The Oklahoma Parents Center (OPC)

OK’s Statewide Parent Training and Information Center

The Oklahoma Parents Center provides training to all families of children and youth in Oklahoma and the providers who service and support them.

In order to effectively advocate for children, detailed information is needed on the laws, communication, team building skills, etc. Ongoing training opportunities for all parents and professionals can assist in this process.

Workshops are available to groups and organizations upon request. They are typically two hours long and can be provided in your area of the state. Topics include: Basic Rights Regarding Special Education, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Transition from School to Adult Life, The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process, Positive Behavior Planning, Bullying Prevention & Solutions.

If you have school services or transition related questions, please feel free to contact the Oklahoma Parents Center at by calling 877-553-4332.

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The Permanency Pact

“A permanency pact is a pledge by a supportive adult to provide specific supports to a young person in foster care with a goal of establishing a lifelong, kin-like relationship” (FosterClub, 2006). When a youth “ages out” they may feel they are losing their support system. Although no longer minors, youth need a safety net and an adult they can count on for advice and support. The Permanency Pact provides: structure and safety net; a written commitment to a long term, supportive relationship; and clear, comfortable expectations and boundaries.

Check-list for Transition:

- Student can articulate disability and supports needed to succeed
- Student must have current testing that was provided following their 16th birthday (check web site of school’s disability services for actual testing needed)
- Begin transitioning health care management to student (should be done by middle of senior year)
- Identify health care provider in town of school planning to attend
- Student schedules own health care appointments with current providers
- Student transports themselves via public system, a friend or driving and attends appointment alone
- Student takes medication routinely without being reminded
- Student knows how to order her medication and fill medication box
- Once student has identified post-secondary school, they and parent/caregiver should meet with Disabilities Services office at college/career tech for coaching and required documentation needed (should be done Junior year or early Senior year)
- Explore possibility that student may qualify for Vocational Rehabilitation Services with your school (by 16 years old)

Continued on the next page.
Transitioning to adulthood can be a period of growth and accomplishment, especially when youth have the resources they need to navigate this process, such as community connections and a stable family that can provide guidance and financial assistance. For young people in transition with a severe emotional disturbance, substance abuse addiction or disability, the transition process can be described as a period of severe challenges and barriers, fears and uncertainty. They face the reality of living in shelters or on the streets, being exposed to higher risk for physical and sexual assault or abuse, and physical illness, including HIV/AIDS. Many of these young people have experienced a combination of placements that include foster care (therapeutic), group homes, shelters, detention facilities, residential centers, institutions, and hospitals. The unique service needs of these young people extend beyond those of children and younger adolescents, and they differ from those of adults. While these young people have ongoing needs for clinical services, they also have significant needs for support services (employment, education, and housing) that facilitate independent living and the ability to make wise choices as young adults.

For years professionals from various agencies have struggled with a definition of young people in transition. To truly develop a universal definition of a young adult in transition involves a multi-dimensional approach that reflects on past service systems, and cultural experiences. Young adults in transition come from multiple service systems such as child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education and vocational rehab. They bring with them past cultural experiences (poverty, substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse). Their race, gender and ethnicity cross multiple demographics. Some young people come from single parent homes, some from broken homes and others from no home at all, just a “facility”. Some of these young people will require a lifetime of support and services; while others will require short points of intervention. The one consistent theme among all of them is the ability to survive and thrive in the most challenging situations. It is a resiliency factor that encourages a young person to dream bigger and brighter, when they have been knocked down again and again. No assessment or counseling session can measure or evaluate a resiliency factor. So, the definition of a young adult in transition: “A young adult in transition represents a complex, intertwined demographic of young people with severe emotional disturbance, behavioral health challenges or disabilities, who are on an individualized journey to adulthood.”

For more information, contact Marqus Butler at mbutler@odmhsas.org or call (405) 522-0994.

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For more information, contact Joni Bruce at the Oklahoma Family Network at joni-bruce@oklahomafamilynetwork.org or call (405) 271-5072.