

**Caledonia / Southern Essex
Local Interagency Team**



***Youth in Transition Plan
CHMI- SAMHSA Initiative
November 2009***

*Never doubt that a small, committed group of people with a good idea can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

- Margaret Meade

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The following plan is in response to the SAMHSA Youth in Transition Initiative Invitation to Vermont Communities. This plan has been approved and signed-off by the membership of the local LIT/Steering Committee and the AHS Field Director as indicated in the Memorandum of Agreement. (Appendix A)

I. Description of the regional vision

Young adults in Vermont are empowered, healthy, appreciated and engaged in their communities.

Mission: Young adults, families/adult allies and community partners will collaborate to develop a system of care to support transition to adulthood. The system will build upon the strengths of young adults to create an array of specialized mental health and related services to meet their unique and changing needs. The system will also foster young adult leadership.

Community Description

The Northeast Kingdom (NEK) is located in one of the most isolated and sparsely populated corners of Vermont. The NEK is comprised of Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties. As a result of this isolation and sparse population this region has consistently been among the most economically distressed. The countryside is dotted with picturesque villages that have lost their economic foundation, leaving behind poverty and a community infrastructure with few means of support.¹

Despite the economic distress, families have strong ties to their land. The small towns and villages are passionate communities, whose residents work hard, demonstrate resilience, and care about their children. They want to give their children the best start in life, but here in the Northeast Kingdom there is a poverty of opportunity due to the economic conditions.

While this Caledonia and Southern Essex plan will have major portions that are identical to the Orleans and Northern Essex Plan it is because the NEK is bound together through the three primary service provider agencies and our one field director for all three counties. Northeast Kingdom Human Services (NKHS - mental health and substance abuse) services the three counties. The same is true for the non-profit Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA) and Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NKLS). All other agencies are state agencies. Northeast Kingdom Youth Services in St. Johnsbury is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving youth in need.

Our youth and young adults in all three counties have many similarities in needs and yet these communities are diverse in family culture and norms and in the needs of individual youth/young adults.

¹ <http://www.ezec.gov/Communit/vtreap.html>

II. Description of the services already in place for behavioral health treatment for Youth in Transition (aged 16-21, inclusive, and their families) with SED, especially those who are out-of-school

The following is a description of services currently provided by the Caledonia and Southern Essex County Agencies that support Youth in Transition (aged 16-21, inclusive, and their families) with SED, especially those who are out-of-school:

- access to medical insurance and medical treatment
- behavioral health treatment
- family intervention and supports
- education
- employment skill building
- employment supported by special programs
- access to housing information
- emergency shelter and transitional living programs
- life skills Youth Development Program
- Parent Child Center
- all programs affiliated with the Department of Corrections and Family Services Division
- runaway crisis intervention program
- street outreach program and
- The Living Room, a drop-in center

The Caledonia Southern Essex Local Interagency Team (CSE LIT), whose membership includes most of the agencies that provide the services these young people need, is an advisory team that meets monthly. Our resources are *within* the agencies. The resources are as varied as the needs for skills and support. This list is an attempt to highlight some of those resources.

The CSE LIT is made up of those community members that can most effectively influence the system of care. Through their collective experience they identify local system needs, evaluate the effectiveness and availability of services and attempt to fill service gaps. Our LIT is also the problem-solving component of the system of care when developing and implementing Coordinated Services Plans. If a team is not functioning, if a Coordinated Services Plan is not satisfactory, if there is no lead agency, or if a plan is not being implemented satisfactorily, the family or individual or another involved party may request a meeting of the Local Interagency Team to address the situation.

A more detailed explanation can be found in Appendix B of the different teams that serve and support children and families in the Caledonia Southern Essex region. Some of the teams that exist in this region are: treatment teams within agencies, Child Protection Team (CPT), Developmental Services Team, School-based Team, Resource Team, Core Transition Team, Offender Re-entry Team, and Community Partners Team. In addition, we work together in accordance with the CSE Coordinated Services Planning Protocols and Procedures (Appendix B). The Caledonia Southern Essex LIT recommends that this planning process be considered for any teams working with children and their families as well as youth in transition when complex issues exist and multiple agencies are involved.

Within Coordinated Services Plans the lead agency is the agency with the assigned case manager who assures that the plan is regularly reviewed and serves as the agreed upon contact person if the Coordinated Services Plan needs to be adjusted. The lead agency will maintain this status but with this initiative, will have the Transition Facilitator as the seamless service coordinator to help build a positive life experience that will help sustain outcomes from services provided. It is likely the person taking the lead to initiate the planning process is the person that either has the best rapport with the youth/young adult and family or whose agency is experiencing the most pressing issues that it hopes to have resolved through this process or in the case of unconnected youth/young adults, the Transition Facilitator.

