



Supporting Families – Changing Lives
Since 1976

Preparing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care

Michelle Basham, E.S.Q., M.P.A.

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Background/Experience:

- 1993: Founded Avenues for Homeless Youth
- 1993-2001: Served as agency Executive Director.
 - Co-Chair/Co-Founder-MN Runaway & Homeless Youth Coalition.
- 2001-2008: MN Department of Human Services (attorney, administrator stakeholder relations and manager strategic planning & special projects including reducing disparities work.)
- 2008-Present: Executive Director, Genesis II for Families



Education:

- Bachelors in communications, organizational development & psychology.
- Juris Doctorate with emphasis in child advocacy, civil rights & administrative law.
- Masters in Public Administration.
- Fellow (1998-1999), Humphrey Institute Public Policy Forum.



Overview of Session:

- This presentation will focus on Minnesota.
- Learning Goals for Presentation:
 - The state of foster care services in Minnesota;
 - Risk factors for youth transitioning out of foster care;
 - Racial disparities in Minnesota affecting high-risk youth;
 - Service gaps, issues and needs;
 - Best practices for youth transitioning out of foster care;
 - Independent living skills curriculum example; and
 - What you can do to help youth transitioning out of foster care.



Genesis II for Families

- Genesis II for Families (Genesis II) was founded in 1976 as the first community based corrections program for women.
- Over the years, the organization has grown and expanded programming to meet the needs of its clients.



Genesis II Continued:

- Genesis II Programs:
 - Family Focus Day & Evening: *Intensive program for women and their children- family centered, strengthening model.*
 - In-Home Parent Education: *Similar to Family Focus but less intensive in-home.*
 - Children's Services: *Buzzy Beehive & GII Child Development Center.*
 - Clinical Services: *Therapy, Evaluation, Parent Child Interaction Therapy and Parent Assessments.*
 - Supervised Parenting: *On-site, seven days per week.*
 - Youth Services: *Teen Parenting Program, Bright Beginnings and Independent Living Skills Program.*



Genesis II Continued:

- ❑ In 2007, 1800 individuals served.
- ❑ 53% African-American, 28% Caucasian, 7% American-Indian and 12% Bi-Racial.
- ❑ 83% of adult & teen parents demonstrated increased parenting skills.
- ❑ 64% of children remained with parents at program completion and for two years following (where three months or more of programming completed.)
- ❑ 75% were employed.
- ❑ 73% achieved safe, stable, drug and violence free homes.
- ❑ 55% of children in out-of-home care at program start, were able to be reunified with parents who completed at least eight months of programming and treatment.



Foster Care In Minnesota

- The *2006 Children in Out of Home Care Report* released by the MN Department of Human Services reveals that in 2006: 14,770 children had 15,901 episodes of out of home care and experienced 24, 456 placement settings. This is a slight increase from last year (0.3%.)
- The majority of these children were Caucasian youth and there was a disproportionate representation of African-American & American-Indian children compared to their representation in the overall population.



Foster Care in Minnesota Continued:

- Slightly more boys than girls experienced out of home care. (54% compared to 46%.)
- The majority of children in out of home care were teenagers. (32% of children in care were aged 0-7, 15% were aged 8-12 and 53% were 13 or older.)
- The majority of placements were in a family setting and the majority of Minnesota children had a stable placement (62.4% no moves, 22.4% one move and 15.2% two or more moves.)



Foster Care in Minnesota Continued:

- The number one cited reason for placement changes was provider requests (15.4%.)
- The two reasons cited most often for placement in out of home care were child behavior (22.2%) and neglect (20.1%.)
- Last year, of the youth discharged from care, 6.8% (or 1,004) were discharged because they had reached the age of majority.
- Over the last few years, the number of youth discharges due to reaching the age of majority has been increasing.



Risk Factors for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care:

- ❑ Involvement with Criminal Justice System
- ❑ Teen Pregnancy
- ❑ Decreased Reading & Math Skills
- ❑ Lower Rates of High School Completion
- ❑ Higher Rates of Mental & Physical Health Problems
- ❑ Youth Homelessness
- ❑ Trafficking
- ❑ Alcohol & Drug Abuse



Risk Factors Continued- Criminal Justice System:

- In 2003 & 2004, Black juveniles comprised 59% or more of the admissions to the Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC.) *Council on Crime & Justice, An Analysis of Racial Disproportionality in Juvenile Confinement, August 2006.*
- Black juveniles comprised 2/3 of all bench warrants and 59% of all arrest and detention warrants. For other types of prior detention cases, Black juveniles represented 3/4 of admissions for termination of court ordered treatment, 60% of juveniles detained while awaiting placement and 81% of cases involving violation of home monitoring. *Id.*

Risk Factors Continued-

Teen Pregnancy:

- ❑ Overall, teen pregnancy rate in MN is lowest in nation; *MN Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting (MOAPPP.)*
- ❑ In 2003, 1528 children were born to teenage mothers in Minnesota. (The majority of these, 378, were in Hennepin County.) *Id.*
- ❑ Research indicates that there is a strong correlation between the rates of teens who drop out of school and teens who become pregnant. *Id.*
- ❑ In 2001, Minnesota families started by a teenage parent accounted for 53% of all welfare expenditures (\$13.3 million per month.) Minnesota Department of Human Services, Program Assessment and Integrity Division. Minnesota Family Investment Program Longitudinal Study: Special Report on Teen Mothers. 2003.
- ❑ Homeless girls, 17 times more likely than youth in general population to become pregnant. (*Wilder Research Center Minnesota, 2007*).



