

Youth in Transition (YIT) Focus Group Results

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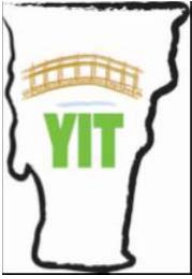
This project was supported by the Mental Health Services for Transition Aged Youth project conducted by the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) in the University of Vermont's College of Medicine.

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Youth in Transition (YIT) Focus Group Results Executive Summary

What is the Youth in Transition project?

In 2008, the Vermont Department of Mental Health was awarded a 6 year grant funded by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Vermont Youth in Transition project is a statewide effort to enhance the mental health system of care for young adults aged 16-21 years old. The Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) of the University of Vermont's College of Medicine is evaluating YIT. The goal of the evaluation is to determine which aspects of the system of care are associated with positive outcomes for the young adult clients and to characterize the overall effectiveness of the system of care. The main components of the evaluation include: 1) conducting structured interviews with young adult clients of the system of care longitudinally, and 2) examining administrative data to learn about patterns of service utilization. This is being done through multiple studies at the community, state and national levels, including a set of focus groups held around the state between June 14 and August 18, 2011.

What was the purpose of the focus groups?

The purpose of this evaluation was to answer two questions related to YIT: 1) what are the facilitators and/or barriers that young adults face in trying to access the Vermont mental health system of care, and 2) in what ways can the system of care become more young adult-driven, such as by more young adults being involved in the operations of the system of care or by providing feedback directly to mental health agencies.

Who participated?

Eighty-six young adults aged 18 and older participated in the project. Eleven focus groups each comprised of 3-14 young adults, who had had some experience in the Vermont system of care. All Agency of Human Services districts were invited to organize and hold one or more focus groups, and 10 of the 12 did so. See Appendices A and B for the script used by designated contacts in the field to recruit participants and the consent form signed by participating young adults.

How was the data collected and analyzed?

The data consists of participant responses to: 5 open-ended questions and 9 scale survey questions delivered in a focus group setting (See Appendix C) conducted by the YIT evaluation team leader and the focus group consultant. Qualitative data was analyzed using standard methodology. Responses to individual questions were organized and coded according to categories of emergent themes and issues. All percentages were calculated based on the total sample of n=86.

What are the findings?

Findings include presentation of the area of focus, the question asked, followed by categories of emergent themes mentioned by at least 5% of the participants and listed in descending order of frequency. See full report for a more in depth description of all categories, each illustrated by observations and experiences of the participants expressed in their words. Findings for questions 4 and 5 will be analyzed at a later date.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Area of Focus 1: What are the barriers and/or facilitators that young adults face in trying to access the Vermont mental health system of care?

Question 1: What are some ways that you are involved (or have been involved) with the system of care in your community? Table 1 represents our best understanding of participant involvement in the system of care. See Table 2 on page 14 for a list of components included in each category.

Table 1

Participant Self-reported Present and Previous Involvement in Vermont’s Mental Health System of Care

Emergent system of care category	n
Mental health, substance abuse, counseling and related services*	52
Educational programs	51
Employment	43
Youth-related services*	34
Economic and related services	34
Criminal and juvenile justice systems	34
Foster Care, DCF supports and services*	27
Housing	20
Health care and insurance	16

Note. N = 86. See Table 2 on page 15 for list of components included in each category.

*It was sometimes difficult to disentangle the roles of case managers, social workers and/or counselors among these categories.

Question 2: What has worked well for you in your community’s system of care? 78 out of 86 or 91% of the participants mentioned at least one aspect of the system of care that worked well for them. Two broad categories emerged from their responses: characteristics associated with the youth/worker relationship along with the way in which services were delivered; and, what the youth got help with including outcomes of the work.

1. Characteristics of the youth/worker relationship that helped. (44%)

- ✓ “...having people...that if you need to talk, they’re there to talk to you.”
- ✓ “We’ve built this bond.”
- ✓ “Really, really supportive...they almost acted just like a family they were so supportive.”
- ✓ “[They are] “cool” ...”nice” ...”amazing, beautiful person inside and out” ...decent, good people.”
- ✓ “And they care, which is hard to come by, people who actually care.”
- ✓ “Always been there to help me.”
- ✓ “...go out of their way to help you.”

- ✓ “I found that the...workers...respect...and never talk down. Always compliment people and look for what’s good.”
- ✓ “...listened to what I had to say.”
- ✓ “They encouraged me.”

2. Helped with education. (37%)

- ✓ Helped me get a high school diploma and/or graduate.
- ✓ Some form of alternative education helped with schooling.
- ✓ Characteristics of alternative education programs that helped.
- ✓ “...When I got my GED, they were really helpful.”
- ✓ “...pretty much all life skills. That made my life a lot easier for me.”
- ✓ “...helped with schooling or education in general.”
- ✓ “...I...attended the...Technical Center...I got [some type of certification in nursing, automotive]...through there.”

3. Helped with employment. (35%)

- ✓ “They have people there who will help you get [find] jobs.”
- ✓ “...and they helped me...apply for jobs and they would tell me what is out there and they would just basically give me all the tools that I needed.”
- ✓ “...they actually help you understand what you need for a job, help you get that. And right now they’re helping me get my driver’s license.”

4. How services were delivered to youth. (33%)

- ✓ “They helped me get around to all of my appointments.”
- ✓ “...help connect you with what’s in the area that is good for you and what you need.”
- ✓ “My case manager like keeps me on my toes about stuff. Like don’t forget you have GED testing next week and don’t forget you have to apply for this...it’s really nice to live on my own, but she kind of reminds me that it’s not all fun all the time.”
- ✓ “He works around my schedule.”

5. Helped with financial issues. (23%)

- ✓ Getting food stamps and/or unemployment.

6. What youth reported happened to them as a result of the work done.(22%)

- ✓ They kept me out of trouble.

7. Helped with figuring out the living situation. (20%)

- ✓ Getting my own apartment.

8. Helped with mental health and/or counseling. (20%)

- ✓ Counseling helped me.

9. Helped with health care, insurance or medical coverage. (12%)

10. Helped with issues related to criminal justice. (9%)

11. Having a place to hang out helped. (8%)

- ✓ “Used to hang out there [teen center] all the time.”

12. Aspects related to Foster Care that helped. (7%).

Question 3: What things do you think should be different or be changed in your community's system of care? 78 out of 86 or 91% of the participants described at least one problem they were experiencing, offered a solution to a specific problem, or made a suggestion for change in a certain aspect of the system of care. Subcategories of problems or issues are preceded by a check mark (✓) and were mentioned by at least 5% of the participants; suggestions for change are preceded by a bullet point (•) and were made by at least one individual.

1. How services are delivered to youth. (33%)

- ✓ Too much staff turnover.
 - "...[Agencies] need more staff. If they can't handle their caseload that [they've] already got, then they need to get more staff..."
- ✓ Don't know what resources are available, where to get services or who to ask about them.
 - "...the only real way that you can empower somebody like a kid to take charge of the resources and things they're receiving is to just give them information about it and...encourage them to use that information."
 - "...different organizations should...reach out to kids that [were] never in DCF and never heard of these things [system of care] and are...having...a rough time in high school and with their families... reach out to the kids in high school, because everyone has to go to high school"... "maybe in middle school or younger..."
 - "You need more communication within the community to say what these programs are [and] where you can get them"... "when people are getting help through...counseling...or even at...food shelves... people should...put the word out there [about available services]. Because if you're homeless, you don't have a...TV or cable [It] needs to be advertised a lot more."
 - "...[have information about services at the] doctor's office [and health clinics] and make it clear, like not behind the magazine rack or anything." "...at hospitals...pharmacies."
 - "[Put flyers] in a store window. Just everywhere like [in] a phone booth. And then have it be like a number you could call without having to put in 50 cents."
 - "...a poster on the wall [of a building]" "...a list of whatever is [available] right [on the]...front of [a building where youth might go]."
 - "...[put information] in the paper or on the local TV." "[Have] commercials...over the radio."
 - "Put [information] on Facebook, everybody would find it...You could go right to the library and go online." "...[there] should be easy access to internet for all...at every public building...free Wi Fi."
- ✓ Worker is not helping.
 - "...need more resources...[workers] don't have all the resources to actually help the kids even though they want to."
- ✓ "[Agencies] need...to screen their people better and actually find someone that works well with the client instead of just bouncing them around. Like introduce the client to say, three people, see what [the youth's] opinion is with each one,

to find who would work the best...Find someone that...has the same ideas, same opinions....”

- “If I could pick the staff? [Maybe they would be] younger...somebody with...energy and that has lots of patience....maybe they need to be reevaluated...after...30 years of working...maybe you need to be...woken up again...Because it’s not just a job when you’re talking about people and kids and helping someone.”
 - “I think maybe they’ve just been there too long or...their sense of what’s normal and what they’re trying to achieve...their gauge for it...shifts...”
- ✓ More and better communication between worker and youth, teacher and student, child and social worker.
- “[Worker should be] easier to get a hold of.”

2. Characteristics of the youth/worker relationship. (29%)

- ✓ “...Everybody’s constantly judging you. Always. Counselors, they judge you as soon as you walk in the door; like this is what type of person you’re going to be and this is the type of questions we’re going to ask you.”
- “...Be nonjudgmental.” “[Don’t] look at us and judge us on what [you] hear about us ...actually try to figure out who we really are...”
 - “...have more respect and...not act as if their time is more important than [ours].”
 - Don’t judge us on appearances. “...it’s so hard to find a job that you don’t have to change something about yourself for. Like for the...job this summer, I had a tattoo on my arm that I have to wear an Ace bandage around it while I’m there...I have to take my piercings out...having piercings and tattoos doesn’t make me a bad kid...I should not be judged because I have some ink on my arm or hole in my face...one thing I’d change about the system is store policies against piercings and tattoos. It’s such a common thing these days.”
 - Treat us like you do other kids.
 - “...[agencies] work with...some [youth that] are pretty messed up and... bad...but...not everybody is like that...just because...you’re working with [the youth], it doesn’t automatically make [the youth] a horrible person [it would help] if they didn’t generalize...so much, with everybody.”
- ✓ “They don’t listen to me.”
- “Personally, I wish they would listen to me more and take my [idea] when I want to do something, how I would do it. Rather than just [doing] everything for me. Makes me feel like a science project.”
 - “Listen to [the young person’s] side of the story.”
- ✓ They don’t care.
- “The adults that work [with us] need to start caring again, because it gets to a point where they see so many broken people they don’t care anymore.”
 - “Show the kids care and the kids will open up to you.”
- ✓ They don’t understand us.
- “I think they should all understand where we come from and what we went through to get [here].”

3. Issues involving the youth's living situation. (23%)

- ✓ Problems with youth shelters.
 - “I’d like to see...more shelters...for...youths...a place...for youths to lay their heads so they don’t have to stay outside all night long and get arrested because [they’re] breaking, violating curfews.”
 - “...there could be a lot more services in this town that are open more reasonable hours...”
- ✓ “I’ve been homeless for the last 2 months and it’s really cold and wet outside...I guess it’s mainly that there are not enough places available...And not enough money and just not enough like places dedicated just for youth.”
 - “...there should be more housing options...I’ve been waiting a long time for housing...”
 - “...need cheap housing.”

4. Financial issues. (22%)

- ✓ Issues with Reach Up.
 - “I live...paycheck to paycheck even with the rent stipend...it would just be nice if they would...**give me one set amount** so I could plan my life and...my months around that amount instead of constantly changing it.”
 - “...[working is] definitely better than living on welfare because then you don’t have to go by all their rules and their stipulations. You can actually live your life and save your money the way you want to save it.”
 - “...people who are working should get more help because ...you’re trying a lot harder than just sitting on your butt and not doing anything and collecting welfare...Like...why even bother getting a job when I can just do community service and get more money and like play the system?”
 - “...[Have a system in which] those who need [help] the most...the ones at the top [of Reach Up’s priority list] get...a little bit more than the ones at the bottom...the other way you [could distribute the money] is to divide everything out equally.”
 - “I think [Reach Up] should take in consideration [what] you pay for [things].”
- ✓ Issues around having enough food.
 - Food stamps: “We definitely don’t get enough food stamps to feed both of us...”
 - “[the minimum age limit to apply]...should be changed, just because you’re not 22, you should still be able to apply.
 - “With food stamps, you should be able to buy toilet paper and toothpaste...because those are necessities...you should be able to buy that kind of stuff.”

5. Issues involving education. (22%)

- ✓ Issues dealing with accommodation to student learning styles.
 - “...for the [students] that do learn differently [they] should have alternative way[s] of learning...I wouldn’t have gotten my [certificate] if I stayed in the [public] high school. I probably would have been a...“drop out.”...finding these alternative...ways...saved me, helped me

pursue...what I wanted to do for a career, and just made me like learning again.”

