Healing and Higher Education: Leveraging Resources to Expand Mental Health Services for Foster Youth in College

Blueprint to Success Conference
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PANELISTS

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A statewide non-profit organization working to improve the quality of life transition-age foster youth in the areas of education, housing and health.

Policy advocacy, technical assistance and training.

Leads the LA OYC Foster Youth College Advancement Project to increase postsecondary educational attainment for current former foster youth in L.A. County.
91% want to go to college.
43% enroll in college
8% complete a degree
THE ROLE OF TRAUMA

- 90% of children in foster care have experienced a traumatic event, with nearly half reporting exposure to four or more types of traumatic events.

- Foster youth transitioning to adulthood have a greater likelihood of experiencing physical and mental health problems than their non-foster peers.
IMPACT OF TRAUMA AT HOME & IN THE CLASSROOM

- Impaired sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Lower school performance or impaired learning
- Changes in behavior - anger outbursts, irritability, absenteeism, etc.
- Difficulty with authority, redirection or criticism
- Emotional numbing
- Over or under reaction to environment stimuli (sirens, physical contact, doors slamming, bells, etc.)
64% of former college students reported they are no longer attending college because of a mental health related reason.

More than 45% of those who stopped attending college did not receive accommodations.

50% did not access mental health services and supports.
COUNSELING SERVICES AT CA COLLEGES

Typically:
- Short-term + Referrals
- Impacted
- Wait-lists
- Lack of coordination with community-based mental health services
- Foster Youth students often prefer on-campus services
ACTION THROUGH COLLABORATION
INCREASING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR FOSTER YOUTH

**Leveraging resources**
Connecting 10 community college campuses to existing community-based mental health agencies

**On-campus coordination**
Campus-based foster youth support programs & student health services

**Lessons learned**
Developing a learning community and providing technical assistance
NEXT STEPS

10 LA County community colleges

Sharing best-practices statewide
CASE STUDY:
RIO HONDO COLLEGE & CRITTENTON
DIVING DEEPER
THE NEED AT RIO HONDO COLLEGE

High demand from students and limited services

Time limited Mental Health Services Grant

The problem
THE SOLUTION AT RIO HONDO

Community Liaisons: Role in Increasing Services for Students

Partner with Crittenton
HELPING TO HEAL WOUNDS: CRITTENTON’S VISION & PASSION FOR STUDENTS
THE SOLUTION FOR CRITTENTON

NEIGHBOR PRINCIPLE: CONNECTION TO LOCAL CAMPUS
THE OVERALL PROCESS

Community College & DMH Providers Networking Meetings
Began partnership with Crittenton
Developed a MOU, and internal processes and protocols
Began sending referrals
MEETING THE DEMANDS OF STUDENTS: GUARDIAN SCHOLARS PROGRAM

• Part of meeting objectives of Mental Health Services Grant

• Began collaborating closely with Guardian Scholars Program

• Recognized high need for mental health services

• Developed process for referrals from Guardian Scholars office to Crittenton and trained Guardian Scholars staff
RECIPE FOR SUCCESS:
POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND COMMUNICATION

• Developed MOU
• Release of Information
• Referral Form
• Developed internal office structure to process referrals
• Rio Hondo trained staff
• Crittenton tracked referrals and shared relevant updates
• Strong communication between Rio Hondo and Crittenton
CHALLENGES

Country Road vs. 405/5/605, etc.:

BARRIERS AND WORKING THROUGH PIT HOLES IN THE ROAD
BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

- Medi-Cal accepted
- Meeting on-campus
- Convenient times
- Long-term services
- Access to other services, including psychiatric services if needed
- Warm hand-off
- Opportunities to build rapport with therapist
Realizing the Vision:
Success Story
NEXT STEPS FOR COLLABORATION

- Incorporate therapists into groups/events for Guardian Scholars
- Resilience Group
- Retreats
- Campus events (Foster Care + Mental Health Awareness Month in May)
- Foster Friendly Ally Training
QUESTION & ANSWERS

THANK YOU!