Analysis of What We Learned about Existing Resources

The CSE LIT vision is to better meet the individual needs of youth and young adults through open and thoughtful dialogue in collaboration with them, significant people in their lives and potential service providers. In our initial planning sessions we identified what we knew to be or believed to be true. Through our focus groups with youth and young adults we saw strengths within our community in each of the five domains. We found there was minimal duplication of service. Often times what might have appeared to be a duplication, may have been due to age and other eligibility criteria/issues.

Strengths in Caring Relationships

All people need more than services. We all need to know we need to be able to trust others, and in that trust, trust that someone cares. We have purpose in life when we believe that someone will listen to us and care about us not just *for* us.

- Peers – identifying what exists or developing relationship skills that will lead to supportive, reciprocal, and sustainable relationships
- Family Members –this includes extended family members – or newly defined families for the youth/young adults
- Parent Child Center – family education in relationships, and child rearing, teen issues of the 21st Century
- Northeast Kingdom Human Services (NKHS) – case managers, substance abuse treatment, JOBS Program
- Department of Corrections (DOC) - Probation and Parole Officers
- Northeast Kingdom Youth Services - Youth Development Program, Transitional Living Program Out-Reach Workers, The Living Room, Diversion Program
- Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division - Social Workers
- School Teachers/Counselors
- Community Justice Center/Diversion Program - relationships develop depending on the length of time involved and the nature of the supervisor

Strengths for Access to Health Care

- Dr. Dinosaur – for youth living with families
- VHAP – for individuals based on income eligibility

- Medicaid – based on eligibility criteria
- Catamount Health – requires premium payments
- RCT - transportation to health facilities/providers – if eligible
- Local Providers – hospital/ public mental health/ substance abuse/dental
- Private behavioral health providers for both MH and SA

Strengths for Opportunities in Education

- Local Schools including schools with Special Ed Programs
- Parent Child Center family education and alternative programs
- St. Johnsbury Academy
- Technical Center and Alternative Programs
- Northeast Family Institute – Cornerstone and Caledonia Schools
- Lyndon Institute
- Northeast Kingdom Learning Services for GED/high School completion
- Community HS of Vermont – under the supervision of Department of Corrections
- LEARN Alternative Program
- Community College of Vermont – degree and non-degree courses
- JOBS Program/Transitional Living Program/Youth Development Program - all offer life skills instruction
- NKHS – Home School Coordinators

Strengths for Opportunities in Employment

- Department of Labor (DOL)– YSEP – Youth Summer Employment Program
- DOL– Division of Employment Training and the WIA Program, on the job training programs
- DOC, DCF, and Vocational Rehabilitation – JOBS Program at NKHS

Strengths for Safe and Secure Housing

- Foster Homes – DCF, FSD
- Elm Street Shelter - Northeast Kingdom Youth Services (NEKYS)
- Rental Apartments – Gilman Housing Trust – private landlords
- Transitional Living Program – Northeast Kingdom Youth Services
- HUD Eligibility/Section 8 Housing – Vt. Housing Authority
- Home Providers/Respite - NKHS

We have a strong Youth Development Program (YDP) that crosses all five domains. The YDP Coordinator works with youth in state custody beginning at age 15. The YDP reaches out to young adults who age out of foster care, but are engaged in continuing their education or working part-time while receiving training and skills that can help their transition to adulthood (Appendix C). The YIT Initiative will serve those young adults who do not meet eligibility under the YDP. The JOBS Program also crosses all five domains (Appendix D).

III. Statement of remaining unmet needs (gap between the regional vision and the current situation/services)

Members of the CSE LIT have on average met twice a month, held 5 youth-based focus groups, disseminated surveys, participated in multiple technical assistance conference calls, attended the Working with Youth Conference in Burlington and the Sequential Intercept Model Training in Montpelier. In addition we have read and considered the numerous resources provided by the YIT Director at the State level. Each meeting was an opportunity to serve as a brainstorming session for responding to the questions raised by this invitation. This dialogue has helped us to identify some of the problem areas or barriers that limit transitional success for our youth and young adults. We have also identified that some youth fall through the cracks because they do not meet eligibility criteria so remain in need. The results of these meetings have identified the many possible services and supports we provide for both cross-system case management and individualized service plan development.

Analysis of Responses from Grant Assessment Processes (Appendix E)

Young adults/youth that responded to surveys or participated in focus groups voiced a wide range of needs and negative and positive experiences. Their comments were not always about services received or not received, but about barriers such as transportation and financial ability to even begin a process that could lead to independence. The transportation barrier points to the degree to which they have caring relationships. For those who have someone to call, someone to reach out to, they are more successful in *getting a ride* to appointments, to work, to service providers, than those youth who have no one. Motivation to participate and develop the skills and knowledge they need only comes when they trust and believe someone does care about them. Our assessment reveals the need for all providers (case managers, corrections personnel, educational staff, and employment personnel) to assist youth/young adults in establishing caring relationships.