- “...have the high school staff or even middle school or younger...learn about the different kinds of...disabilities or struggles or challenges... students [can have]...and understand that not everybody is the same...”
- “...there’s some situations where you can’t always accommodate... every student, but take in consideration of what [the students] say and what’s helpful for them and...compromise what would work best...let that person know that you hear them, that you’ll try to do something about it.”

6. Issues involving foster care (21%)

- ✓ Need better foster parents.
 - Choose and train foster parents better.
 - “They shouldn’t just let anyone be a foster parent.”
 - “I think people should have to go through a little bit more ...to become a foster parent...Maybe more meetings, more home visits or something...”
 - “[have them] go through mandatory classes...if they’re really interested in foster caring kids, then they should be interested enough in taking classes for parenting and how to deal with the kids.”
 - “DCF could go through their foster homes and look at them because most of them are not decent.”
 - “Do better background checks on the foster parents.”
 - “...kids should have a trial with the family...[to] see if it’s a good match...maybe...spend a week [with them]...[the child] can see how available [the parents] are...and how much...they...attend to [them].”
 - “[DCF] should...have random visits where the foster parents don’t know that they’re going to stop by...then maybe you’ll see what’s actually going on in the home, if there is anything wrong.”
- ✓ Foster parents misuse money paid to them for kids.
 - “...the [State] gives the parents money for the kids, to take care of them, like for clothing and stuff. The parents don’t even pay for the clothing. They make the kids get a job and pay for their own stuff instead of letting them save [the money].”

7. Have a teen center in every county. (17%)

- ✓ “There’s nowhere to go in the town”...“where young adults like ourselves can hang out.”
 - “This place has stores and everything else and pretty much help[s] you get what you need, but what we really need is a place to be ourselves; a place to be youth...hang out with friends and not have to get in trouble doing it...a place that’s public.”
 - “Someplace warm...that’s open all the time.” “...[where you] walk through the door and...instantly...feel comfortable...[a] place... [that’s] cool.”

- "...where we can sit back...put in a scary movie or...a place where you can kick back and order a pizza...just having someplace in general...for young adults."
- "...work on the computer..."
- "...you [could] pay a \$15 one-time membership registration and you get a card and you're a member...until you're 25 or something."

8. Issues involving employment. (16%)

- ✓ "I've found it extremely difficult [to get a job] because I've applied many places and been denied, not even gotten an interview."
 - "...it should be easier for the youth to be able to get a job."
 - Have daily, temporary jobs available. "There's [a program] in Florida...[for] anyone from...16 to 25, you go to this place and you meet up...there's some work every day. And at the end of the day, you get...60, 70 bucks. That's not bad for every day work. They should have something like that...something that anyone can do. Like they do have something [like this] during the summer through the city where...you go clean up the...beach...I'm sure there's plenty of odd jobs around town that people need, like businesses getting their lawns mowed...anything."
 - "...[have] a way to make money other than selling drugs, because that's the easiest way.."

9. Need "more things to do" in the town. (16%)

- "Have more positive outlets...Something that...kids can channel their off-time or aggression [into]." "Something...constructive."
- Have places with an activity.
 - "Open a skate park," "a rec center," "[an] outdoor basketball court," "...a free roller skating rink."
 - "...[have] access to a gym...a pool."
- Have something to go to.
 - "something low maintenance...[like a] community garden"... "a park"
- Have more events.
 - "the Teen Center [could have]...a band or something. ...Certain days of the week, they would go the beach or they would go bowling or out to the movies..."

10. Transportation problems. (15%)

- "Lower the prices...or pay for [existing] transportation."
- "Make town more accessible by bus."
- Why doesn't someone just [start] a community bus...for teens."
 - "community buses should be cheap or for free."
 - [or] "have local companies donate some money...a hundred bucks to whoever...starts up a bus company for our little town..."
- "...[have a] taxi service for young adults that need transportation to a job that's new or something."

- “...more programs out there that...can [help you]...get a vehicle.”

11. **Issues involving criminal justice. (14%)**
12. **Issues involving mental health. (14%)**
13. **Family/child issues. (7%)**

Appendix A. YIT Focus Group Study Recruitment Script

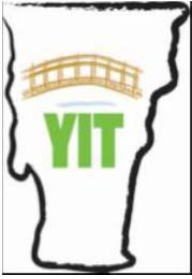
Appendix B. Consent for YIT Focus Group

Appendix C. YIT Focus Group Discussion Guide

“Thank you” to all the young adults for taking the time to share your insights and suggestions, to Ellen Talbert who coordinated the outreach, recruitment and logistical arrangements for the groups and to all the people in the field that made this project happen.

It is the hope of this focus group consultant that we heed the heartfelt words of one participant:

“I kind of feel like we have too many [surveys] as it is...We sit...and talk...but then nothing happens, which isn’t any of our faults or your fault... It’s just...we shouldn’t be talking...we should be doing.”



Youth in Transition (YIT) Focus Group Results

What is the Youth in Transition project?

In 2008, the Vermont Department of Mental Health was awarded a 6 year grant funded by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Vermont Youth in Transition project is a statewide effort to enhance the mental health system of care for young adults aged 16-21 years old. The Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) of the University of Vermont's College of Medicine is evaluating YIT. The goal of the evaluation is to determine which aspects of the system of care are associated with positive outcomes for the young adult clients and to characterize the overall effectiveness of the system of care. The main components of the evaluation include: 1) conducting structured interviews with young adult clients of the system of care longitudinally, and 2) examining administrative data to learn about patterns of service utilization. This is being done through multiple studies at the community, state and national levels, including a set of focus groups held around the state between June 14 and August 18, 2011.

What was the purpose of the focus groups?

The purpose of this evaluation was to answer two questions related to YIT: 1) what are the facilitators and/or barriers that young adults face in trying to access the Vermont mental health system of care, and 2) in what ways can the system of care become more young adult-driven, such as by more young adults being involved in the operations of the system of care or by providing feedback directly to mental health agencies.

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Findings include presentation of the area of focus, the question asked, followed by categories of emergent themes mentioned by at least 5% of the participants and listed in descending order of frequency. See full report for a description of all categories, each illustrated by observations and experiences of the participants expressed in their words. Findings for questions 4 and 5 will be analyzed at a later date.

Area of Focus 1: What are the barriers and/or facilitators that young adults face in trying to access the Vermont mental health system of care?

Question 1: What are some ways that you are involved (or have been involved) with the system of care in your community? Table 1 represents our best understanding of participant involvement in the system of care.

Table 1

Participant Self-reported Present and Previous Involvement in Vermont's Mental Health System of Care

Emergent system of care category	n
Mental health, substance abuse, counseling and related services*	52
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Housing	20
Health care and insurance	16

Note. N = 86

*It was sometimes difficult to disentangle the roles of case managers, social workers and/or counselors between these categories.

Table 2

Vermont System of Care Involvement Category with Descriptive Elements

System of care involvement category	Description
Mental health, substance abuse, counseling and related services	Alcohol evaluation, teen alcohol classes Anger management, DBT group Brattleboro Retreat, hospitalization Counseling general, therapist, social worker, Psychiatrist, medication, Rehab Substance abuse treatment, drug and alcohol
Educational programs	Adult basic education Alternative educational programs Public high school, School guidance, IEPs Life skills programs – cooking classes, budgeting, parenting programs Technical schools/centers, Job Corps College
Employment	Supported employment, JOBS Employment help general, Voc Rehab
Youth-related services	Teen Center/Drop In Center Living room, Junction, Spectrum Youth Services YIT coordinator, youth outreach people Youth advisory board/group
Economic and related services	Financial help – pay bills, rent Individual living stipend Reach Up, Food stamps, SSI, Unemployment compensation WIC, Child support
Criminal and juvenile justice systems	COSA group, Court diversion/drug court DUI Victim's Impact Panel, Community Restorative Board/Justice, Involvement with legal system – 'arrested, busted, charged', Dept of Corrections, Court in general, Court appointed lawyer, guardian ad litem, Jail Probation and parole
Foster Care, DCF supports and services	Foster care, adoption, Over 18 agreement Placement, group home Youth development counselor
Housing	Finding place to live, apartment Living with family, Transitional living Housing with programming, Shelter Section 8
Health care and insurance	Medicaid, Medical coverage, insurance both private and public, VHAP, Hospital, medical facility

Question 2: What has worked well for you in your community's system of care? 78 out of 86 or 91% of the participants mentioned at least one aspect of the system of care that worked well for them. Two broad categories emerged from their responses: characteristics associated with the youth/worker relationship along with the way in which services were delivered; and, what the youth got help with including outcomes of the work.

1. Characteristics of the youth/worker relationship. (44%)

- A. "...having people there that if you need to talk, **they're there to talk to you.**"
- "...talk to somebody...who wasn't around me all the time or in my family."
 - "...having someone healthy to talk to."
 - "We just talk about like life and work and friendship and relationships and...like responsibility."
 - "...staff sitting down with...talking to me and explaining things to me."
- B. "We've **built this bond.**"
- "I just connected with one of the workers."
 - "We hit it off."
 - "They....made you feel comfortable."
 - "...I fit in like part of the family."
 - "He's gone through actual life experiences of the things that he does counseling about...Like he's had a time in his life where he's gone through almost the same things that most of us have gone through. And so it's easier to talk to him because we can actually relate to him. Like you stick someone in there who's been in school and in college dorm rooms and in an office their whole life and haven't done anything exciting or irrational in their life, you can't like...relate to that, yeah... And you can't explain it to them unless they understand."
 - "...the workers, they're not older people. They're still young like us. So they understand where we're coming from. So that's why they're easy to talk to, easy to work with. Because they deal with the same stuff that we pretty much deal with."
 1. "If I had someone my age to reach out to me and say, this is where you can go, this is what you can do, I think I would have been a lot more successful."
- C. "Really, really supportive...they almost acted just like a family they were so supportive."
- "One positive thing is the support system they give you."
- D. [They are] "cool"... "nice"... "amazing, beautiful person inside and out"...decent, good people"
- E. "And they care, which is hard to come by, people who actually care."
- "...like I was talking to [my counselor]...and he said if I can make one person's life better, that [makes] my life better. And you know, that kind of like...got to me because...I've had some people that care about me, but not a lot of people care about me. You know, I can count on one hand about everybody in my whole family or even friends that I can say they truly care about me. And [my counselor] cares...it's kind of bad to

say because he gets paid to work with people but still, it's there. You can tell. You can tell about who cares about you and who don't."

- F. "Always been there to help me."
 - "...every worker I've had and connected with was always there when I needed them."
- G. "...go out of their way to help you."
 - "...willing to go out and beyond what they're supposed to do just to help one person out."
 - "...in their own personal time...they would take the time out of their day to call me."
 - "...even like an 'off the clock' kind of thing. They'd call later at night if we had like a question or something like that, and were just really committed..."
- H. "I found that the...workers...respect...and never talk down. Always compliment people and look for what's good."
 - "...you didn't get the downgrading talk."
- I. "...listened to what I had to say."
 - "...it's like that safe person who...actually listens, not just nods their heads and is like, 'Oh yeah, uh huh,' and doesn't hear a word you're saying."
- J. "They encouraged me."
 - "Just keep telling me to keep going forward...kept pushing."
 - "...when I wanted to give up, they were there to push you back up, to keep you going."
- K. "They don't judge you."
 - "They look at you as a person, even if you like have a drug problem, they don't look at you as a junkie."
- L. "...you can trust them and they're honest with you. And that's what a lot of us need."
 - "...they say they're going to do something and my case manager always like sticks to her word."
- M. "...would put themselves out there, like put their necks on the line for me...they're not just worried about, 'I'm going to get fired, I'm not going to have a paycheck.'"
 - "I'll bet if this job didn't pay her, she'd still do it. She does it because she likes it. She does it because she loves it and loves her kids. She doesn't do it for the money."

2. Helped with education. (37%)

- A. Helped me get a high school diploma and/or graduate.
 - "...helped me get my high school diploma."
 - "...helped me graduate and get everything done on time."
- B. Some form of alternative education helped with schooling.
 - "...they helped me figure out a different, I guess, path to graduating without being in the high school. And that's why I was in Act 176 and took...adult basic ed [classes] so I could get my diploma and take classes without being in the high school."

