.

5. Other Activities

- The Youth in Transition Housing Coordinator taught a family education class about Mental Illness through NAMI in Brattleboro. This was not a paid part of her work but an extension of her involvement in mental health issues in the community
- The YIT Housing Coordinator attending the Training Institutes conference in National Harbor, Maryland to learn more about systems of care and better serving youth with severe emotional disturbances.
- Inter-agency YIT ACT teams have been meeting at least every two months to address youth issues related to housing and employment.

6. Activities Planned for Next Reporting Period

- After the pilot phase of the program is completed with 3-5 youth having been living in the house, we hope to be able to expand the program by having at least 8 youth residing in the building, and have a youth-affiliated resident manager put into the site as well. At that time we will be able to engage in all house youth activities and 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).
- We plan to add house events with youth residents and staff on at least a monthly basis within the next reporting period as well as encouraging youth to join some of our planning and review committees which will be developing and revising house guidelines.