

## TARGET POPULATION

Youth age 14-25 years old who need support to achieve their developmentally appropriate level of independence.

## GOAL

WV youth will have access to the needed support guided by defined best practice standards to achieve their personal level of independence regardless of system involvement or funding source

## OUTCOME 1

### **WV Will Have a Comprehensive Integrated Youth-Guided Transition System for Youth Ages 14-25**

**Best Practice Recommendation # 1:** All current as well as future transition to adulthood programs and services in WV will be guided by current research, promising practices, and WV practice wisdom.

#### **Strategies:**

- 1a. It is recommended that the WV Commission to Study the Residential Placement of Children (Commission) charge WV decision makers with convening a cross system (public/private /Youth/Family) Youth Transitioning to Adulthood Summit (Summit) to develop a strategic plan to carry out those recommendations contained in this report requiring cross system public/private/family partnership. This Summit will build upon and utilize existing work groups (Service Delivery & Development, WV System of Care State Implementation Team, Permanency, Well Being, etc) to develop a comprehensive cross system strategic plan. The Summit will:
  - *form strategic partnerships including but not limited to families, youth, courts, community, private sector, education, social services, juvenile services, business, housing, and work force to provide the opportunities, services, and supports young people need to successfully transition to adulthood.*
  - work with national resources such as the National Resource Center (NRC), “New Ways to Work”, Casey Foundations, National Independent Living Association and Youth Transitions Partnership, etc.
  - coordinate with the Bureau of Children and Families (BCF) five year plan implementation & updates
    - Coordinate with WV Independent Living Plan implementation & updates
  - work with youth transitioning to adulthood demonstration projects and oversight team as a resource.
  - work with West Virginia System of Care State Implementation Team (WVSOCISIT) to integrate cross system best practice guidelines.

- 1b. It is recommended that the Commission charge an existing work group with forming a task team to review policy and funding for youth transitioning to adulthood to assure all services and supports are based on a youth's needs and strengths.
- 1c. It is recommended that WV develop the policies, training plans and support necessary to provide for a trauma informed system of care based on a true understanding of the Neuroscience of trauma. Most specifically these policies, programming and support need to take into account the effect trauma has on brain development and delays leading to care being provided based on a youths developmental age and individual needs versus their chronological age. (NCTSN)
  - Link to the WV System Of Care Implementation Team (WVSOC SIT) trauma task team

**Best Practice Recommendation # 2:** In order for WV youth to receive the necessary support, guidance and services needed to achieve their personal level of independence current negative perceptions of remaining in care will be addressed to remove any “stigma” about receiving support and linkage.

#### **Strategies:**

- 2a. It is recommended that the Commission charge decision makers with expanding upon current efforts to make services, support and linkages available to youth beyond age 18.
  - Decision makers assign a group or individual to work with youth councils and solicit youth voice to guide decision makers in changing the language and approach to the act of “signing the FC-18” so it is viewed more positively by youth and the “stigma” is removed.
  - Decision makers put into place the policy, training, ongoing support and monitoring to encourage and assure easy return to care for those youth needing assistance after they leave care.
    - It is recommended that existing work groups or task teams be utilized as a resource.
  - The WV Youth Transitioning to Adulthood Summit will address and develop strategies for necessary changes in policy, legislative involvement, training , cross system memorandums of understanding, address funding issues and any other issues that need to be addressed to expand support, services and linkages to all youth in need up to age 25.
- 2b. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with developing a plan to assure that all youth age 16 and above (meeting defined objective eligibility criteria and assessed need) will have a specially trained Transition Facilitator that remains with them

until they achieve their personal level of independence regardless of setting or funding source.

- The Transition Facilitator will act as a knowledge broker, guide.
- Current and future demonstration projects can be utilized for testing and guided implementation.
- The WV Youth Transitioning to Adulthood Summit can build upon lessons learned from demonstration projects for cross system implementation.
- 2c. Youth transitioning to adulthood age 16 and older will have a defined transition team that develops, monitors, and revises an independent living plan (standardized template) focused on achieving permanency while simultaneously preparing youth for transition to adulthood.
  - It is recommended that the Commission charge a current work group with assuring the following is addressed in policy, training, funding, and implementation:
    - Youth's independent living planning and process should include:
      - Full youth participation and guidance
      - Cultural relevance
      - Plans are reviewed and updated regularly
      - Educational or Vocational planning
      - Career Planning
      - Employment Planning
      - Health Care Planning & Medical Coverage
      - Transportation (including obtainment of drivers license)
      - Money Management (including setting up savings account)
      - Housing
      - Social and Recreational
      - Connections with family, community and trusted adults (Minnesota Department of Human Services)
    - It is recommended the Commission charge this same work group with assuring that the youth's independent living plan will be developed, guided and updated based on standardized assessment of independent living skills, strengths and needs. (Minnesota Department of Human Services)
      - Assessment should include an assessment of :
        - Hard Skills – skills that can be taught
        - Soft Skills – social experiences
        - Essential Documents- certified copy of Birth Certificate, Social Security card, state issued id, health and dental records, etc
        - Standardized Checklist – checklist that follows youth of competencies, documents, linkages that must occur by age 16 and 17.

