FACT SHEET

Thrive@25 Phase I Evaluation Findings

Thrive@25 is Maryland's initiative to end and prevent homelessness among youth and young adults with current or prior child welfare involvement. Thrive@25 is led by The Institute for Innovation & Implementation at the University of Maryland School of Social Work in partnership with Maryland Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration (DHR/SSA), the Talbot County Department of Social Services on behalf of the five local departments of social services on Maryland's rural Mid-Shore and the National Center on Housing and Child Welfare. Thrive@25 is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children & Families, Children's Bureau, and seeks to build the capacity of Maryland's child welfare system to prevent homelessness among the most at-risk youth and young adults with child welfare involvement. Phase I of Thrive@25 (9/30/13-9/29/15) focused on designing an intervention model to prevent homelessness among specific populations of youth and young adults with current or prior child welfare involvement. Phase II of Thrive@25 (9/30/15-9/29/18) will focus on installing, implementing, refining, and evaluating the intervention model which is grounded in implementation science and a commitment to trauma-informed care to improve four core outcomes: stable housing, permanent connections, education/employment, and social-emotional well-being.

Phase I Evaluation: Process

The Phase I Evaluation had multiple components and the evaluation spanned the duration of the Phase I grant. The evaluation included the following components:

- Multi-faceted readiness assessment, including a review of more than 15 community needs assessments from 2011-2014;

- Administrative data analysis using
  - CHESSIE (Maryland's State Automated Child Welfare Information System)
  - Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessments
  - National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD); and,

- Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups:
  - Youth currently in foster care on the Mid-Shore
    - 37 surveys
    - 10 interviews
  - Youth formerly in foster care in Maryland
    - 254 surveys
    - 18 interviews
  - Foster Parents, Resource Parents, Child Welfare Workers & Group Home and Community Providers
    - 57 surveys
    - 10 interviews
    - 2 focus groups

Demographics	Youth Out-of-Care (Statewide Pool) N = 254	Youth In-Care (Mid-Shore Only, N = 37)
Age	22.2 (20-28) Range 20-28	17 (SD = 2) Range 14-20
Sex		
Male	99% (n = 252)	58% (n = 15)
Female	1% (n = 2)	42% (n = 11)
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	61% (n = 154)	58% (n = 15)
Gay/Lesbian	39% (n = 100)	8% (n = 2)
Bisexual	0%	15% (n = 4)
Other	0%	19% (n = 5)
Ethnicity		
African American	47% (n = 118)	35% (n = 10)
Caucasian	51% (n = 127)	45% (n = 13)
Hispanic	1%(n = 2)	7% (n = 2)
More than one race	1% (n = 2)	3% (n = 1)
Do you have children?	99% (n = 247) Yes	Did not ask

Table 1: Demographics of Current & Former Foster Youth Survey Participants

State-level Findings

The administrative data analysis identified that 129 of youth who entered foster care between the ages of 14-17 (5% statewide) had a housing issue at the time of entrance into foster care; 362 of youth ages 18-21 in foster care in Maryland (6%) had a housing issue at the time of entrance into foster care.

Statewide Administrative Data	Youth Entering Care Ages 14-17	Youth In Care Ages 18-21
Average Age at Removal	15.5	12.4
Selected Factors at Time of Removal		
Physical Abuse	381 (15%)	935 (15%)
Sexual Abuse	146 (3%)	405 (6%)
Substance Abuse-Child	161 (6%)	335 (5%)
Substance Abuse-Parent	1043 (40%)	1660 (27%)
Parent Incarceration	276 (11%)	482 (8%)
Housing	129 (5%)	362 (6%)
Average number of placement moves	6	5
Average length of stay prior to aging out of care	n/a	6.2 years

Table 2: Key Characteristics of Youth from Administrative Data

Both youth in foster care and young adults who have left foster care described feeling unprepared for or not considering pursuing secondary education and many reported lacking access to quality jobs. Youth and young adults (in care and those who have left foster care) reported being taken advantage of by others, having difficulty sustaining connections with families of origin, feeling isolated, substantial substance use and abuse, and frequent exposure to bullying.   The majority of former foster youth (92%) were looking for employment at the time of the survey, and 39% had a severe problem-level usage of illicit drugs.

Both young adults and youth in-care were asked about their shelter use or if they had stayed with a friend due to lack of housing. Former foster youth (up to age 30 now) had secure housing for the first 3 months after leaving care but most became unable to manage rent and experienced housing instability. **All of the former foster youth had experienced or were currently experiencing housing instability.**

Experiences with Homelessness	Youth Out-of-Care N = 254		Youth In-Care N = 37	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Since leaving care, have you ever stayed with a friend or relative because you had nowhere else to stay?	100% (N = 254)	0%	Did not ask	Did not ask
Have you ever stayed with a friend or relative because you had nowhere else to stay?	100% (N = 254)	0%	42% (n = 13)	58% (n = 18)
Since leaving care, have you stayed in shelters?	99.2% (n = 252)	.7% (n = 2)	Did not ask	Did not ask
Have you stayed in shelters?	Did not ask	Did not ask	24% (n = 9)	76% (n = 28)

Table 3: Experiences with Homelessness: Youth In & Out of Care Survey

<u>Mid-Shore-level Findings</u>

The following are key findings from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups of foster youth, resource parents, foster care workers, and other providers on the Mid-Shore:

Youth 14-17 Currently in Foster Care

More than 1/5th of the youth surveyed (22%) had, at some point in their lives, experienced a lack fo stable housing. Most of the youth were identified as having normal self-esteem but most were consuming illicit drugs (some substantially) and drinking alcohol at a hazardous/binge level (on average). Many of the foster youth state that they often felt depressed and worried, and most reported wanting more contact with adults, including existing friends and family, and perceived it was difficult for others to visit them.

Young Adults 18-21 Currently in Foster Care

Many of the young adults (38%) had, at some point in their lives, experienced a lack of stable housing. These young adults were found to have normal self-esteem and low levels of problem consumption of alcohol, although 62% were consuming illicit drugs. The young adults reported that they had friends and permanent connections but were worried about losing touch with supportive adults after aging out of care. The majority of the young adults stated that they were unaware of the Maryland Tuition Waiver, but were more concerned about housing and employment than education.

Resource Parents, Foster Care Workers and Other Providers

These individuals identified a lack of transportation as an issue that impacts the ability of youth to travel and connect with family and friends. They noted that the youth have trauma exposure but there is a lack of mental health providers trained in trauma treatment. They articulated a need for the youth to be supported emotionally and practically to be able to navigate daily life, and they felt that job opportunities on the Mid-Shore are scarce. They observed that many youth do not consider post-high school education to be an option for themselves, and the resource parents were unaware of specific resources to prepare youth to afford safe and stable housing after they leave care.