- “I wasn’t doing too well in school. So they moved me over there [to the alternative educational program] and from there, I was able to finish high school and get my diploma through that...”
 - “...I felt very uncomfortable where the place was that they were going to put me for the following year...They were going to put me in...[a]...program...You sit there...like [in] a small classroom. And you do your work. And I felt very uncomfortable...[so]...I moved down here ...and was able to finish my school off.”
- C. Characteristics of alternative education programs that helped.
- “It’s like a smaller group environment.”
 - “Just the teachers. They work pretty closely with you. I mean it’s not like a class like 50 people. More one on one. Sometimes if there’s a handful of people in there, they’ll be bouncing around. But you always get the help that you need.”
 - “I’m a really slow learner so they can take their time and help you out.”
 - “...they weren’t really strict on how they wanted things done as long as they were done.”
 - “...they molded my [education]...like I was able to kind of create my own kind of education like curriculum around what I wanted to learn... it’s like a community connection kind of program so it takes place all around the community. And they just try to find different kind of resources that’ll help fit what I want to do.”
- D. “...When I got my GED, they were really helpful.”
- E. “...pretty much all life skills. That made my life a lot easier for me.”
- “We do parenting classes. We do cooking classes...it helps you being a single mom like the cooking classes, don’t shake your baby, like the parenting classes are really good...it really helps you learn how to live by yourself with your child.”
- F. “...helped with schooling or education in general.”
- G. “...I...attended the...Technical Center...I got [some type of certification in nursing, automotive]...through there.”
- “...the Tech Center programs that some of the high school level educators have to offer, they have good programs there if you are interested in getting a career post high school, and quickly after high school. They have some good production programs...like welding...”
- H. Helped with attending college [Community College of Vermont and others] now or in the future.
- “I paid for [my college course], but she helped me. She came with me to pay for my course...I did the [on-line course] at the library.”
- I. “...helped me out with my [high school] grades.”
- J. “...helped me get my [high school] credits.”
- “I’m pretty much just going to school. I’m here with [name]...and she really helped me get my credits and that’s a big part because I’ve got like 10 credits I still need...they should have been done a long time ago but that’s what happens when you slack off.”

3. Helped with employment. (35%)

- A. "They have people there who will help you get [find] jobs."
- "...a real big help on helping me get the job I have now."
 - "...getting a permanent job."
 - "I'm waiting for call backs on jobs."
 - "I told them I was having trouble looking for a job. They directed me to someone who could help me do that."
- B. "...and they helped me...apply for jobs and they would tell me what is out there and they would just basically give me all the tools that I needed."
- "...really helped me, whether it was...making a resume, or when you get job applications bringing them in,... [helping you know]...what you should put on them. That really helped a lot."
 - "They were teaching us resumes and cover letters...a couple of weeks ago...helped me build my first resume and I got it done and it looks great and I'm putting it into my applications and everything."
 - "They had me fill out...kind of like an application that they could send anywhere to any business...it was just like basic information...and then they would call around to see if there was any job openings and then they'd send my application and then I'd get an interview."
- C. "...they actually help you understand what you need for a job, help you get that. And right now they're helping me get my driver's license."
- "...getting your permit and your driver's license."
 - "...help get shoes when I needed them for work, slip resistant boots."
- D. "...put me through a training program...helps me get my foot in the door."
- E. "Gave me some on-the job training which helped me out...some regular job stuff...Nothing really too hard."
- "They show you how to like do the cash register and pricing of the clothing and stuff like that. I always thought it was hard but it's pretty easy."
 - "And it helps you maintain your skills and gives you new ones if you need it...like organizational skills."
 - "And they teach you how to run the business, if you had your own business and get you started."
- F. "I never had a job. I grew up in foster homes and group homes. Like how am I supposed to know what to do...I went through...[the JOBS program]...And [now] I'm waiting for call backs for jobs."
- "I'm like most young teenagers. I didn't have to get a job...I didn't know like how to go about getting a job and all that."

4. How services were delivered to youth. (33%)

- A. "They helped me get around to all of my appointments."
- "gave me a ride."
 - "...paid for a cab."
- B. "...help connect you with what's in the area that is good for you and what you need."
- C. "My case manager like keeps me on my toes about stuff. Like don't forget you have GED testing next week and don't forget you have to apply for this...it's

really nice to live on my own, but she kind of reminds me that it's not all fun all the time."

- "They catch you if you're slacking..."
- "They stick on you...they don't just let you get in trouble for not doing things."

D. "He works around my schedule."

- "...even though I didn't have a scheduled appointment, if I was having a bad day, I could go tell her. And even if she couldn't meet with me right then you know she'd be like, I'll come pull you out of class or I'll give you a ride home after school or something, you know, like just so I could meet with her and get my emotions out on the table."

E. "Before I started working with them, I had to go and find everything myself. I had to contact people myself. It took twice as long. And then when I started working with them, they know everybody. They like – they know personal like people within like different programs and stuff. And if we go to them, it goes through way faster and takes less time and energy."

- "...as other people have said, the promptness of how...[they] react to certain people's needs. You need a place to stay, [they] will get you a place to stay. If you need a job,...[they] will get you a job, working position somewhere."

F. "... like the first time I ever talked to [my youth worker] was a surprise because he met me in my own environment, which is something new, instead of an office. I really don't like offices. And it was just pretty cool...He comes to you...what really makes him different from any office [worker]...saying the same questions every time and being a real drag. I like [him].

- "He's interactive...always something new. He wants to even go fishing with me."
- "He would take me out to lunch and stuff. There was no really sitting in an office, filling out paperwork and crap. He listens and say, if I wanted to go fishing, he would take me fishing. And we could talk while fishing or basically be there to listen. And if I didn't want to talk, he would just sit there and basically talk and try to figure out what's going on in my head."
- "He made it fun."

G. "The fact that I went [there] and told them I wasn't feeling well and they said, 'Well, we can take you to someone who can talk to you right now'...they scheduled the follow-up appointment, got me coming there every week."

H. Benefitted by doing work in a group setting.

- "Getting to know people [in the group]. Because not only do we talk in this group...we also go to other events...I don't know whether it was a conference. We get to meet people around the world and talk to other people, see how their lives are..."

I. Used varied approaches to the work.

- "Like if...I have an issue with like [aggravation]...I can go and do [a martial art] with him for one session of my counseling, and then go just talk with him on another day. So it's like a physical and a mental counseling at the same time. Works well. It's fun to learn."

- "...used a point system...We used to go skiing every Friday; did field trips on Friday if we got all our work done and got the right amount of points. If we didn't – it was a point system, so if you got in a fight, you lost points. You didn't do your work, you lost points. You did anything that you weren't supposed to, you lost points."
 - "If I had a good month of behavior at home, she would take me out to get sushi..."
- J. "And they just basically show you – not really telling you what to do, but showing you what you should do and then showing you the consequences of what you shouldn't do and letting you decide."
- K. "Makes sure you're safe."

5. Helped with financial issues. (23%)

- A. Getting food stamps and/or unemployment.
- "He set me up with like food stamps and stuff like that to try to get me back on my feet."
 - "Food stamps...It was an easy process getting it and now I have it"
 - "And then unemployment and food stamps has helped me a lot when I haven't had a job. It's like I don't know what I would have done if I didn't get unemployment and food stamps." ...they have taken me off the streets. They got me an apartment."
- B. Helped with having bills paid.
- "I was behind on a bill and I was able to have help having that paid."
 - "They helped me with my car...with some repairs...financially. And they have helped me when my phone was going to be shut off. They immediately helped me with that, because being a single mom and working and stuff, you can't not have a phone."
- C. Helped to pay for college and certification programs.
- D. Helped with creating budget plans.
- "I've been able to do budget plans and a lot of things they don't teach you elsewhere."
 - "Worked with me with budgeting...they help try to budget money to save up for a house or an apartment or whatever."
- E. I worker my whole summer through the Department of Labor and then I get extra funding to work a couple of months more after their funding was done."
- F. "They paid for...like...you have class dues you have to pay in order to walk up for the graduation and wear a gown and I did not have the money...They came up with the money for that."

6. What youth reported happened to them as a result of the work done. (22%)

- A. They kept me out of trouble.
- "...and kept me out of getting in trouble."
 - "...kept me out of a lot of trouble that I could have gotten into because of how I was raised and treated when I was growing up."
 - "...I was faced with prison time. So I took the deal they offered me and that was six months probation,...And [that] has helped me somewhat

stay out of trouble....they're [probation] only there to...make sure you stay out of trouble and stuff."

- "Got me out of a lot of bad stuff."

B. Doing better.

- "I've been doing a lot better with my anger and a hell of a lot better with my drug abuse...I've been clean for [several] months."
- "I stopped fighting, did my work...When I was there, he taught me how to walk away from fights instead of plowing right into them."
- "I'm not in jail...that's a positive."

C. Got me back on my feet...back on track.

D. "Builds your confidence."

- "...they give you like the confidence to go out on your own and like you can do it."
- "...and they got me more confident with myself."

E. Underage drinking.

- "Learned that underage drinking is bad for you."
- "I did get in trouble for underage drinking...But he [probation officer] didn't send me to jail, like he gave me a chance to go to rehab and clean myself up. A lot of probation officers won't do that."

F. "I owe him a lot of gratitude on a lot of things...I've been trying to track him down to say thanks again."

- Thanks to them I have matured a lot and I'm who I am today."
- "I smartened up a lot by the end of my senior year, thanks to them."

G. "Got me going on the straight path."

- "...Just keeping me on the right path; keeping me from self-destruction, as I would put it."

7. Helped with figuring out the living situation. (20%)

A. Getting my own apartment.

- "...they have taken me off the streets. They got me an apartment."
- "...they got me a place to stay pretty quickly."
- "They have a program where they help somebody get into an apartment. And I was...pregnant and a single mom and they helped me get into my first apartment."
- "...helped me fill out applications to move in there."

B. Helped with my rent.

- "I had my apartment before I worked with [them] but they help me like keep up with my rent with like a stipend so I can actually afford it every month."
- "...help work with the landlord and help you try and work with them for the pricing of the rent."

C. "I was able to get Section 8 to afford an apartment with help from some of the people here."

D. On the waiting list.

- ...we're working on housing...And we're actually on the waiting list for an apartment..."

- And I'm on a waiting list for apartment, like...single moms and stuff, which are really nice apartments.”
- E. “...the girls who work with [them] get their apartments first in the priority just because knowing we have children and stuff. So I think we're kind of like get bumped up on the waiting list and get ahead [of the boys] and stuff.”
- F. “I ended up in the homeless shelter. Honestly I liked it there. It was nice. People were awesome....You feel safe there.”
 - “Made me feel comfortable being with people I hardly even know at the shelter.”

8. Helped with mental health and/or counseling. (20%)

A. Counseling.

- “I'm doing the intensive outpatient program at [the mental health center] for substance abuse...I really like [it]...because there's a lot of people. You meet people that are supportive in the group and I think that's really important to stay clean is having some positive people to hang out with and stuff. And also the curriculum they run there for the program is actually really thorough and it kind of touches base on all these different aspects of your mentality and how it plays into your addictive mindset and everything.”
- “Counseling...helped me when I was young.”
- B. “...getting to talk to someone about my problems. Getting it out there and so I don't have to stress about it.”
 - “...it feels like when I go there, I can get a lot off my shoulders...the things I bring up...I asked for their point of view. Because sometimes when you're talking, when you think something, it's always good to ask somebody else's point of view, because theirs may not be the same as yours. So it's always good to get more than one.”
- C. “Really nothing helped until I met with [a counselor] at [the community the mental health center].”
- D. ““So for me...the only thing that's ever worked for me is writing. That's my counseling.”

9. Helped with health care, insurance or medical coverage. (12%)

A. Insurance.

- “Insurance helps a lot...I can't afford the \$2,000 I'd be paying every month for my medications.”
- “They'll help you keep your insurance.”
- B. “VHAP (Vermont Health Access Program) and like Medicaid has helped me a lot.”
- C. Help with dental problems.
 - “I remember...I don't know where it would have been through, but they ended up giving me like...vouchers to get my wisdom teeth pulled...they straight told me I was going to die if I didn't...and I couldn't afford it. So I ended up getting all four of my wisdom teeth pulled. And that definitely helped a lot because my mouth didn't hurt any more [and] it wasn't a health risk.”

10. Helped with issues related to criminal justice. (9%)

A. Probation.

- "...I was at the last point – you know what I mean? – before you just give up with everything because of the drugs and all the other things, you're just selling things and robbing people and everything. And they [probation] really just showed me that I could do better and that's what made me want to get my GED, because I wanted to be a better person and ended up getting my GED."
- "I liked how like with probation and stuff it's like if you did something wrong, like relapsed or something, they don't... automatically penalize you or judge you. Like I'm not saying they give you like free chances or anything. You'll get like a warning ...they're trying to help...to be a better person versus...be like you're watcher or whatever. You know what I mean? Making sure you don't do bad things. They really try to like help you as much as they can."
- "...in probation...I had to go in and take urinalysis tests. And it helped me to be more responsible..."

B. "Court diversion was pretty good."

- "They were really nice. They helped me a lot..."
- "Court Diversion prevented me from getting a disorderly conduct charge...that helped me...[the process for that is]...You've got to go and you've got to pay \$200 to do the program. And if you go and meet in front of a board of community members and people like that and...if you complete all the conditions that they have, then they dismiss your charges...the state's attorney will dismiss the charges. I...completed it..."