- Life Skills – Casey Life Skills Matching Report and Individual Learning Plan
- It is recommended the Commission charge a current work group with developing standardized assessment protocols to guide decision making as to youth housing and support levels of need to guide decision making.
- **2d. It is recommended that the Commission charge an existing work group to partner with current and future efforts to develop a plan that will provide for a centralized youth friendly on line resource that provides youth, families and stakeholders with easy access and linkage to cross system information on policy, funding, support and services for youth transitioning to adulthood.**
  - Needs to provide access and information to youth, foster parents, caseworkers, probation officers, communities, families, etc.
  - Needs to include a resource database that is organized by categories that will allow youth to get the information they need easily and quickly.
  - Needs to include information on Financial Aid Counseling, Support and Assistance (educate youth and link them to information on WV Foster Care Youth Tuition Waiver, WV Educational Training Vouchers (ETV's) and Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
  - An E-Newsletter to keep youth up to date and aware of available supports and services
    - Youth should be able to update their email addresses via the on line resource
  - An online FAQ and avenue for youth to submit questions that are answered timely.
  - Information should be easily accessed by both youth and families.
  - A brochure that links youth and families to a 1-800 number that will provide access to a “knowledge broker” who can assist them in navigating the system needs to also be developed, funded and widely distributed.
  - Both the online resource and brochure needs to be closely integrated and linked with peer and mentor networks.
  - **Development needs to be integrated with the adult system for smooth transition from the youth to adult system.**
- 2e. It is recommended the Commission charge the Summit with developing a strategic plan that will lead to WV youth having uninterrupted continued qualification for health coverage up to age 25.
  - Explore amending the WV State Medicaid plan.
  - Explore legislative, funding and policy changes.
- 2f. It is recommended the Commission charge a current work group with planning to make sure youth have a comprehensive understanding of their physical and mental health needs,

community services and available assistance prior to leaving out of home care. This work group should address:

- making policy revisions that will require a youth's Transition Facilitator to arrange a comprehensive health, vision, dental, mental health and substance abuse screening before youth leave care.
  - policy revisions that will require youth to be educated on how to monitor and take responsibility for their health, access providers in their community, make and keep appointments and how to apply for medical coverage.
    - Name, phone number and address of dentist, medical doctor and therapist.
    - Information and tools to track medical history (NGA Center For Best Practices, 2007)
  - policy revisions that will require youth have critical health care information in their possession prior to leaving care (immunization records, copy of medical card, etc)
- 2g. It is recommended the Commission charge a current work group with working with all available state and national resources to thoroughly examine model State Independent Living Plans and revise the current WV Independent Living Plan policies that affect youth transitioning to adulthood accordingly. This work group will be responsible for:
  - Conducting a cost of living analysis to determine and recommend an appropriate Chafee youth stipend, and implement differentiated stipends as applicable.
  - Thoroughly examining the utilization of the provider community and develop recommendations for increased utilization and integrated cross system partnership.
  - Examining current provider reimbursement strategies and develop a recommended per diem reimbursement strategy guided by national successful reimbursement methods that streamline reimbursement, maximizes creativity, support housing continuums and promote individuality.

Best Practice Recommendation # 3: WV youth transitioning to adulthood will have access to a safe, affordable housing continuum.

