

Article about South Windham Region (Brattleboro AHS District) YIT Plan

The South Windham Region (Brattleboro District) has already begun to implement its Youth in Transition Plan. Youth Services, Inc. is the fiscal agent and has hired the main staff person, Michelle Boslun, who helped produce the following description of the work now being done.

While homelessness is a much more hidden phenomenon in rural communities, it is nevertheless a serious and very real social problem in Vermont. Many youth in our communities are couch surfing, living in places unfit for human habitation, or in unstable and/or unhealthy situations. Being in such situations makes it much more difficult for youth to achieve their education and career goals and often leads to greater mental and emotional instability.

Through a regional Youth in Transition grant, Youth Services - a youth and family services agency serving Windham County - has hired a Youth-In-Transition Housing Coordinator to help address the needs of youth who are homeless, runaway or unstably housed. The Coordinator will develop and oversee a much-needed site where youth aged 16-21 who are in need of housing will receive one-on-one support as they engage in a successful transition to self-sufficiency by teaching them the skills necessary to live on their own. This project will involve an arrangement between a property owner and Youth Services that will allow housing of youth aged 16-21 who are in need. The program will provide housing for a period of 6 – 12 months, during which participants will reside in a single room occupancy building. The program is intended to duplicate, as much as possible, the kind of shared-housing that is common to young renters and college students. A building manager will live on-site to provide moderate supervision.

The program's goal is to support these young adults including those who struggle with severe emotional disturbance or have court findings. The end goal is to assist youth to have adequate preparation and the necessary supports to be productively engaged in the community. Youth will be assisted in identifying and achieving goals in five core areas: education, employment, long-term housing, healthcare, and healthy recreational choices.

A strong network of collaborating agencies has developed this program and is committed to work together to help transition-aged youth find and maintain safe, secure housing where they can develop the skills and resources to lead healthy, productive lives. For more information, please contact the Youth-In-Transition Housing Coordinator at Youth Services at 802.257.0361 or michelle.boslun@youthservicesinc.org.