New Booklet Gives Providers Tips for Tackling Service Provision to Teens, Emerging Adults

Teen years are notoriously turbulent times. This transition to adulthood can be even harder for youth in the foster care system or adolescents with behavioral health issues. To aid providers in understanding the challenges facing transition age youth and young adults (TAYYA), the Georgia Interagency Directors Team (IDT) created a booklet with suggestions for providing appropriate services and supports to this population.

“As our understanding of human development has improved, it has become clear that our historical view of young adulthood—that at a certain age an internal switch is thrown that suddenly transforms an adolescent into an adult—is incorrect,” says Christy Doyle, Ph.D., director of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice’s Office of Behavioral Health Services and current IDT chair. “Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood is a growth process that happens over time. It is time for our systems to rethink the sharp division of “adult” and “child” services that have traditionally been offered to these emerging adults, and to craft options that serve the unique needs of this population.”

IDT was created by Georgia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to design and implement an integrated child and adolescent system of care. IDT is made up of representatives from more than 20 state agencies and non-governmental organizations that serve children with behavioral health needs. This new booklet will support those providing educational, social, and other services to the state’s TAYYA population.

TAYYA, 14 to 26 years of age, are particularly vulnerable to physical, behavioral, and social challenges that may affect housing, education, career training, employment, life skills, and relationships. Challenges in these foundational areas in turn affect successful transitioning from childhood to adulthood, which can have long-term consequences.

While major physical health problems in TAYYA are largely preventable and result from risky behaviors (accidental injuries and violence, sexually transmitted infections, and teen pregnancy), serious behavioral health issues often present during this life stage. Early treatment can impact prognosis, but is often delayed, due to a lack of access to care. Increased insurance options resulting from the Affordable Care Act may increase health care access for TAYYA, as untreated health issues, especially mental illness, can negatively impact the transition to adulthood.

IDT offers several tips to providers to help prevent TAYYA from experiencing negative consequences associated with a difficult developmental period.

* *Transition Planning* – Fragmented systems can inadvertently provide a barrier to accessing care and services. Transition planning can bridge the gap between child- and adult-serving systems in housing and behavioral health care, especially for at-risk populations exiting foster care or the juvenile justice system.
* *Continuity with Adults* - Permanent connections with an adult, especially for youth aging out of foster care, can provide TAYYA with assistance if they are having an emergency, need emotional support, or to provide guidance. Parents, teachers, and/or providers can engage in discussions with TAYYA surrounding life skills development, education and employment, and support for the promotion of healthy relationships and communication skills.

Please click here to see the brochure.

<http://ghpc.gsu.edu/download/tayya-important-information-for-georgia-health-care-education-and-other-service-providers/>