### **Strategies:**

- 3a. It is recommended the Commission charge appropriate work groups with developing detailed recommendations and implementation strategies that will provide for a comprehensive housing continuum that will provide youth with varied developmentally appropriate levels of supporting living arrangements.
  - Pre-Independent Living-Group Living Homes (ages 14-16)
  - Transition Homes (youth ages 16-21)

- The work groups will use the recommended best practice guidelines, service array data , APR data, youth out of state data, regional clinical review data as well as current demonstration projects lessons learned to develop, fund and implement in target geographic areas cross system transition homes that specialize and focus on preparing youth coming out of congregate care settings who needs this extra level of support (out of state, level II & III, DJS, inpatient, etc) to successfully transition to supported and transitional living situations.
- The work groups will put forth recommendations and implementation strategies that address design, funding, and regulate these Transition Homes so that they are guided by best practice and focus on real life living, skills building, asset development, and experiential activities.
- **Temporary Shelter**
  - ***The work groups explore utilizing Transition Homes, Foster Homes, linking to existing service providers, or developing short term stabilization for youth needing temporary support (loss of apartment, financial emergency, etc) or in between living settings (Summers, Holidays, emergencies, etc).***
- Supervised Apartments (on site staff)
  - The work groups familiarize with and model after demonstration projects (Stepping Stones-It's My Move, Burlington United Methodist Family Services-Pathways)
- **Scattered Site Apartments**
  - ***Chafee***
  - ***Demonstration Projects***
  - ***SAMHSA grant if awarded***
- 3b. It is recommended the Commission charge a work group with making recommendations and implementation strategies that will fund Chafee providers as well as new programming funding sources with a per diem reimbursement that will allow them the funding flexibility and stability to enter into leases to provide stable, safe, affordable housing for youth first transitioning into their own apartment/home.
- **3c. *It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with exploring and making recommendations in their strategic plan for providing rental subsidies to landlords who will rent to youth transitioning to adulthood.***
- **3d. *It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with making recommendations and including strategies in their strategic plan that provide for strategic partnerships with programs providing HUD housing, section 8 vouchers in order to leverage funds and provide youth transitioning to adulthood with a safe and affordable housing continuum.***
  - ***Huntington Housing Authority, KIRSA, etc***

- These programs need to be involved participants in the Youth Transitioning to Adulthood Summit as well as related work groups developing, implementing and updating the resultant strategic plan.
- *3e. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with developing and implementing policy and strategies to make sure no youth is discharged from out of home care without safe and stable housing.*

## OUTCOME 2

### **WV youth will be educated and ready for lifelong learning upon achieving independence.**

**Best Practice Recommendation # 4:** WV youth will have access to high quality standards based education regardless of setting as well as the support services and access to bridge youth to higher education.

#### **Strategies:**

- 4a. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with planning to assure that youth will have access to specially trained educational advocates in their school setting.
- 4b. It is recommended that the Commission charge both existing work groups and the Summit with developing implementation strategies that will provide for educational advocacy coordinated by a specially trained Transition Facilitator to assist youth in educational gain and stability.
  - Transition Facilitators will advocate for and assist youth in seamless transition of educational settings.
  - Transition Facilitators will advocate for and assist youth in attaining aptitude and vocation interest assessments.
  - Transition Facilitators will link and monitor youth involvement in career exploration, vocational and job training offered at their school.
  - Transition Facilitators will partner with the educational system to link youth meeting the target population with extracurricular cultural and arts classes.
  - Transition Facilitators will link youth to tutoring both face to face and on-line
- *4c. It is recommended that the Commission will charge the Summit with developing strategies leading to the development of policy and practice that keeps youth in the same school even when they are moved from one placement to another whenever viable.*
- *4d. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with developing strategies to develop partnerships that will lead to the development of policy, training and oversight to make sure that transition planning is incorporated into all applicable youth Individual Educational Plans (IEP's).*

- 4e. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with developing strategies to assure all youth have seamless standardized life skills instruction regardless of living situation.
  - It is recommended that the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) and curriculum be implemented for all youth age 14 and up in the WV School System.
- ***4f. It is recommended the Commission charge the Summit with developing strategies that will lead to strategic partnership with Universities, and Community Colleges to provide for the following:***
  - *Transition Support Centers with specially trained Transition/Support Specialist available to target population*
  - *Core College Preparation Courses targeted and available for youth in target population*
  - *Standardized, integrated planned campus visits and orientation activities*
  - *Dorms kept open during Holiday's & Summer at an affordable rate.*

### OUTCOME 3

**WV youth will be experienced and ready to enter the workforce upon achieving independence.**

*Best Practice Recommendation # 5: WV youth will have information about career options and exposure to the world of work, including structured internships.*