C. "The DUI impact panel has taught me a very valuable lesson about driving impaired. And I'll never drink and drive again."

D. "...the whole courthouse was [helpful]...you'd walk in and they would say, 'Hey...whoever [your] name is'...they'd be like on a first-name basis sort of thing and they made you feel comfortable and not judged. And they were down to earth and they were not – you need to do this, this, this and this...they allowed me to [work through my issue in my own way]... everybody there...It was a really interesting support system."

11. Having a place to hang out. (8%)

A. "Used to hang out there all the time."

- "...a home away from home for me...The only thing that's keeping me out of trouble."
- "It's a hangout...like I get hungry quite often and I come here and that problem is solved...Someone cooks food...Like we'll go on the computer, talk to people. If you need help, you can ask any of the staff and they'll try to help you."
- "It's a place to work on things."
- "...[they] have specific boundaries and rules...really clear...what is appropriate."

12. Aspects related to foster care that helped. (7%)

A. Voluntary Custody Over 18 Option

- "...you're extending your care with DCF. They help you pay for college. They'll help you keep your medical insurance. They pretty much help you get you back on your feet. And once you turn 18 and you get to being on your own."
- B. "My foster parents were really open and got involved with everything I was doing."
- C. "They ended up adopting me and if I wasn't adopted I would have done a lot of inappropriate things, so I learned not to do that kind of stuff in the family I have now."

Who or what helped or worked well

Adult Ed director	Youth in Transition	JOBS
Case managers	Youth services worker	Life skills classes
Case workers		Medical clinics
Courthouse (everyone there)	Adoption	Parent child center
DCF worker	Adult basic ed	Probation
Drug counselors	Alternative ed programs	Reach Up
Instructors	Circles of Support	Section 8
JOBS counselor	& Accountability (COSA)	Tech/career ctrs
Mental health counselor	Community education ctr	Teen center
Mental health center employees	Cooking class	Training program
People by name	Counseling	Transitional prg
Principal	Court diversion	Voc rehab
Probation officers	Department of Labor	Vt Federation of
Senior class	Food stamps	Families
School staff	Foster care	Youth services
Students (classmates)	Housing	
Teachers	Insurance	

Question 3: What things do you think should be different or changed in your community's system of care? 78 out of 86 or 91% of the participants described at least one problem they were experiencing, offered a solution to a specific problem, or made a suggestion for change in a certain aspect of the system of care.

1. How services are delivered to youth. (33%)

A. Too much staff turnover.

- "I've seen so many different people there and some of them have helped me out and some of them haven't. And so...it's kind of hard when you keep getting switched back and forth between the same person and then somebody totally new."
- "...it was the same for me. It was like somebody was there a month and I was starting to feel comfortable. And then they would leave and somebody else would be coming in to take their spot. And that's been happening to me since I was 10 until this day. So, it's like I'm passed down. Like pass the baby type thing."
- "Like you get sick of meeting new people and...starting over from day one. Not getting anything done, just asking the same questions. It's just a drag...I wonder how long this person's going to last. Or...does she even

care what I have to say? I don't really like meeting somebody new every other time I meet...a counselor ...it's just stupid.

- "I've had pretty much like kind of the same situation but it was with foster care. My case worker...first it would be one person and then a couple of months later, it'd be a different person. And I was told it was because their case load was too much. They had too many kids on their case load....Just because you have too many kids on your case load doesn't mean...that kid should be pawned off to a different case worker. After awhile, you get used to your case worker; you get to trust your case worker. And you just get switched to someone else, that person doesn't know nothing about you. You know nothing about that person. You have to start all over again from square one. And that's a lot to put on a kid that doesn't know what's going on – when am I going to see my mom again? When am I going to see my dad again?"
- "I just got sick of...not having one dedicated counselor. And I kept getting so many different people, I just gave up on the office people....if [they] can't give me one dedicated counselor...and I'm asking too much...then I'm not going to do it. I just quit."
- "...I had to see like...a temporary [psychiatrist]...I only saw that psychiatrist like once ...And then another one came in and I was put with that one. And after that, it changed twice."
- **Suggestions:**
- "...they need more staff. If they can't handle their caseload that they already got, then they need to get more staff..."
- "There should be more people out there to help...Like more people at mental health, places like that."

B. Don't know what resources are available, where to get services or who to ask about them.

- Services or resources for youth in general.
 - "I kind of feel like there are...services out there and...organizations, but I feel like most of the kids don't know about [them]... unless they're kids that go to the Teen Center...or something like that. You know what I mean? And like when I was younger, I didn't know what to do. I didn't know where to go. Nobody told me. So you kind of have to figure it out yourself."
 - "So kids in high schools...don't know where to reach out and find resources, like me when I was in high school and 14 and going home and like getting beaten up every day and stuff...Because if you're [living in my town], you don't know anything about the world...there's really nothing [there]."
- Specific services
 - "Nobody knows where to go for legal advice...I need it for like my job...harassment [issues]...I tried to go to the Department of Labor...They gave me like a piece of paper with...a website on it...but it only came to the Department of Labor's website. And it was all loopy and confusing and I couldn't really find [the information I needed]...I needed someone to talk to about specific situations."

- "...I only know of one place that I can even call to get into a substance abuse program. So I just think it's kind of odd, like even when I go on Google and stuff, I can't even find anything about like Narcotics Anonymous or anything. And I'm like pretty much hopeless because I don't know who to ask. I feel like there should be somewhere that people can turn to, to find out about these programs...I googled Narcotics Anonymous in [our] area...and it popped up with two churches. And then it just said a time. There was no phone number...I didn't want to walk into a bake sale and be like, 'Oh, I'm here for NA'...So like I didn't want to go, you know. And that's the only options I've seen for those...So I don't really know what else to search for."

- **Suggestions:**

- "...the only real way that you can empower somebody like a kid to take charge of the resources and things they're receiving is to just give them information about it and kind of encourage them to use that information."
- "I think maybe different organizations should kind of reach out to kids that are maybe never in DCF and never heard of these things [system of care] and are just having sort of a rough time in high school and with their families and stuff and they don't know how to go about reaching out to these people or just don't feel comfortable. Maybe they should do something to reach out to the kids in high school, because everyone has to go to high school."
 - "...we should have...groups at the schools talking to everybody instead of just targeting the kids that are getting services. Because there...[are] kids out there that don't get services and need them and don't know that they're here. So if you go to the schools and actually have these kind[s] of groups or have [kids] like – go to a study hall or something, people can communicate a little differently than just targeting the people that already know about the services."
- "You need more communication within the community to say what these programs are [and] where you can get them, instead of just, 'Oh, by the way, [a certain organization] might have an opening. Or like somebody like me off the street saying, 'Oh, yeah, did you know that this place has openings.' Well, what are you talking about?"
- "Kids...need to be told things about guardian ad litem and things like [teen centers and shelters]...all these resources and things...need to be accessible to people in...high schools and even maybe middle schools."
 - "I think...when people are getting help through like... counseling...or even at like food shelves when you go...people should be putting the word out there [about available services]. Because if you're homeless, you don't have a...TV or cable. I mean you may not even have a radio. And so you've got to get the word from all the local businesses, too...even if there's like a flyer stuck up down at...[the] grocery stores and just like all over the place. Needs to be advertised a lot more."
 - "[Put flyers] in a store window. Just everywhere like [in] a phone booth. And then have it be like a number you could call without

having to put in 50 cents, because a lot of people don't have 50 cents if they have to make that phone call."

- "When I was in New York, I actually wound up getting dropped off...in the middle of New York and I had no idea where I was, being from Vermont...which is...not [as] populated as far as comparison goes...I was actually just basically going to sleep on the street that night with my duffel bag and then I saw...a poster on the wall that said shelter...and I went to the shelter and [from there] I got...two jobs and an apartment for six months because of the poster that I saw."
- "But there should be like things like in the paper or on the local TV... They should have like announcements or something so that kids know what to do or where to go instead of just being lost and not knowing. You know what I mean? Like not knowing how to go about fixing their lives."
- "[Have] commercials like that [about] places where you can go...over the radio."
- "...have...like a white[board]...and just have...a list of whatever is there right [on the]...front of...[a building where youth might go]."
- "Should be easy access to internet for all...at every public building...free Wifi."
- "Put it on Facebook, everybody would find it...You could go right to the library and go online."
- For specific services:
 - "...if there could be legal advice somehow because a lot of people...have legal problems, and it's hard to afford legal advice. It's really hard. And when you're like trapped in that system and you don't know exactly how to get out and things, it kind of...makes people keep getting stuck in stupid ways...legal advice would help."
 - "...definitely [have information about services at the] doctor's office and make it clear, like not behind the magazine rack or anything."
 - "...at hospitals...pharmacies." "And then maybe at the [health clinic]...I went [to one] when I was having withdrawal and stuff. And they pretty much gave me Ambien because I hadn't slept in...days and that's it. They didn't give me a number to call. They didn't tell me what I could do. They just told me it was going to be a rough couple months. So maybe if they put information up there or like have pamphlets that they can give out if there's people in the same situation as me."
- For physical needs.
 - "Clothing is an issue...maybe if...somebody that's advocating for the homeless could somehow get companies to donate like quality clothing or jackets or even underwear, like long johns or even vouchers to shop at...stores. I understand that Voc Rehab gives vouchers for clothing. And [some organizations give] vouchers for...thrift store[s]...[the] food shelf."

C. Worker is not helping.

- "...you go to see these counselors and they're not even really helping you... They don't help you out as far as school, court, parole, probation, cops, nothing."
 - "Nobody is like there to help you... unless you're pregnant, about to have a baby, or you've got tons of money. You've got to be like a certain crowd or pregnant... or hav[e] kids."
 - "It's been six months and I get the sense that there is a de-emphasis on results, on getting kids employed. And that if nothing happens this week, nothing happens next week, that's okay. They're still going to get paid. And even if it just comes down to presentation, [there's no] sense that this is important to them, that they want this to happen now... I'm sensing a very frustrating air of complacency."
 - **Suggestion:**
 - "[Agencies] need more resources... they don't have all the resources to actually help the kids even though they want to."
- D. "[Agencies] just need... to screen their people better and actually find someone that works well with the client instead of just bouncing them around. Like introduce the client to say, three people, see what their opinion is with each one, to find who would work the best... Find someone that works well with them; has the same ideas, same opinions kind of... [and] that – will be there to help 'em, not just sit there and say, 'Oh, your problem is this.'"
- "If I could pick the staff? [Maybe they would be] younger, I think – like I know you can't hire people based on age, but... you've got to find somebody with... energy and that has lots of patience. And you can tell when you talk to someone. You can tell if they really care or not. And maybe they do at the time when they're having an interview because they need a job and they're just starting out, so they might care... maybe they need to be reevaluated... maybe after... 30 years of working... and dealing with stupid brats... every day, maybe you need to be reevaluated or... woken up again... while you're there... instead of it just turning into a job. Because it's not just a job when you're talking about people and kids and helping someone."
 - "I think maybe they've just been there too long or you know... their sense of what's normal and what they're trying to achieve and things, their gauge for it, I think it shifts because they just go through so many people, and at a certain point... you can't be in a job like that forever. Like [mentioned a drop in center] has a big turnover of staff and that's probably why they can keep it so fresh and good... in there. All the other places, you know... they have people that worked there 30, 40 years and... they get to a point and they don't really care anymore."
 - "...[a person that has] the same moral values as me... a nice person and seems like they really are willing to help you and maybe do more than they should, like that's the type of person I'd like to meet with."
- E. More and better communication between worker and youth.
- **Suggestions:**
 - "if [a teacher is] having a hard time with a student, then maybe [the teacher] need[s] to talk to [the student] and find out what the reason is."

So more communication because maybe the student doesn't understand so...instead, they just don't pay attention, because they're stressed."

- "there should be more communication between the child and the social worker.
- "...[should be] easier to get a hold of."

F. "I'm trying to get help...[services]."

- "...when I'm trying to get services, I don't get the right services that I need, which I'm struggling with right now."
- **Suggestions:**
- "...Should be there to help you."
- "...[they should] make sure that everything is...coming into place in time."
- "...[need] people that will help you faster at finding something that can help you out..."

G. Don't force people or services on us.

- **Suggestion:**
- "I don't think that people should have like a counselor forced on them...or like any type of service person forced on them because...it just isn't the right thing and it could end up like a bad relationship."

