

North Carolina FFTA Meeting Minutes May 21, 2009

Present: Aura Anania(ESUCP), John Deans (Methodist Home for Children), Regina Arrowood (Catawba Co DSS), Shanna Davis (CCDSS), Cheryl Morgan (Cardinal Clinic), Michelle Corry (NYAP), Phyllis Stephenson (ESUCP), Leslie Kellenberger (CFSA), Maureen Murray (DUMC), Cindy Thomas (ESUCP), Jean Kenefick (ESUCP), George Montgomery (Alexander Health Care Network), Tammy Wall (Alamance Building Futures), Lance Oldham (Youth Focus, Inc), Jenny Simmons (Eliada), Paige Pait (Kidspace), Tom Culver (Kidspace), Kathy Dobbs (CFSA).

Guest Speaker

Jason Eberly, LINKS Coordinator, Alamance County (Jason.Eberly@alamance-nc.com) . “Transitioning to Adulthood”. Presented on techniques to engage youth and provide them with hands-on experience in skill development toward the ultimate goal of preparing them for a successful transition to independence. LINKS is a Federally funded program, based on county census of eligible youth, currently approximately \$500,000 allocated in North Carolina that typically offers reciprocity of services between counties when a youth does not live in their home county. Every county has a LINKS coordinator to assist transitioning youth.

LINKS in a voluntary participation program that targets 7 outcomes including income, housing, educational/vocation training, avoiding high risk behaviors, identifying a personal support network of natural supports of 5 responsible adults, postponing parenthood and access to health insurance. LINKS has a lot of latitude to fund activities and/or resources relating to these goals.

Eligibility requirements include youth under the age of 21 who were in foster care between their 13th and 20th birthday. Services include academic support, IL assessment, rent deposits up to \$1500 per year, career preparation such as “The Career Exploration Inventory”, budget and financial management including the costs of education, transportation and by John. J. Liptak, Ed.D., housing and supervised IL. Youth are expected to contribute some of their own resources which may include monetary resources and/or their time and effort.

Also reviewed several other programs for aging out foster youth including “Nc Reach” (www.ncreach.org) which is for youth who have been adopted after the age of 12 or in and covers the cost of college education at a state college. Applications are on line.

Educational Training Voucher program for youth in DSS custody on their 18th birthday and provides up to \$5000 of costs associated with post-high school education. (www.statevoucher.org)

V-Mentor program www.vorphan.org is a program that offers virtual coaches to provide mentoring to youth aging out of the system who need support with college success.

Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SAYSO) is a program designed to help youth to advocate for themselves. Eligibility is any child who has ever been in foster or group care of in a mental health services placement. Chapters exist throughout the state. The website is: www.saysoinc.org.

Onyourway.org is an on-line tool to help kids in achieving their independence goals.

Jason to send us his power point to distribute to the group.

Introductions & Ideas for Future Meetings

Went around the room and did introductions. Ideas for future meetings that will keep us all coming back include:

- Networking opportunities
- Speakers/educational opportunities
- collaboration opportunities
- Foster parent training ideas
- Staff training/informational opportunities
- Experiences and challenges experienced by others to further research & practice
- Treatment foster care program improvement efforts
- As a forum to receive and discuss information provided by FFTA
- To identify gaps in knowledge and services that need advocacy at the state level

Guest Speaker

Tammy Wall is a Youth Coordinator for the “Building Futures” program. County based funding allocations are determined by a formula that accounts for factors like unemployment rates. Qualified organizations may apply for this money and it is determined through an RFP process.

Programming includes workforce support and training for youth between the ages of 16 & 21 at the time of program entry, from a low income family and has at least one area identified as a barrier to success including an educational need based on standardized educational criteria, status as a high school drop-out, homelessness, foster youth, or a pregnant or parenting youth. Youth may be involved in programming up to 4 years.

Services are based on assessments including life skills assessment, educational assessment, background information, etc. Information gathered is used to establish service goals based on individual need and may include assistance with obtaining day care vouchers, transportation or mileage reimbursement to and from school, uniforms for work, assistance obtaining Pell grants, off-set funding to unfunded portions of educational costs, leadership activities, work-shops, tutoring, deposits for apartments and utilities, cut-off notices, eye glasses, etc.

Those wishing to access this program can find out the county location for distribution of these monies through the Employment Security Commission or the Job Link Career Center in your county.

Next Meeting Dates

Based the next meeting date on the availability of Karen McLeod from CFSA, the group was provided 4 dates in July to choose from including the 6th, 10th, 17th, 20th. The majority of the group was available on July 10th, which will be our next meeting date, location and time unchanged (The Cutting Board in Burlington, 11:30 – 2:30).

Presentation/Discussion

Lobbying by Foster Care Agencies: Rules and How To PowerPoint that was utilized at the Public Policy Institute and Advocacy Day May 18 & 19 in Washington D.C.

Phyllis Stephenson discussed the bill that will provide a medical assistance definition for therapeutic foster care as a separate Medicaid service category. The bill requires that providers are accredited by one of 3 National entities including CARF, COA and JCAHO. Efforts are underway to include other accrediting bodies as options within the bill.

The difference between lobbying and advocacy was discussed by Jean Kenefick. The distinction is that lobbying is always geared toward influencing legislation. Lobbying always includes advocacy, but advocacy does not necessarily include lobbying.

Advocacy tips provided including being knowledgeable about the bill and your community, the financial impact, establishing and building on connections and relationship and addressing only one issue at a time.

Advocacy letters written need to include the distinction between foster children in state custody and those that are not in state custody as well as the difference between family and treatment foster care. Of particular interest is information on good outcomes, on Treatment Foster Care as its own modality and as an alternative to residential care. It was noted that 10% of the 50,000 kids in foster care nationally are therapeutic or treatment.

Ideas from the group included asking foster parents to send letters, maximizing relationships by sending letters to representatives within your community; individual stories about kids we have served that demonstrate the effectiveness of Treatment Foster Care as well as the dismal statistics regarding the quality of life outcomes for youth in the foster care system.

The bill will be reintroduced after Memorial Day in early June, and FFTA will announce who will sponsor the bill on the house side. The bill is currently referred to as the Stabenow Bill ERN09670 on the Senate side and is sponsored by Senator Stabenow.

Approval of Minutes from March NC FFTA meeting

Deferred minute review and approval of the March 12th meeting. The group agreed to review and approve minutes from the March and May meetings at the July meeting.

Miscellaneous/Announcements

- Kathy Dobbs from CFSA distributed upcoming educational opportunities.
- Phyllis Stephenson distributed the FFTA conference brochures for the August conference in Atlanta, August 2nd – 5th.
- Phyllis Stephenson distributed the packet of information they utilized at the Public Policy Institute and Advocacy Day.
- Phyllis Stephenson reminded everyone of the National Respite Conference on September 24 – 25.
- Tom Culver from Kidspace announced that his agency is planning an event in August (8th) at Springforest Park in Raleigh that a representative might be invited to attend.

Meeting Adjourned @ 2:30.

Reminder: Next Meeting: July 10, 2009 11:30 – 2:30

Guest Speaker: Karen Macleod – Update on Foster Care in North Carolina (Legislative Updates / Progress of Core Indicators)

We will invite Melissa Cole from FFTA to engage with National Update

Minutes submitted by: Michelle Corry; FFTA North Carolina Chapter Secretary