#### **Strategies:**

- ***5a. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with developing and implementation plan that will lead to strategic partnerships with the Business Community being developed for ongoing partnership and support from the business community.***
  - *Business leaders will be invited to participate in the Youth Transitioning to Independence Summit*
  - *Strategies will be developed to provide organized job shadowing opportunities for youth transitioning to adulthood.*
  - *Strategies will be developed to provide employment opportunities for youth transitioning to adulthood.*
  - *Business leaders will be encouraged to participate as mentors for youth transitioning to adulthood.*
  - *Business leaders will be encouraged to participate and strategies developed to conduct strategic job fairs on a regular basis targeted for youth in transition to adulthood.*



- *Business leaders will participate in providing planned and organized practice interviews for youth in transition to adulthood.*
- *Strategies will be developed to develop a pool of business leaders willing to serve as guest speakers willing to speak to youth transitioning to adulthood.*
- **5b. It is recommended the Commission charge the Summit with developing strategies to formalize partnerships with Work Force WV and contracted Work Force Investment (WIA) providers that will actively engage youth in the defined target population by providing support, linkage and easy access to workforce investment services.**
  - Strategic membership and attendance of WIA and Bureau of Employment representatives at the Youth Transitioning to Adulthood Summit and workgroups developing, implementing and revising the resultant strategic plan.
  - Easy access and priority given for youth in the defined target population to in school and out of school WIA programs.
  - Specially designed summer employment targeted for youth transitioning to adulthood with youth in care given priority.
  - Planned linkage and easy access to employment offices.
  - Coordinated access to job training centers and job referral resources.
  - Designated liaisons formally linked to transition Facilitators implemented to coordinate employment services to youth transitioning to adulthood.
- **5c. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with developing a cross system plan for uniform active involvement in work force development activities coordinated by a Transition Facilitator that will include:**
  - Career Interest Assessment/Job/Career Matching
  - Job Readiness & Maintenance Skills
  - Career Exploration & Job Shadowing Opportunities
  - Supportive Employment

## OUTCOME 4

**WV youth will be confident will be confident and ready for life upon achieving independence.**

**Best Practice Recommendation # 6:** Youth Development Principles will drive all decision making and program implementation in WV for youth transitioning to adulthood.

### Strategies:

- 6a. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with developing strategies to organize and implementing initial cross system training, ongoing training and coaching on

youth development principles with the assistance of consultants such as the National Resource Center (NRC).

- These principles are:
  - Empower youth to set goals and to be self determined
  - Employ qualified and experienced staff
  - Utilize positive strategies that build upon the strengths of the youth , their support network and community
  - Provide ongoing support for desired behavior
  - Provide relational care
  - Make learning fun and relevant
  - Involve caring adult connections and mentors that will be connected with that youth beyond the time of agency involvement. (The Youth Transition Funders Group Foster Care Work Group With the Finance Project, 2003)
- 6b. It is recommended that the Commission charge the West Virginia System of Care with assuring all systems contract language, regulatory standards, training and policies are guided by youth development principles that treat youth as emerging adults as part of their cross system best practice recommendations.
- 6c. Services should be based on youth's needs, strengths and developmental level, not their diagnosis or deficits.
- 6d. It is recommended that the Commission charge the WV System of Care State Implementation Team to coordinate and oversee the development of an organized statewide Youth Advisory Council that is active and adequately funded that provides youth with the training, support and opportunities for meaningful youth voice.
  - This should be accomplished by partnering with consumer representative groups such as the WV Mental Health Consumers Association & FAST to provide leadership academies designed for youth transitioning to adulthood.
- 6e. It is recommended the Commission take the lead in assuring that all public/private initiatives, commissions and work groups will provide for and support meaningful youth participation.
- 6f. It is recommended that the Commission recommend an existing work group to explore existing funding, policy and regulatory standards and develop strategies that will provide that funding and regulatory standards for youth in transition homes will promote autonomy based on youth need in order to provide flexible developmentally appropriate programming that is adaptable to meet the youth individualized needs (reexamine current child to staff eyes on requirements, funding strategies, medical necessity, etc)
- 6g. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with addressing youth's transition needs proactively and planning accordingly. These strategies and planning efforts need to include the following:.