H. Scheduling problems.

- "...they should be able to work you in for the time that works the best for you, not what works the best for them."
- "I've noticed that...I've had [a] problem...if I schedule an appointment with some organization or company or job or something, I'll call and set up an appointment and they really...kind of pound into you that you need to follow up, you need to come to your appointment 15 minutes early. But then they can cancel something like that and not let you know ahead of time...or say, 'They're...sick, I'm sorry, I don't know why no one called you.' They get frustrated with kids and teenagers not letting them know...they're not going to be able to come to an appointment or they [will] show up late. But then...people [in the] organizations or...classes...they can decide not to do it or they think [that] it's okay for them not to do it."

I. Problems with confidentiality.

- "I've noticed sometimes like with my...counselor...I'll tell her something...she would go back to that person and tell them, but there was a loophole because you're not supposed to do that, so she wouldn't say who told her that...but it's obvious. Like the only thing I think is when they say that it's confidential, that it needs to stay confidential."

J. "...[don't] focus so much on bringing the kids to the office, in a little square room and just sit there and talk about, how you feeling today...Why are you feeling that way? I think there should be more people like [my worker] who come to you. Because young adults...don't have a car or a license and the parents don't want to take them anywhere. How...is [the young adult] supposed to get there? [My worker is a] works-on-the-street kind of [person], goes out with you, hangs out with you, meets you in your own environment where you feel comfortable. ...most kids don't

feel like sitting in an office all day. People like [my worker] take...you out there and do things. So I think there should be more...people like [my worker] out there.”

2. Characteristics of the youth/worker relationship. (29%)

A. “...Everybody’s constantly judging you. Always. Counselors, they judge you as soon as you walk in the door; like this is what type of person you’re going to be and this is the type of questions we’re going to ask you. And if [the youth] get frustrated about it, then they need anger management and they need meds and they’re frickin’ crazy.”

- “All look down on you because you’re there [at an agency serving people with problems] and that means you have done bad things in your life.”
- “And when the kids get in trouble...people look down on ‘em and ...they don’t help at all. They don’t get help. They just get put in this category of ‘Well, you’re a troublemaker, junkie, druggie; go sell some more drugs.’ And it’s not like that. Like sometimes people have to do what they have to do to live.”
- “...when I go in...most of them don’t look at me like I’m an actual adult...because they find out that I’m on probation and I’ve been in trouble...they look at me like I’m just some teenager...I am some teenager but I am an adult at the same time.”
- They judge us on appearances so we can’t get a job.
 - “People judge you...I have...huge holes in my ears, I have a number of piercings...So people see me come in, drop off an application...and even if I get to the interview part, I go in for an interview and they’re just, ‘Nope’.”
 - “I’ve definitely walked in for an interview and had someone look at me and be like, ‘I can’t hire you’, like before I could even sit down. So I turned around and left...”
 - “I walked into [the drug store] one day and...they would not even give me an application because my hair was red and I had piercings...And I told them like on the spot, ‘I can take my piercings out. I can change my hair color. That’s not a problem.’ It’s like a freedom of speech thing. It’s expressing yourself.”
 - Made sexist and judgmental comments.
- **Suggestions:**
 - “...Be nonjudgmental.”
 - “...[Don’t] look at us and judge us on what [you] hear about us ...actually try to figure out who we really are...”
 - “...have more respect and kind of not act as if their time is more important than [ours].”
 - Don’t judge us on appearances.
 - “...it’s so hard to find a job that you don’t have to change something about yourself for. Like for the...job this summer, I had a tattoo on my arm that I have to wear an Ace bandage around it while I’m there. It cannot be seen. I have to take my piercings out. And I feel that...having piercings and tattoos doesn’t make me a bad kid...I have issues...yeah, I have depression issues...I have some anger issues. But I have enough self-control on the job site to get through what I

need to do that I should not be judged because I have some ink on my arm or hole in my face...one thing I'd change about the system is store policies against piercings and tattoos. It's such a common thing these days."

- Treat us like you do other kids.
 - "...what you're doing for these rich kids...do for us...one day [a rich kid and I] got in a fight and I ended up hitting him and he hit me. I picked up a charge for it and the school kicked me out...and he was allowed to go back every day. And...that ruined my life...because that's how I ended up going through group home and foster homes...I got punished and he got off scot free because he had money or because the school liked him."
- Don't generalize.
 - "It seems...like they work with...some people, [that] are pretty messed up and are bad people, but I mean not everybody is like that. I mean just because...you're working with [the youth], it doesn't automatically make [the youth] a horrible person [it would help] if they didn't generalize...so much, with everybody."

B. "They don't listen to me."

- "Sometimes when I want something done, it's not done the way I want it to be."
- **Suggestions:**
- "Personally, I wish they would listen to me more and take my [idea] when I want to do something, how I would do it. Rather than just [doing] everything for me. Makes me feel like a science project."
- "They definitely need to listen to the foster kids more, because I know I've personally reported things and nothing has been done, nothing has changed about it."
- "Take everything that their clients [kids] say into consideration..."
 - "I had a counselor that every year I never set my goals. He always took the same goals as last year, put them on paper, said sign it, and then we'll go on the rest of the year. It's because he never really wanted to take that time to actually sit down and try to make new goals or anything like that."
- "Listen to [the young person's] side of the story."

C. They don't care.

- "...the problem isn't with the resources, really, except for some things. The problem is really with people and the staff, and I don't know how you can fix that with money..."
- "They don't care about anything but making money...They just want to make their money and go home."
- "...feel like they're forced to talk to you...don't want to be there...[and you] don't want to bother them...you're going to use up my time...you're going to act like I'm not there."
- **Suggestions:**
- "The adults that work there need to start caring again, because it gets to a point where they see so many broken people they don't care anymore."

- “Show the kids care and the kids will open up to you.”
- “...more considerate and more caring about who they’re trying to help and actually want to be there to help...”

D. They don’t understand us.

- **Suggestions:**

- “I think they should all understand where we come from and what we went through to get [here].”
- “There’s always a reason behind why somebody did something. And they [the worker] should be there to like look at that person’s side of the story instead of just what they see, because there’s always more than what you see, and try to improve and fix the problem versus punish the person for the problem.”

3. Issues involving the youth’s living situation. (23%)

A. “Problems with youth shelters.

- “At the...shelter, you only have a certain amount of time you can stay there before you cannot live there anymore. And it’s very, very hard because [of] the housing...there’s lots of people sleeping on the streets. And the waiting list to get into a place, a shelter...you could wait months, maybe even a year or two just to get...into an efficiency or...a room in somebody house.
- “...in the middle of the winter...once the shelter closes at 7:30 in the morning, there is nowhere for anybody to go until 8 o’clock that night.”
- “...the homeless shelters are actually getting too crowded and too full...the numbers that they’re saying now is that there’s around a thousand people every night that are actually homeless but the numbers are actually higher than that.”
- “...I was 16 and pregnant and trying to find a place to live... [and] 16 years old with a child is the...hardest thing. And [at the] Shelter, they [said] ‘This is where you’re staying. And you’re going to be put on some list and hopefully, you’ll get a place some day. But you can only stay here 3 months.’”
- “Those shelters don’t really help you...it’s just a place to stay. They don’t really help you do anything.”
- “They don’t have as much space for a woman in shelters.”
- “So we don’t have like...places for youth to go in the middle of the night...Like we have the shelter and you have to wait and you have to meet certain criteria. You have to be referred to them.”
- “I mean it’s sad to think that we have 10 beds at the shelter but somebody that’s in jail or just gets out of jail...can come out and ‘Oh, ...here’s your keys to your brand new apartment. You can live here for 6 months and not pay any rent until you get a job.’”
- **Suggestions:**
- “I’d like to see...more shelters, like for...youths...Like a place...for youths to lay their heads so they don’t have to stay outside all night long and get arrested because you’re breaking, violating curfews.”

- "...I think there could be a lot more services in this town that are open more reasonable hours...I really think that it's more or less a staffing thing."
- B. "I've been homeless for the last 2 months and it's really cold and wet outside...I guess it's mainly that there are not enough places available...And not enough money and just not enough like places dedicated just for youth."
- "...I've been homeless almost since I was 17...I've been like mattress surfing and I'd move in with people for a little bit, move out..."
 - "...I stay with different friends and my parents. But the State's not helping me at all."
 - "Like somebody might have a place to stay tonight but what about tomorrow night? I mean you're still homeless if you're sleeping on somebody else's couch. You don't have your own place."
 - **Suggestions:**
 - "...there should be more housing options. That's a really biggie...Like I know I've been waiting a long time for housing, not a long, long time, but long enough that it's inconvenient."
 - "More...help with housing. Because I'm not getting any help with any of that."
 - "...need cheap housing."
 - "They're actually coming out with a new program for homeless people...they're coming up with ways that they can get them in their own housing."
- C. "...there's no money for a place to live."
- "...it's like really expensive living on your own...My apartment is nothing included whatsoever - so heat, hot water's all on me and stove's on me and trash removal, snow removal. I live on a third floor apartment. It's cold there in winter."
 - **Suggestion:**
 - "Landlords should pay for everything except for your rent and cable."
- D. "...my services [for transitioning youth] are going to end [soon]...First...I got kicked out of my mom's house and ended up being homeless, I guess is what they'd call it. And so...my case manager...helped me get to stay somewhere and I was renting a room, where now she got me my own apartment...but, because it's...Transitioning Youth, you only have...12 months to be in your apartment. And then it's kind of like, 'You've been here for a year, you're supposed to have..saved up money to go get your own apartment. See you later,' is what it's going to boil down to.
- "...there's not anything for transition housing...like if you...get kicked out of your parents. Like I left my parents' house. No place to go. I was sleeping on streets in different people's houses and luckily ...I was able finally...to get a place of my own. And [I found it]... through one of my community systems...."
 - **Suggestion:**
 - "...if anybody is looking for housing or anything [in the Middlebury area], contact the Parent Child Center because...there's always been rooms

available there. It's just the word isn't getting out... You... meet with [the director] and fill out papers for Section 8."

E. "...there's no programs...out there that are focused on helping a family be together. They're just more worried about the mother and the children when it should be the whole thing [all three – mother, father and child]."

- "...[the] fact that they say that they're trying to help families and they're not really out there to help families. It's the mother and the children. Like me and the baby's daddy, there's no programs out there right now that would help [all three of] us...live together; like have housing and help him get a job."

4. Financial issues. (22%)

A. Issues with Reach Up.

- "I don't think Reach Up gives us enough money to get by at all... And it makes it really hard and frustrating. Makes life a little harder."
- "...there's not enough money...to get the things we need and, well, it's really hard...to...be able to afford living and ...having to buy everything, especially with kids. It's hard to buy stuff...that your kids need, or – if you need it...but you have already had to spend the money on your kid..."
- "...I get a rent stipend every month to help me out with my rent. And I meet with my case manager like once a week and we go over a budget. And since I've been living on my own, my rent stipend has changed at least like 3 times....And it makes it really hard. Because ...one month I'll get...\$200 and then the next month, they'll be like, "Oh, we can only help you out [with] \$50.' And then it's like I have to come up with that extra money that I wasn't planning on coming up with...I know that there's a lot more people in the system that need just as much help or more help than me, but I think that it just makes it really hard when it's constantly...fluctuating – that stipend...There's like a pot of money and...they have to...split it between everybody. And when they do my budget...one week I'll make more tips at work...or I'll...pick up an extra shift. And then they automatically assume...'Oh, you're making 20 extra dollars so we have to take that off your rent', when it's like it would be nice if I could use that 20 dollars for something towards me instead of constantly paying bills."
- "...they give you enough money to pay...some of your bills, but like my electric's...\$200 a month. I had space heaters during the winter because it was really cold and I got...crisis fuel...but...my daughter needs...certain ointments because she gets rashes and stuff and they're like \$12 a tube and she can only use one kind. And she needs certain wipes and diapers and they're a lot more expensive than the cheap ones....It adds up quickly."
 - "They say [they pay] 100 percent [of daycare] but it's really not. I still have to pay \$40 a week."
- Requirements.
- "You have to be in school, work, or do community service. And then if there's...a two-parent household...I can stay home and do my school from home which I do...but my boyfriend has to do...40 hours a week of

community service ...and then if he works, we get no money. And so I'd rather he just do community service..."

- "That's how it is with us, too. He doesn't even get to see the baby during the day because...he worked...a 10-hour day...[when he'd] get home...the baby would be in bed. It'd be like 8 o'clock at night. He doesn't even see the baby at all...and it's really rough on me, too, because she's fussy. She was colicky the first [few] months, too."
- "I don't have kids but I feel like...people...just keep having babies because they play the system. It's like then all these kids are...running around."