Risk Factors Continued- Poor Academic Performance:

- ❑ 63% of foster care youth not enrolled in educational program at point of “aging out.” (*Courtney et al 2005*).
- ❑ Only 11% enrolled in a post-secondary educational institutional. (*Id.*)
- ❑ Youth in foster care more likely to be suspended or expelled. (*Courtney, Terao & Bost, 2004*).
- ❑ Compared to youth in general population, twice as likely to have repeated grade, changed schools or enrolled in special education. (*GAO, 2004*).



Risk Factors Continued-

Decreased Physical/Mental Health:

- ❑ Five times more likely than youth in general population to have been treated for drug or alcohol problems. (*Wilder Research Center Minnesota, 2007*).
- ❑ Four times more likely to use tobacco. (*Id.*)
- ❑ Among boys, twice as likely to have attempted suicide. (*Id.*)
- ❑ Half of homeless youth report “significant” mental health needs. (*Id.*)
- ❑ One in five have had a head injury. (*Id.*)

Risk Factors Continued-

Youth Homelessness:

- Approximately 1,900 homeless, unaccompanied homeless youth in Minnesota every night aged 10-21. (*Wilder Research Center Minnesota, 2007*).
- Average age youth first became homeless- 16. (*Id.*)
- 30% of homeless youth report staying in abusive relationships due to lack of housing options. (*Id.*)
- More homeless youth than in the past report being turned away from shelter due to lack of space. (*Id.*)
- In 2005, 3414 youth were served in emergency shelters or other housing programs. This comprises 15% of the estimated need for homeless youth. (*DHS Runaway and Homeless Youth Report to the Legislature, Beth Holger, 2007*).
- There are 147 beds (81 Metro and 66 in Greater Minnesota) designated age appropriate and safe to serve the estimated 1,900 youth who will be homeless every night in Minnesota. (*Id.*)



Risk Factors Continued- Youth Homelessness:

□ A Story of One Homeless Teenager:

- *“Omar” spent five years in a relocation camp in Somalia before his dream of coming to America was fulfilled. He stayed at Avenues for Homeless and with their help and the help of another youth program, was able to get a job and get his own apartment. Due to a language barrier however, he lost his apartment and called Avenues the same day for a temporary place to stay. The program was full that day and so Omar had no choice but to spend the night on the streets. He was murdered that night, waiting for a bed. (1995.)*



Risk Factors Continued-Trafficking:

- “200 to 250 adds are run everyday on Craig’s list advertising women and children in prostitution.” (*Vednita Carter, Executive Director, Breaking Free*).
- 14% of homeless youth report having engaged in “survival sex.” (*Wilder Research of Minnesota, 2007*).
- The prosecution of the Evans family case in 1999 highlighted the role of the Twin Cities and Minnesota in internationally trafficking of juveniles in the sex trade. (*Hostedde Committee Report on Juvenile Prostitution in Minnesota, 1999*).
- Average time for a homeless teenager once they hit they hit the streets to be approached by a pimp for recruitment into prostitution – 48 hours.



Service Gaps, Issues and Needs:

- Services Gaps:
 - Transitional Services for Youth Aging Out.
 - Availability of Programs for Homeless Youth.
- Issues:
 - Jurisdiction;
 - Funding; and
 - Legal Status.
- Needs:
 - Enforcement of Existing State/Federal Laws;
 - Funding.



Best Practices for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care:

- Minnesota Statutes (260C.212, *subd. 1*) requires an “*independent living plan*” for youth in out-of-home care who are 16+ and have been subject to a permanency disposition;
- Plan must address: education, transportation, money management, housing, social/recreational needs and connections to family & community; and
- In addition, SELF Funds (support for emancipation and living functionally part of Federal Chafee Foster Care Independent Act) for: independent living skills training, room/board, graduation costs, training workers and youth education.



Best Practices for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care Continued:

- Best Practices (*Best Practices Guide for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Claire Hill, DHS, October 2006*):
 - Assessment of hard and soft skills (Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment);
 - Development of an “independent living plan”;
 - Gathering of essential documents (social security card, birth certificate etc.); and
 - Teach life skills.



Best Practices for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care Continued:

- Best Practices (*Best Practices Guide for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Claire Hill, DHS, October 2006*):
 - Recommended Independent Living Skills Area: education, employment, healthcare, transportation, money management, planning for housing, social/recreational skills and family/community connections.



Independent Living Skills Curriculum at Genesis II:

- Youth Services Overview:
 - *Independent Living Skills Program* (Center-Based and Hennepin County Home School);
 - *Next Phase Independent Living Skills Program* (for teen parents); and
 - *Bright Beginnings* (for teen parents).



Independent Living Skills Curriculum at Genesis II Continued:

- Ansell-Casey Assessment;
- Four to Sixteen Weeks Skills Based Courses (education, budgeting, employment health/nutrition, communication and goal setting);
- Mentoring for Teen Parents; and
- Program Completion Celebrated with Graduation.



Genesis II Outcomes:

- ❑ In 2007, 1800 clients served;
- ❑ 83% of adult and teen parents demonstrated increased parenting skills;
- ❑ 75% of clients employed;
- ❑ 73% of clients achieved a safe, stable, drug and violence-free home; and
- ❑ 55% of parents who completed program and had children in out-of-home care, were able to have their children reunified with them.



What You Can Do:

- ❑ Promote Legislation and Funding To Help Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care;
- ❑ Support Programs Serving Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Runway and Homeless Youth;
- ❑ Promote Best Practices for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care Including Independent Living Skills Training; and
- ❑ Mentor a Young Person.



In Conclusion

- You Can Make A Positive Difference for Youth!



Questions?
