



Transition Planning Policy

I. Subject

Creation of a comprehensive policy directing state offices serving youth and young adults, ages 14 up to 26, who are entering, exiting or navigating state service systems, to implement an effective transition planning process that is:

- Transparent
- Strengths-based
- Inclusive of authentic participation of youth & young adults
- Meaningful
- Sustainable

II. Policy Statement

The Departments of Corrections, Education, Health and Human Services and Labor shall support effective transition planning for youth and young adults age 14 up to age 26 transitioning to adulthood. Effective transitions to a healthy adulthood will improve the quality of life for these young persons; increase access to educational and employment opportunities thereby diminishing the risk of chronic homelessness, incarcerations and/or hospitalizations throughout adulthood, and will be cost effective by lessening the need for more intensive level of services from the state adult services Departments.

III. Guiding Principles

This Transition Planning Policy directs the co-signatories of this document to ensure that:

- practice guidelines be developed in their respective offices so that meaningful transition planning occurs for all youth and young adults served beginning at age 14 up to age 26;
- the respective offices affected by this policy work together toward streamlining a meaningful transition planning process creating any written binding agreements that may be necessary to achieve the policy's intended purpose;

- a uniform transition planning document be created and utilized by all relevant offices affected by this policy;
- the transition planning process and document(s) will be consistent with the tenets listed below:
 - Any youth and young adult age 14 up to age 26 and receiving services from the Departments of Corrections, Education, Health and Human Services or Labor will participate in meaningful transition planning reflecting the young person's interests, wishes and goals for future.
 - Transition planning will be based on a strengths-focused approach identifying the individual's interests, capabilities and supports needed for successful transition to adulthood.
 - Youth and young adults must be central to their own transition planning and will direct the process throughout from initiation to completion.
 - Transition planning must be comprehensive and holistic reflecting the young person's wishes and goals in all of the major life domains.
 - All transition planning will emphasize the development and/or participation of important connections to include family, friends, co-workers, etc. as identified by the young person.
 - Transition planning will be culturally competent, linguistically appropriate, trauma informed and compliant with all regulations pertaining to accessibility.
 - Transition planning will be integrated throughout other relevant state and contracted provider agencies to support strong and effective transitions to healthy adulthood for Maine's youth.
 - The transition planning process will be transparent and the various relevant state offices will develop and disseminate informational products describing the transition policy.

IV. Practice Guidelines

This state policy provides the framework for the development of practice guidelines for transition-aged individuals presently served by the various state Departments listed above, or those individuals newly seeking services as an adult, or exiting state services. The practice guidelines developed by each individual agency will adhere to and support this comprehensive transition policy.

- All youth and young adults age 14 up to age 26 receiving state services will have a written individualized transition planning document.
- All transition planning meetings and activities will be documented on a form to be developed.
- All youth and young adults receiving direct or contracted state services will have, at a minimum, an annual meeting involving the youth or young adult, family and/or friends and natural supports, any relevant professionals or others of the young person's choice, to update, revise or finalize the transition planning process as needed.
- All transition planning will be strengths-focused and will be directed by the young person's personal interests, wishes, talents, abilities and goals.
- The transition planning process will be accessible, culturally competent and trauma-informed throughout its duration, and various means of support (technological, peer, communication, venue) will be provided the young person if requested.
- All state offices and contracted agencies will incorporate language in contracts and job descriptions requiring case managers to routinely seek opportunities for informal conversations to explore wishes and goals for the future in the various life domains to encourage and support youth and young adults in life planning.
- All young persons receiving services directly from a state office, or through an agency contracted with a state Department, will routinely be invited to engage in ongoing informal discussions with their case managers about their dreams, wishes and goals for the future in each of the life domains.
- All state Departments and state contracted provider agencies serving youth and young adults will gather outcome data on the above expectations to oversee adherence to the practice guidelines.
- Specific data collected will include the name of youth or young adult, transition planning history, and outcomes relevant to the documented goals in the various life domains. Data will be given to the Office of Quality Management for individual and aggregate tracking and analysis.
- The Department of Health & Human Services, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education, and the Department of Labor will collaborate in the development and provision of statewide trainings for state staff, contracted provider agencies and youth, young adults and families on the comprehensive state policy on transition.

V. Policy Development

This policy was developed by a Healthy Transitions Initiative/Moving Forward policy group which includes DHHS offices of Child & Family Services, Adult Mental Health Services, Maine Care Services, Substance Abuse Services, Family Independence Services; the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education; and the Department of Labor, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, in collaboration with youth and adult consumers advocates of mental health services, and 3 agencies serving youth,

TriCounty Mental Health Services, Common Ties, and New Beginnings, and the administrative agency, Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc.

VI. Background

This policy was developed as part of a federal Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Healthy Transitions grant awarded to DHHS in 2009. The grant directed the state to seek to create policy at the state level which has direct impact on the practice level and to have the practice level advise the state level on the policy development.

VII. Policy Definitions

- Individuals of Transition Age: youth and young adults age 14 up until 26 presently served by the various state Departments listed above, or those individuals newly seeking, or exiting, state services from these Departments.
- Cultural Competence: the transition planning process must demonstrate understanding, respect and capability of working effectively with persons/groups from various cultural identities and backgrounds including age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, etc.
- Transparent/transparency: transition policies and practices which are easily found, understandable, and consistent.
- Accessible/accessibility: Transition planning practices are available to meet the diverse and unique needs of youth and young adults across the state Departments and their contracted agencies.
- Strengths-focused: Youth and young adults experience transition planning where they identify, build upon, and utilize their unique strengths.
- Integrated: Youth and young adults experience care that has smooth transitions in and out of services, and which addresses the culture, strengths and needs of the participants.
- Life Domains: all important areas of life identified by individual youth and young adults (education, jobs, health, family, etc)
- Transition Planning: the process of planning with a youth or young adult ages 14 up to age 26 in preparation for adult life. The plan will be directed by the young person and will include his or her strengths, wishes and goals in self-identified important life domains.