- **Suggestions:**

- "I live...paycheck to paycheck even with the rent stipend. And it would just be nice if they would...give me one set amount so I could plan my life and...my months around that amount instead of constantly changing it."
 - "Consistency is a big thing..."
- "It may take having two jobs but [working is] definitely better than living on welfare because then you don't have to go by all their rules and their stipulations. You can actually live your life and save your money the way you want to save it."
- "...and it's also worth it in the end. Because if you have two jobs, that gives you more experience to move onto something better."
- "I think people who are working should get more help because ...you're trying a lot harder than just sitting on your butt and not doing anything and collecting welfare...That's why you're working. So it's like they should help you more when you work. Because I see people who get welfare and then they do the community service jobs and it doesn't affect their welfare at all to get paid for doing community service. But when I went out and got a real job, they wouldn't give me welfare and I'm making less than what they were. It was ridiculous. Like...why even bother getting a job when I can just do community service and get more money and like play the system?"
- "I don't know if there's something in place now that kind of designates the money to those who are on the top of the list...meaning those who need it the most...and those who are on the bottom of the list. I would assume there is. But if there isn't something in place like that, it'd probably be productive to have something where the ones at the top get...a little bit more than the ones at the bottom...or the other way you could go is to divide everything out equally, but that might make the ones at the top...and the ones at the bottom a little bit frustrated."
- "I think they should take in consideration [what] you pay for [things]..."

B. Issues around having enough food.

- Food stamps
- "We definitely don't get enough food stamps to feed both of us. And...at the end of the month, we won't have enough because WIC doesn't give us enough formula for the baby, either...so at the end of the month, I

have to buy a couple cans and like –we don't have enough to buy a lot...”

- “Basically like me and my girlfriend...[and] baby moved in with my parents, in my mom and my dad's house. But just because I had [a medical issue] and can't really get a job right now and basically to get food stamps you have to be either over 22 and...moved out of your parents' house. So [I] can't get food stamps.” 8Ta
- “...[with] food stamps...the State was so far behind, it took people 4 months to get...benefits.”
- **Suggestions:**
- “[the required age limit]...that should be changed, just because you're not 22, you should still be able to apply.
- “...make it so you can be like 18, a regular age and be...legal [for] getting it.”
- “With food stamps, you should be able to buy toilet paper and toothpaste...because those are necessities, you know. I think ...you should be able to buy that kind of stuff.”
- “the hard thing is trying to get food stamps and having a baby...”
- How to get around requirements.
- “So you can just lie to them and tell them you're homeless.
- “...there's loopholes such as if you state that you work a certain amount of hours on the property that you're living at, that counts as living expenses...and I have to use my own money to get food, which I don't have. And that's pretty much all you have to do.”
- “My friend...they kind of cut off like a section of the house to make it like his own apartment. And he got food stamps that way.”
- Food shelf
- “You can only go to a food shelf once a month....and they give you enough food for...one or two days. And that's like stuff you bake with. If you're homeless, how are you going to cook a pot pie or light a fire? Like you take your lighter and light it?”

C. “I'm not making enough money right now.”

5. Issues involving education. (22%)

A. Issues dealing with accommodation to student learning styles.

- High School Completion Program.
- “I dropped out of high school in the beginning of my junior year, went through some family problem...And I got pregnant at 17 with my [child]. And that's when I decided to get my GED, but I wish that I had known about the high school completion program. Because I didn't know about it. I basically thought you could only get your GED at the time. So now I'm 22 years old and stuck with my GED and some college. And I wish I would have my actual diploma, because it was the biggest mistake I ever made was to drop out of school. ...I remember going to the guidance counselor at [the high school] and tried to get help and they basically just encouraged me to stay in school and that was all they had for me. And they told me if I wanted to drop out, that was my choice. And so I did.

And they didn't point me in any direction. I waited a year and then eventually got my GED."

- "It used to be and it may still be called Act 176...people...at the high schools...don't discuss those things [e.g. the high school completion program, Act 176] because they want the [federal] funding...they want [their high school completion rate] to look good...like [their] graduation rate."
- Accommodating learning styles.
- "...if you have...needs in the school, [saying] 'I can't take tests in this class because I just can't concentrate, can you give me an oral test,'" they'll dig their heels in and not give it to you because they're very much into having kids memorize things ...traditional is the word. And so it was very hard...I love learning and going to school...but I learn in a different way. And it's...a hands-on way, so classrooms weren't best for me."
- "...Our guidance counselor wasn't very helpful. When I told him about how I had certain accommodations that I needed to take tests a certain way – and the teachers knew that. They had my IEP's. Or I needed an extension on homework or something because I don't understand the material, he said, 'Well, I know...they might have done that in middle school, but we don't coddle here in high school.'...They didn't say...this is a good place to go to learn...They were just like, can't help you."

- **Suggestions:**

- "And there are some students that thrive in the public school, and you know, that's great. I'm glad that that works. I'm not saying public school is bad for everyone, just for the ones that do learn differently [they] should have alternative way of learning...Because obviously I wouldn't have gotten my [certificate] if I stayed in the high school. I probably would have been a...“drop out.”...finding these alternative...ways...saved me, helped me pursue...what I wanted to do for a career, and just made me like learning again."
- "Have different ways of teaching kids and different like resources in the schools to help a kid however it is they can help them."
- "...have the high school staff or even middle school or younger...learn about the different kinds of...disabilities or struggles or challenges...students [can have]...and understand that not everybody is the same..."
- "...there's some situations where you can't always accommodate... every student, but take in consideration of what they say and what's helpful for them and...compromise what would work best...let that person know that you hear them, that you'll try to do something about it."

B. Teachers, principal and guidance counselors hold previous behavior against you.

- "They judged me basically...on my elementary grade [behavior], from kindergarten all the way up. And I did one wrong thing and they basically said that just because I did that one wrong thing...they were going to use that against me because how bad my past was. I don't think it was right."
- "...not just the principal, but teachers who have...known you when you were a kid, totally base [their view of] you on who you were or who your

family was, not [on] what you as a person have become. Who cares...who you were...it doesn't matter if it was last year. [The principal and teachers] didn't...even take the time to look and see who you have become or what you are becoming, just what you were."

C. "I don't think community high school should be in with probation and parole. I think we should have our own site."

D. Passed me on or pushed me out of school.

- "I didn't try [in school]. I didn't want to because [of] the way the teachers were; I didn't like how they were teaching. And I needed help. They would not help me. So I didn't do nothing. They gave me work and I just guessed on what the answers were and just gave them the papers. I should have stayed back at least 2 years, but they just passed me. They didn't care."
- "...and they just pushed me out of high school...the principal was dead set on pushing me out of school, [saying], 'There's no point for you to be here.'"
- "I don't remember being taught math after 3rd grade. Ever...I never had a math class in high school except business math. All the way up until I went to [alternative school]. And now I'm actually doing post-algebra. And that's just in like one year [at the alternative school]...because they cared and they really want you to learn. But how does somebody get placed at a third grade math level and then stay there for like all those years? I couldn't even do multiplication."

E. "I wasn't learning things that would prepare me for the real world. Like after I graduate, I won't know how to get my own apartment or apply for a job or apply for college even. They don't teach you that in high school."

- **Suggestion:**

- "I would just let the kids choose their own classes and choose their own groups...The teachers did it all for me. They didn't talk to me and ask me what classes I wanted to take."

6. Issues involving foster care (21%)

A. Need better foster parents.

- "I was placed in...quite a few foster homes within a month...eventually I landed in a foster home where it seems like they had not checked it out...because [I] got locked in the basement at night. And there was a camera and an alarm on the door...There was no privacy and the foster parents were pretty terrible and would say some pretty terrible things...So I think foster care really needs to be looked at in this area."
- "...[my foster parents] kicked me out and told me that [if] I ever became pregnant, they were going to put me out on the street."
- "I was in some pretty bad foster homes where...kids [in these homes] are better off probably being in their own homes than in a foster home."
- **Suggestions:**
- Choose and train foster parents better.
 - "They shouldn't just let anyone be a foster parent."

- “I think people should have to go through a little bit more ...to become a foster parent...Maybe more meetings, more home visits or something...”
 - “[have people] go through mandatory classes...if they’re really interested in foster caring kids, then they should be interested enough in taking classes for parenting and how to deal with the kids.”
 - “DCF could go through their foster homes and look at them because most of them are not decent.”
 - “Do better background checks on the foster parents.”
 - “kids should have a trial with the family...[to] see if it’s a good match...maybe...[the child] can spend a week...if the parents do go to work during the day or...[the child] can see their weekday schedules and then their weekends; see how available [the parents] are to [them] and how much like time they spend with...and attend to [them].”
 - Check in on foster parents.
 - “I think [DCF] should...have random visits where the foster parents don’t know that they’re going to stop by. And not even just [in] the first month, the whole time that they’re in care...Because if [the foster parents] don’t know that you’re going to stop in...then maybe you’ll see what’s actually going on in the home, if there is anything wrong.”
- B. Foster parents misuse money paid to them for kids.
- “...the [State] gives the parents money for the kids, to take care of them, like for clothing and stuff. The parents don’t even pay for the clothing. They make the kids get a job and pay for their own stuff instead of letting them save it or something along [those] lines.”
- C. Negative effects on kids of being in foster care.
- “My biggest problem in foster care was being in therapeutic homes and placements for...long periods of time and not knowing what was going on, when I was going to be moved, where I was going to be for the next couple of weeks.”
 - “...me and my siblings fell through the cracks and we got stuck in a situation.”
 - **Suggestions:**
 - “I think [DCF] really needs to take a look at what they do and realize how they affect kids’ lives.”
 - “...regardless of age, I think kids should have an input because we’re not stupid. We...don’t know everything, or know as much as people that are older than us. I think that... what’s going on...should be explained [to us] so that we’re not wondering what’s going to happen.”
 - “stop moving [kids] around so much.
 - “...there should be...maybe a mentor program to coincide with care. They do have that through NFI. It’s called a CSI worker. I think they should focus more on that; focus more on like the positive mentors and people to spend time with the kids and show them to do good things.”
- D. “[If] foster parents already have a [biological] kid, they won’t pay attention as much to what the foster kid needs.”

- **Suggestion:** “[have] more strict rules...for the foster parents...Like you don’t pay more attention to one kid than you do the other.”

E. “Half the [kids] who are in foster care didn’t do anything wrong, [they’re in foster care] because their parents are abusive...it’s nothing that [the kids] did wrong, which was my situation.”

7. Have a teen center in every county. (17%)

A. “There’s nowhere to go in the town.”

- “The thing about [our town] is it’s such a small town...a large population of youth develops...and they don’t know what to do with it.”
 - Kids are bored...”Boredom causes trouble.”
 - “[The town] complain[s] about all the teens get in trouble because now they’re out running the streets at night or doing drugs.”
- Problems with existing places in the town.
 - “Like we have a movie theater but... it costs money to go to the movies... it costs money to go to the drive-in. And there’s the transportation to get there.”
 - “We have the boys and girls club...but...it’s overrun by...middle schoolers. And it’s hard to find a place where young adults like ourselves can hang out...I stopped going down there because no one’s there that’s my age.”
 - “Another place that youth go to and hang out at is...the Recovery Center...they’re only open until the afternoon...[and] during the winter ...sometimes they haven’t even opened it up at all.”
 - “..the volunteers that...run the center...sometimes don’t even show up...So they have less dependability.”
- The town closed or changed things.
 - “the pizza shop”...”the café”...closed.
 - “...the building that everyone used to hang out around, the town hall, that’s all spiffed up now and there’s cameras everywhere... everything’s...being watched now and the teens aren’t trusted any more at all.”
- “I have nowhere to hang out with my friends except for my apartment. You can’t fit like 4 or 5 people in there.”
- **Suggestions:**
- “This place has stores and everything else and pretty much help[s] you get what you need, but what we really need is a place to be ourselves; a place to be youth. Go out and shoot hoops, hang out with friends and not have to get in trouble doing it. Go to a place that’s public.”
 - “Someplace warm...that’s open all the time.”
 - “...where we can sit back, hang out, put in a scary movie or...a place where you can kick back and order a pizza...just having someplace in general...for young adults.”
 - “...work on the computer...”
 - “...[you] walk through the door and...instantly...feel comfortable...[a] place...[that’s] cool.”
 - “...you [could] pay a \$15 one-time membership registration and you get a card and you’re a member...until you’re 25 or something.”

- Possible results of having a teen center.
 - "...If they have such a place, there would...might be...less break-ins...less vandalism...Crime rate [might] go down...drugs cut down."

8. Issues involving employment. (16%)

A. "I've found it extremely difficult [to get a job] because I've applied many places and been denied, not even gotten an interview."