- *WV will put into a place a coordinated plan to prioritize youth in out of home care settings will receive targeted Drivers Education classes and additional support as necessary to make sure every youth in out of home care has been enrolled in Drivers Education no later than their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.*
  - *Provide opportunities for youth to practice driving the required number of practice hours.*
  - *Provide opportunities for youth to take driving test*
  - *Explore if policy change or legislation is needed.*
  - *Also explore any legislation that may be needed to allow foster parents or caseworkers to sign for youth driving permits.*
- *Transition Facilitators will arrange opportunities for youth to learn to use public transportation.*
- *Work with the WV Business and philanthropic community to provide youth with bicycles when applicable.*
- *WV Youth Transitioning from out of home care be given access to free or reduced-cost older cars from the state fleet. (If this requires legislation work with legislators to get legislation for this purpose.)*
- *Work with the legislature and business community to provide youth with affordable car insurance.*
- *6h. It is recommended that the Commission charge an existing work group with developing developmental and discharge checklist that all youth in out of home care regardless of living situation will oversee youth in out of home care.*
- *6i. It is recommended the Commission request all cross system WV decision makers to immediately develop and implement necessary policy revision, training and resources to make sure that every youth in out of home care has access to and/or possession of a certified copy of their birth certificate, social security card, a state approved picture id. and health/dental/immunization records by age 17 at the latest.*

**Best Practice Recommendation # 7:** Youth will have access to education, training and support that will provide opportunities for lifelong economic well being.

#### **Strategies:**

- 7a. It is recommended that the Commission charge the Summit with designating a specific specialized work group to review and provide recommendations for West Virginia's implementation of "Connected by 25: Financing Entrepreneurship Programs For Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care.". The work group membership should be strategic and necessary consultants involved to successfully implementing this well researched initiative.

- The following strategies of “Connected by 25” need to be included in strategic planning:
  - Accessing Community and Economic Development Resources
  - Integrating Entrepreneurship into Existing Education Programs
  - Accessing Workforce Development Resources
  - Accessing Child Welfare Funding
  - Accessing Other Private Funding Sources-Private Philanthropy and Angel Investors
  - Engaging in Community Fundraising
  - Reinvesting Business Income
- “Connected by 25” consultants should be utilized
- Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative’s “Opportunity Passport” model should be explored and considered for a demonstration project.
  - Personal debit card for short term expenses
  - Individual Development Accounts
  - Door Openers (special local programs that give youth opportunities) (NGA Center For Best Practices, 2007)
- Demonstration projects should be considered.
- 7b. It is recommended that the Commission also charge this specialized work group of the Summit with coordinated and standardized training, policy, support opportunities and support will be in place to assist youth in achieving financial literacy.
  - WV needs to thoroughly review other States use of matched Individual Development Accounts (IDA’s) and consider implementing a WV IDA program to promote youth savings, financial literacy and investment in their future independence.
  - WV will explore partnering with financial institutions in WV that will consider investing in the future of WV’s youth by providing free checking and safety deposit boxes for unaccompanied youth transitioning to adulthood.
  - WV will partner with the FDIC and local banking institutions to provide the Smart Money Curriculum available to all youth meeting the target population.

## OUTCOME 5

**WV youth will be connected to adults, peers, and services upon achieving independence.**

**Best Practice Recommendation # 8:** WV Youth will have strong lifelong connections to caring stable adults.

**Strategies:**

- 8a. It is recommended that the Commission charge an existing work group with examining protocols and guidelines for reconnecting youth with extended family members and parents even when parental rights have been terminated when it is safe and appropriate to do so.
  - Connect youth to family members such as grandparent, aunts, uncles and cousins anytime it is safe and appropriate to do so.
  - Establish legal guardianship or another type of permanent relationship with a caring adult
  - Assist youth with connecting to other caring adults such as teachers, church members, or mentors
  - Always explore reconnecting with biological parents when it is safe and viable to do so.
  - Explore adoption regardless of age
  - Make sure no youth leaves out of home care without at least one lifelong connections to a caring committed adult
  - Train caseworker and transition Facilitators to help youth reconnect with family and caring adults.
  - Reconnect and provide for ongoing and regular visitation with siblings. (National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices, 2007)
- 8b. It is recommended that the Commission charge an appropriate agency, work group or individual with developing implementation strategies and partnerships to assure all applicable youth are be connected to Mentors
  - On Line E-Mentors (Orphan Foundation)
  - Well screened mentors
  - Business community

**Best Practice Recommendation #9:** WV youth will have opportunities for safe socialization, engagement and connection opportunities as well as opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills.

**Strategies:**

- 9a. Youth representatives will be included in all policy, planning and oversight groups
- 9b. Youth will be involved in design and implementation of training programs
- 9c. Formal youth surveys
- 9d. Annual Conference for youth with regional opportunities more frequently
- 9e. Fund and provide support for an organized Statewide Youth Council (NGA Center For Best Practices, 2007)