



Journey to Independence

Description: Journey to Independence—A demonstration project in rural Minnesota for youth ages 16-24 with mental health needs to transition to independence.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a challenging time, in which young persons are called upon to make complex decisions about schooling, work, finances, and personal relationships. For the more than three million young adults (ages 18-26) diagnosed with serious mental health conditions, this phase of life poses even greater challenges. Youth with mental health needs often face unemployment, underemployment, and discrimination when they enter the workforce. Statistics show that youth with mental health needs, diagnosed or undiagnosed, are over-represented in foster care, the juvenile justice system, and among school disciplinary cases and high school dropouts. From the years 2002-2007, PACT for Families was one of five sites across the U.S. involved in a federally funded Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) project to test out models to support youth in transition. The model implemented was the TIP (Transition to Independence Planning) system, intended to help guide and support young adults with emotional/behavioral difficulties through an individualized, developmentally appropriate process. Outcomes of this program were tremendously successful, but the development of comparable supports has never been realized. See related videos about this project at: <http://www.pactforfamilies.org/Page/Pride4.aspx>

Proposed Solution: Support legislation for a demonstration project in the five counties of PACT for Families (Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville and Yellow Medicine) to show the impact of individualized coaching for youth with mental health needs in transition. This project would build upon the approaches developed under the SAMHSA funded project and integrate transition supports and services in a manner that is comprehensive, but streamlined. This project would be funded directly by the approved legislation and work to identify other funding sources and billable options for sustainable services after four years of the demonstration period. The project would work with a credible organization to determine the return on investment relative to the costs involved and the ultimate savings to service delivery systems and the State of Minnesota. Ultimately, it would provide a demonstration of services that are needed for youth with mental health needs as they transition from childhood to adulthood based on tested protocols that would be enhanced and fine-tuned in a manner that could be replicated in other locations. It would offer solid data not only on outcomes for individual youth but on payback to their communities and society.

Consequence of No Change: Ultimately, these youth either limp along with limited supports to an adulthood that restricts their potential, draws on limited resources from either children or adult system supports and in the most tragic situations lead to a life of unresolved needs and system dependency. The absence of a coordinated system of service delivery also presents significant challenges for youth and young adults with mental health needs as they age out of youth services. They may be either shunted down an inappropriate service tunnel that does not address their specific needs, or they may

“fall off a cliff” as they age out of youth services and have to navigate the complexities associated with the adult service system.

Fiscal Impact: Estimated costs would be \$600,000 per year for four years.