- "I just cut about a foot of hair off my head so I could try to find a job. I am still unemployed."
- Issues involving criminal justice.
- "And like me, I'm a felon...and trying to find a job is like trying to find a needle in a haystack and it's just not going to happen. So I have to rely on everything else and odd jobs and everything to survive and support myself in my own life."
- "...In order to get off Court Diversion, I have to get a job. And in order to get a job, I have to tell [prospective employers] my charge ...And I tried talking to [my court diversion worker about how difficult this was]... [they're] supposed to be there to help us...They [said] that it's all [up to] you – you've got to do it by yourself. If you don't have it [done] by this date, you're going back to court. And I tried to talk to them about it. I told them I'm doing school and I was out looking [for a job]. And they turned around and said...It needs to be in by this date and if it's not, you're going back to court and you're doing jail time."
- "I've been trying to find a second or a different, better paying job ...And progress has been nil."
- "Right now it ain't going so good so we're behind in the rent so bad right now and I don't make enough...that job interview I have will kind of help me if I get [the job], even though I really don't want to work at a grocery store. But hey, a job's a job."

B. "I got fired."

C. **Suggestions:**

- "...it should be easier for the youth to be able to get a job."
- Have daily, temporary jobs available.
 - "There's [a program] in Florida...[for] anyone from...16 to 25, you go to this place and you meet up...there's some work every day. And at the end of the day, you get...60, 70 bucks. That's not bad for every day work. They should have something like that...something that anyone can do. Like they do have something [like this] during the summer through the city where...you go clean up the...beach...I'm sure there's plenty of odd jobs around town that people need, like businesses getting their lawns mowed...anything."
- "...so having a way to make money other than selling drugs, because that's the easiest way. People are used to instant gratification. And that was the thing that got me. I could sell anything. I could sell ice to an Eskimo. And it was great because I had money in my pocket all the time. And then I got in trouble and I was broke. Screwed."

9. Need “more things to do” in the town. (16%)

- A. **Suggestions:** “Have more positive outlets...Something that...kids can channel their off time or aggression [into].”
- “Something more constructive.”
 - Result: “I imagine you’d see the drugs, everything cut down because...what’s the point if you actually have something to do?”
 - [It could] “...make the town more of a community.”
- B. Have places with an activity.
- Open a skate park.
 - “In our town, we used to have a skate park and there used to be kids down there all the time. I wish they’d put the skate park back in town. They took it out.”
 - “...one of the few places where youth can actually congregate and have fun.”
 - “...without getting in trouble.”
 - A Rec Center.
 - “Or you could open up a rec center or something...just go in there and like shoot some hoops for a little while.”
 - “Outdoor basketball court.”
 - “...[have] access to a gym...a pool.”
 - “...a free roller skating rink.”
- C. Something to go to.
- “something low maintenance...[like a] community garden”
 - “...a park”
- D. Have more events.
- “...have it where...the Teen Center has...a band or something. ...Certain days of the week, they would go the beach or they would go bowling or out to the movies or something.”
 - “...for all of us to be able to get along and work on something that we all like.”

10. Transportation problems. (15%)

- A. Transportation is too expensive.
- “...they do have transportation, but you gotta pay out the butt for it....I think, for a pass for a month, it’s like 45 dollars.”
 - **Suggestion:**
 - “Lower the prices...or pay for transportation.”
- B. Problems with existing transportation.
- Problems with scheduling a ride with transportation service.
 - “You call and make an appointment.”
 - “It [only runs] one time a week or one time a day.”
 - “...they can be late or not show up and it’s not a problem. It’s a one-sided thing that if you’re going to be late, [it is]...Most of the time, they’re on time or if they get conflicted with the schedule, sometimes they’ll call or sometimes...They won’t call and tell you until you call [them] and say, ‘Why didn’t I get picked up?’”
 - Hard to get to school.

- “It’s so hard to go to school because not only do you need transportation to go to school, you need somebody’s who’s willing to get up at 7 o’clock in the morning to take you to your classes. You need...to have a ride back, especially if you live in [far away]. You know what I mean? I’ve lived...20, 40 minutes away from [school] and...it’s almost impossible. And that’s why Parole and Probation set me up with the COSA program...[They take me and pick me up from school].”

- **Suggestions:**

- “Why doesn’t someone just [start] a community bus. You need a ride..to the Park N Ride. They have a number that you can call to find rides with people that park at the Park N Ride. ...They should do something like that, except for teens.”
 - “community buses should be cheap or for free.”
 - [or] “have local companies donate some money...a hundred bucks to whoever...starts up a bus company for our little town. If they can...get...donations...from different businesses... plus...ask [the young adult who needs the ride if they] have a spare 5 bucks; then that keeps it going.”
- “...another thing that’d be nice if they had like taxi service for young adults that need transportation to a job that’s new or something.”
- “Make town more accessible by bus.”
- “...more programs out there that...can [help you]...get a vehicle.”
 - [The technical center], has a career assistance fund [that can help with this].”

11. Issues involving criminal justice. (14%)

- A. “...some cops...just target certain individuals constantly and they harass them, always pulling them over to the side and talking to them, telling them they can’t do this and they can’t do that...”
 - “I could call [the police] and say I just got shot, and then someone else would call about some party or someone just graffitied a school ...and the [police] are right there [at the party or school] because they want to get you in trouble. They are after all the young adults, all the teenagers. They do it on purpose...they just stop [you] for no reason, just to...piss in your Cheerios and ask you, What’s up, what are you doing?”
 - “Let’s just say if you go up the road 40 miles an hour, [and] go like 3 miles over the speed limit, they’ll give you a ticket.”
 - “I’m cruising in [my vehicle]. [A police officer] just pulls me over and says, ‘You’re speeding.’ Mind you, I speed like every time I drive. This one time, I was actually not speeding...I was... watching the speedometer making sure I didn’t speed...[The officer] tells me I’m getting a ticket for speeding [but] he’ll rip it up if I tell them about some cop car that was vandalized...I don’t know anything about it....I don’t even live [where it happened].”
 - “...they just take advantage of the power that they’ve been given.”
 - **Suggestion:**
 - “...the police should stop harassing [young] people.”

- B. “My experience with [the officers in] Parole is that they’re extremely busy people and that makes them quite short-tempered, so it doesn’t take much to make them angry and want to violate you or give you another thing on your platter that you’ve got to take care of.
- “...I’m doing everything and [my parole officer] just tried to violate me like a month ago saying that I’m not doing any of this. So I went around and got all my paperwork showing that I’m working with all these agencies and doing all these programs. And so I’m trying to beat the violation right now. But they just seem like they like to mess with you, try to aggravate you.
 - **Suggestion:**
 - “[Your probation/parole officer] should sit down and get to know you like a counselor does first. And then if you can’t get along with [them], you need a new one, because it’s never going to work out.”
- C. “[Court diversion requirement] sets people up to fail...It puts [such high] standards on somebody that they can’t get [them] done in the amount of time [allotted]...For [example a fellow] had a *retail theft*. They wanted him to go out [and] get a job for his charges to be dismissed. When you have a *retail theft*, you’re not going to get a job in any convenience store, grocery store, any corporation of stores, you’re not going to [be able] to do it. They set him up to fail by doing that.”

12. Issues involving mental health. (14%)

- A. Issues with substance abuse and women’s crisis.
- “I was doing a one time a week [substance abuse] group for an hour and a half and it really wasn’t working for me. Continued to use throughout the group and I just didn’t see a point in it and it really wasn’t helping.”
 - “...the substance abuse treatment, it worked for awhile. But then you get back in your same old track and mind and it kind of goes away after a while. And you’ve just got to keep giving it another shot.”
 - **Suggestion:**
 - “I think there needs to be more groups for...substance abuse and women’s crisis...I know there’s one women’s crisis building in St. Albans and one in Burlington for rape victims. But I think there should be more informational groups...It would be like going to an AA meeting, only for people who are victims of sexual acts...It would be like that (domestic violence shelter), only like for – more for like teens and young adults, not just adults.”
- B. Maintaining contact with young people when they’re in placements.
- **Suggestions:**
 - “...I think [workers] should be helping you out more while you’re in [placements] than when you’re out... Like [in] the Retreat and different places...that some of us may have been to ...When you’re in these places, I feel they kind of just leave you hanging...I believe that they should help you out more while you’re in there, keep contact with you...”
 - Have a peer mentor program.
 - “...having a positive mentor...to help you out and it’s not [a] staff member you’re appointed to that doesn’t understand you at all. I

think maybe there should be some kind of mentor program around here. And...it should be people like us [peers] that take a kid out, because when I was in foster care...that was my biggest thing. I was alone. You know what I mean? And my mentality was 'eff this, eff that, I don't want to do that.'...But I think if I had [had] someone my age now to reach out to me then and say, 'listen, this is where you can go, this is what you can do', I think I would have been a lot more successful early on."

C. More awareness of mental health issues.

- "...in...schools and also at...medical offices,...they should have seminars on...mental health, because a lot of the time, teachers don't take into consideration when someone says ...I haven't been in to school for a week because I have depression...or anxiety attacks [and the teachers feel] it's an excuse...[but really students have these] ...also [have seminars] at medical offices, receptionists should learn...about mental health...[it would also be helpful] for a lot of companies."
- "Have someone other than school personnel give an assembly on [mental health issues]...[in] health class...[teachers] talk about sex and drugs and how it's bad and you shouldn't do that, but then they don't talk about how to kind of advocate for yourself and try to learn about yourself [and issues you might have] instead of just trusting what these authorities or teachers are telling you. And then you start kind of like putting yourself down and saying that there's something wrong with you and it's just like a...downward spiral effect on students. I think they really need to know that...they're not the only one and [they're] not alone."

D. Issues with medication use and misdiagnosis.

- "...[Mental health centers] need to stop playing around with medications....only your physician that has gone...to medical school...and is always...learn[ing] more...[should prescribe them]."
- "they misdiagnosed me at [the mental health center]...the [psychiatrist there at the time] thought I had ADHD...[and] put me on this med and this med made me really, really tired...they gave me this medicine for a month and then they [found out I didn't have ADHD]...for certain [issues] you have to see psychiatrists...instead of a regular doctor."

13. Family/child issues. (7%)

A. Issues with finding daycare.

- "...And where I live, there's no daycare...There's no daycare for my daughter's age range up until 2 years old...which means I have to [get to a different town] somehow without a car."
- "...no openings in the [local] parent/child center..."
- **Suggestion:**
- "[Use home care]...My provider's a home in care. She's through the State."
- "[Problem with this] "I did home care. I'm really a paranoid person....I don't really have friends or family. So I prefer [my baby] to stay with me and plus I breast feed so...can't go too far."

- B. "...if I had got into some situation where I got pregnant, I would be screwed. And I would be stuck in many of the situations that a lot of people in [Vermont] are [in] because...[the belief has] been pressed [on them] that...abortion...is murder...people aren't educated and don't understand... kids get pregnant...then...their lives are over, for the most part."
- C. "With a kid, it's so hard."
- D. "There are people who have kids just to get help."

"Thank you" to all the young adults for taking the time to share your insights and suggestions, to Ellen Talbert who coordinated the outreach, recruitment and logistical arrangements for the groups and to all the people in the field that made this project happen. It is the hope of this focus group consultant that we heed the heartfelt words of one participant:

"I kind of feel like we have too many [surveys] as it is...We sit...and talk...but then nothing happens, which isn't any of our faults or your fault... It's just...we shouldn't be talking...we should be doing."

Appendix A. YIT Focus Group Study Recruitment Script

Phone Script for Recruiting into Focus Groups

Please use once you have the young adult on the telephone. You can use the script below for both individuals. Please note that in the script, italics are used to let you know that phrasing will depend upon with whom you are speaking.

1. Hello. My name is _____ and I work at the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program at the University of Vermont. Thank you for calling us about the Young Adult system of Care focus group research study. The state of Vermont is working to improve services for young adults to help them lead health and successful lives as adults. We at UVM are doing a study of these services for young adults to learn how helpful they are to young adults and their families. First of all, are you 18 years old or older?

Do you have 5 to 10 minutes now so I can tell you a little more about the study?

If participant says yes, continue with #2.

If participant says no, ask:

When would be a good time for me to call you back to describe the study?

Establish time with participant, thank them and end call.

If the participant says they would not like to hear more about the study, thank them and end call.

2. Great! Thank you. As I go over more information about the study, I encourage you to ask questions.

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are receiving or recently received mental health and/or related services in your local community. Your community is participating in an effort to improve services and supports for young adults and their families. The goal of this project is to give young adults who are experiencing emotional and behavioral problems and their family the necessary supports to have successful and healthy lives. This effort is being paid for by the Center for Mental Health Services in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

We are conducting a series of focus groups to look at what young adults participating in a system of care think is working well, and not so well, for them. A system of care is a way of meeting young adults' mental health and related needs. It is based on the idea that the mental health and related needs of young adults and their families can be met by a coordinated approach within their community. We are also looking at whether young adults feel like they are "in charge" of the services and supports they are receiving.

For this study, we will ask you to attend a focus group with a small group of other young adults. We will have the focus group at various locations throughout the state, and will try to schedule a

time and location that are convenient for you. The focus group discussion will be led by a member of our evaluation team from the University of Vermont.

If you decide to participate, you will receive \$50 cash for attending the focus group, and you may only attend one time. You will not get any money to cover your travel or any other expenses involved with attending the focus group.

Do you have any questions at this point?

Answer any questions participant has.

Does this sound like something you would be interested in taking part in?

If yes, go to #3.

If no, ask:

Is there any information you could share with me about your choice not to take part in this study? Such information can be helpful for us to improve the study.

Whether the participant says yes and shares reasons for why they choose not to take part or no, they would rather not say, follow up with:

Thank you so much for your time. Take care.

3. Great! I'd like to set up a time and place when we could include you in a focus group. At the beginning of the focus group we will go over the consent form, answer any questions you have, have you sign the consent form, and then we will go over the ground rules and then start the discussion. It should take about 2 hours total to be part of the focus group.

What would be some possible times for you in the next two to three weeks?

In what Vermont towns or cities might you be able to attend a focus group?

Try to schedule a specific time and location at that point, although you may have to contact them back with a specific location depending on how "firm" the details are at the time of this recruitment phone call.

Great! I look forward to seeing you then. You will receive a reminder call, text or email about 24 to 48 hours before the focus group. Should something come up and you need to cancel, please call me at this number: *give your contact phone number.*

Thank you and have a great day!

Appendix B. Consent for YIT Focus Group

THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

BURLINGTON, VERMONT

INFORMED CONSENT FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

Principal Investigator: Judith Shaw, EdD, MPH, RN
Project Title: Mental Health Services for Transition Aged Youth.
Protocol Number: 10-061

Introduction

You are being asked to take part in a research project being conducted by the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP), a research and quality improvement program in the University of Vermont's College of Medicine. We are doing this research project as part of the Vermont Youth in Transition project, which has hired VCHIP to do this work.

Purpose and Background

The Vermont Youth in Transition project is a program funded by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The project aims to develop a mental health "System of Care" for young adults. A System of Care is a way of providing services that:

- ❖ Will meet young adults' and their families' needs
- ❖ Are based in the community
- ❖ Are based on peoples' strengths
- ❖ Involve public and private partnerships, and
- ❖ Are tailored to the person's cultural and linguistic needs.

How Many People Will Participate in the Study?

There will be approximately 10 focus groups, and up to 12 people will be asked to participate in each one. A total of 120 people may take part in the study.

Procedure

This phase of VCHIP's evaluation will include discussion groups made up of young adults (aged 18 and over) who have some experience in the Vermont System of Care. Discussion groups will address a number of issues concerning the System of Care. The discussion will include topics such as barriers to getting access to the System of Care, ways of accessing the System of Care that have worked, how young adults might become more involved in guiding their own services and how they might become involved in helping agencies to help other young adults. In general, we will be interested in hearing your thoughts about ways to make the System of Care more effective. This group session will last approximately 2 hours. The session will be audio recorded for transcription purposes.

Risks

The only possible risks are an accidental breach of confidentiality and/or that you that you might become troubled during the discussion. To protect you against these risks, VCHIP will use only trained facilitators. If you become upset during the focus group and wish to leave the group, you may leave the group at any point and for any reason. If you should need assistance, then one of the VCHIP researchers will be available to help you.

Confidentiality Measures

You will not be identified by name during the discussion group or in the transcript we make of the discussion. Furthermore, all discussion group participants will be asked to respect what each other has to say and to not discuss issues that have been shared in confidence with people outside the group. However, there is always a chance that someone will repeat what

you say in the discussion. We will do our best to protect the information we collect from you. Information that identifies you will be kept secure and restricted. However, there is a potential risk for an accidental breach of confidentiality.

VCHIP will make an audio recording of the discussion that will later be transcribed; the recording and the transcription will be stored in a locked cabinet and on a secure, password-protected computer network. VCHIP may include information we learn from the discussion group in reports and presentations, but will never include any information that would allow for identifying someone who participated in the focus groups.

Upon request representatives of the Institutional Review Board and regulatory authorities will be granted direct access to your research records for verification of procedures and/or data. Information such as your name, address and social security number will be disclosed to the University of Vermont Procurement Services Department for purposes of reimbursement for being in this study. Procurement Services will store your data under lock and key, and only authorized employees of the University of Vermont will be able to access this data.

Potential Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. In order to help the Vermont System of Care do a better job in its work with young adults and their families, VCHIP will report our research findings to the Vermont Department of Mental Health and other public and private agencies in the state that are involved in the System of Care.

Reimbursement

You will receive a stipend of \$50 for participating in a discussion group.

Cost

The only cost is in the amount of time it takes to participate in this research project. Discussion groups will take at most two hours. We understand how busy people are, and we will do our best to accommodate your schedule. You will not be reimbursed for any costs of travel to and from the focus group.

Early Withdrawal or Being Withdrawn

You may stop your participation at any time. You may be asked to leave the discussion group if it is in your best interest to do so or if it is in the best interest of the group to do so.

Alternatives

The only alternative is to not participate in this study. If you choose not to participate in this research project, it will not have any impact on you, any agencies that serve you or on your community's System of Care, either now or in the future.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Judith Shaw, UVM College of Medicine, N329 Courtyard at Given, 89 Beaumont Ave., Burlington, 05405, 802-656-8210. You may also contact Nancy Stalnaker, the Director of the Research Protections Office at the University of Vermont, at 802-656-5040 should you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project.

Statement of Consent

You have been given and have read or have had read to you a summary of this research study. Should you have any further questions about this research, you may contact the person conducting the study at the address and telephone number given below. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate in any components or withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice to your present and/or future relationship with VCHIP or Vermont Youth in Transition project activities.

You agree to participate in this research project and you understand that you will receive a signed copy of this form.

This form is valid only if the Committees on Human Research's current stamp of approval is shown below.

Participant Signature	Print name	Date
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PI/Designee Signature	Print name	Date
-----------------------	------------	------

Principal Investigator: Judith Shaw EdD, MPH, RN
Vermont Child Health Improvement Program
N329 Courtyard at Given
89 Beaumont Ave.
Burlington, VT 05405
Telephone: (802) 656-8210

Appendix C. YIT Focus Group Discussion Guide

VCHIP Mental Health Services for Transition Aged Youth Evaluation
System of Care Young Adult Focus Groups
June 2011

1. Introduction, Consent & Payment Process (15 minutes)

- 1.1 Welcome & thank participants for coming & facilitator introduction
- 1.2 Consent form overview, opportunity to read it and ask questions, and signing. Allow at least 5 minutes to read through the form, check to see if everyone is finished, and offer to explain any unfamiliar words, answer questions and THEN review with entire group and offer another opportunity for questions. Facilitator and other evaluator then circulate through the group and one-by-one countersign the forms with participant keeping one and the evaluator the other.
- 1.4 Payment & receipts; also will be assisted by other evaluator.

2. General description of the Youth in Transition Grant/System of Care (10 minutes)

- 2.1 Description of the YIT statewide project
- 2.2 Helping build a “System of Care” [COMPONENTS OF THE SYSTEM OF CARE ARE DISPLAYED AROUND THE ROOM TO SPARK RESPONSES]

Definition [we’ll come back to this]: “A system of care is a coordinated network of community-based services and supports that is organized to meet the challenges of children and youth with serious mental health needs and their families. Families and youth work in partnership with public and private organizations so services and supports are effective, built on the strengths of individuals, and address each person’s cultural and linguistic needs. A system of care helps children, youth and families function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.”

There are many different examples of what the system of care might look like for a person, and the following is an example that is based on a “made up” young adult, but is still realistic:

“Jim” is a 19 year old who hasn’t lived with his family for years, has been couch surfing for a while and has been unemployed for about 6 months. He got a mental health diagnosis when he was still in high school and is usually pretty good about taking his meds but hasn’t seen his psychologist or psychiatrist in a long time and is worried his meds might be “wrong”. He recently got connected to a youth outreach worker who spent some time getting to know him and is now helping Jim apply to Job Corps. Jim also decided to get a GED and his outreach worker helped him make a plan for getting it by the end of next year. Jim got a new mental health counselor who has a more flexible schedule, and has an appointment to see his psychiatrist to get his meds checked in 3 weeks.

Acknowledging the “system of care” is kind of a strange concept, and present another opportunity for questions.

- 2.3 Goal of the discussion is to learn more about how the System of Care is working for young adults throughout the state. In particular we’ll focus on:
 - Barriers to young people being able to use the System of Care,
 - Facilitators of using the system of care,
 - increasing young adults’ being the “drivers” of the system of care for themselves, and
 - how the system of care works for all young people.

3. Description of focus group and focus group “rules” (5 minutes)

Discussion will consist of a series of questions and answers; each person will have the opportunity to answer every question

Discussion will last approximately 2 hours

Discussion will be audio recorded, we'll also take some notes

We will use fake names that you will write on the card in front of you; please say your name when speaking and when responding to others, and you will be reminded as needed.

Sharing only information within your comfort zone

Respecting other participants

Listen and do not interrupt

Do not share any information from the group once the group is over

Please do not text or make phone calls unless it is very important

Questions about the rules?

Emphasize that people should not share things they are not comfortable having other people know, and that if anyone becomes upset they can let the facilitator or the other researcher know and we will help them.

4. Working well/not well questions: 30 minutes

I'd like everyone to think about the following questions. I'll give you a minute to think, and then we'll go around the table and share our thoughts.

4.1 What are some ways that you are involved (or have been involved) with the system of care in your community?

Foster care

Mental health/counseling

Substance abuse tx

Court diversion/drug court

Parole

Educational programs

JOBS (supported employment)

Having a case coordinator or manager

Other?

Possible probe is above ways are not being identified: How did you first get involved with the system of care in your community?

4.2 What has worked well for you in your community's system of care?

Possible "worked well examples": Maybe you felt you were getting what you need, going to appointments/meetings, had goals and were working towards those goals, maybe achieved some of your goals, you felt listened to by and had good relationships with adults in the system of care, you were able to afford what you needed, it seemed like the adults in the system knew what they needed to know, etc.

4.3 What things do you think should be different or be changed in your community's system of care?

Possible "not working well" examples: not feeling listened to, not getting services you needed, not feeling respected by adults in the system of care, not having goals or not making progress towards goals, not feeling like you were able to make choices, seemed like adults who were supposed to help you didn't know how or didn't know what the other adult workers in the system of care were doing.

5. Youth voice questions: 30 minutes.

Now we'd like to shift gears a bit and have you think about some of the ways have been in the "driver's seat" for your involvement with the system of care. One important idea in the system of Care for young adults is that they should be the ones who are choosing what the goals of their work in the system of care is, and how those services are set up.

5.1 What are some ways you HAVE felt like you were in control of the help you were getting from adults in the system of care.

Possible “feeling in control” examples might be: you helped pick the services (e.g., help getting a job, counseling, medical visits, help finding a place to live, etc.) that you got, the people who were helping you really listened to you and followed-up on what you asked them, you were given enough information to make choices about your services, you were in charge of setting your goals and were part of checking in about whether the goals were being met, you had a chance to be part of a committee or other group of young adults who were sharing your stories and helping adults make changes to the system of care, etc.

5.2 What are some ways you have NOT felt like you were the one guiding your experience in the system of care.

Possible “not feeling in control” examples might be: adults workers not listening to your thoughts and needs, not having a choice about what services you got, not having a chance to set any of your goals or decide if the goals were met, not having an opportunity to tell people how you felt about the services you were getting, being “stuck” with services that weren’t working out for you, feeling like people not checking in with you about your progress, thinking that your point of view or voice wasn’t respected.

6. Survey-type questions (approximately 15 minutes total)

Now we’d like to ask some “survey” type questions, and you’ll be asked to indicate how strongly you agree with a series of statements. I will read a series of statements, and for each of the statements you will use your i-clicker to let us know how much you agree with the statement. Pressing the “A” button means you strongly agree, the “B” button means you agree, the “C” button means you neither agree nor disagree, the “D” button means you disagree and the “E” button means you strongly disagree.

[evaluators are monitoring aggregate responses on a laptop; individual respondents are not identified]

6.1 Services and supports work well together.

6.2 Many services and supports are in natural community settings like home, school, job, community).

6.3 Youth, young adult and family voices are heard and we make most of the decisions.

6.4 Providers asked about and built plans around my strengths.

6.5 Providers learned about and respected my values and culture.

6.6 I am able to communicate well with providers.

6.7 I feel respected by providers in the System of Care.

6.8 My providers and I developed goals together.

6.9 I am satisfied with the services I am receiving.

7. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Thank participants for their time and efforts—we’ve gotten some great insight into the system of care in your community.

Opportunity to sign up to receive a copy of the focus group report.

Remind participants about how they can contact VCHIP or the UVM Research Protections Office with additional comments, questions, or concerns.