The youth discussed at length how most of them do not have a stable phone number, cell phones or access to computers while couch surfing or staying in a shelter. They exist in survival mode. This means they are patient (which can be perceived by others as apathy) when in reality the young person is just waiting for an opportunity to connect with someone for a ride or to receive a basic necessity. When help is offered the youth or young adult usually responds to the help. Many youth/young adults do not have sufficient skills to identify what it is they need and to ask for or communicate that need to another person. This “patient behavior” is also often a communication problem in and of itself, especially when someone else is trying to build a caring relationship with this young person. For some youth/ young adults their ability to be patient can also backfire when a caregiver may perceive their patience as a lack of interest or reciprocal caring. It is critical to understand how many of the youth/young adults are waiting for *permission* because they do not trust their own decisions based on previous experiences.

Communication, understanding and self-awareness are closely linked to moving forward with meetings ones’ needs and accessing assistance to do so. Complicating factors include the lack of caring relationships and literacy issues, which impede the likelihood of completion of paperwork to access existing services/resources. Communication and self awareness are driven

in part by caring relationships. Barriers that appear to increase a belief that no one cares are at times reinforced by the so called “little things”, such as being unable to find someone to give them a ride.

Transportation is a major barrier and a pivotal problem revealed through youth/young adult responses with reasons being wide and varied. For many it was the inability financially to own a car, pay for insurance, or pay for or access driver’s education (estimated at \$800 if not taken while one was in high school). Youth who are not doing well in school often are not able to sign up for the driver education hours as they are constantly trying to make up classes. Youth that are out of school face the additional challenge of not having access to a car to practice driving. Additional transportation barriers in regards to both licensing and insurance premiums are caused by DUI’s which lead to suspended licenses and increased insurance cost. In addition, public transportation is limited to several small 6-8 passenger vans or private cars contracted by the Rural Community Transport System. All of these barriers become so overwhelming that youth/young adults feel they are insurmountable.

Employment options are hampered by the transportation barrier. Livable wage jobs are scarce in the Northeast Kingdom. This makes obtaining employment even more difficult for youth/young adults with limited training and skills. This is further impeded by youth/young adults’ social/emotional needs. Youth/young adults may be profiled by the choices they made early on, which in a small community can be hard to move beyond.

Housing is a scarce resource in the Northeast Kingdom with some being inaccessible due to rural locations. Youth/young adults face barriers to housing because of lack of employment, family history, lack of references or negative ones, criminal history, and/or financial inadequacies. Youth/young adults need to learn how to be responsible tenants.

Identifying the Gaps

Gaps in Caring Relationships

Caring relationships (with adults who nurture positive youth development) is perhaps the primary gap and weak link in helping youth. The primary gap is with their families – for the highest at risk youth – family connections are broken.

Gaps in Access to Health Care

Access to health care includes insurance especially for co-occurring mental health and substance abuse treatment. Limitations occur for mental health and substance abuse treatment after age 18. While most SED youth are eligible for Medicaid, there are varying plans that affect eligibility for services. For youth under 18 the gap for services is not as wide. Our youth have told us that the gap for anyone who exceeds the economic income indicator is the cost of the co-pay/premium. When the youth is struggling to find transportation to work or higher education programs, buying food, and paying rent, the health care premium in their world view is the lowest priority. Many of the small employers in VT cannot afford to offer health insurance.

Gaps in Education

Post-secondary education (also training, and options for completing high school) is often a goal difficult to reach due to a lack of high school diploma or a GED. For many youth/young adults even attaining a GED or high school diploma is often limited by the transportation issues mentioned above. For those who do have a high school diploma or GED, the cost for attending Community College of Vermont (CCV) may be covered for a few classes, but does not provide the full tuition to complete an Associates Degree. Enrollment eligibility impacts accessibility. Second to transportation, again, is the paperwork that often feels overwhelming. Housing (or lack thereof) creates residency issues as well. If a youth/young adult has a felony drug charge they are not eligible for financial aid through federal loans such as provided by VSAC. Often times youth that have had difficulty in school are not given the support and attention they need to plan for post-secondary education.

State data for the year 2007-2008 provides information on graduation rates for our region. The data show that 18-19% of youth in this region did not graduate.

Graduation Rates by	Gender for School Year 2007-2008 based on 4 year study ²		
Blue Mountain USD #21	20 Females	80.00	cohort* graduation rate
	18 Males	72.22%	cohort graduation rate
Danville School	16 Females	87.50%	cohort graduation rate
	11 Males	90.91%	cohort graduation rate
Concord School	11 Females	81.82%	cohort graduation rate
	16 Males	87.50%	cohort graduation rate
St. Johnsbury Academy	does not publish their rates		
Lyndon Institute	reports 2.77% under the NCES rating but is not listed in the Department of Education Drop-out Report		

The cohort graduation rate follows students in a particular 9th grade class through consecutive grades through four years and is a percentage of the students who leave the cohort with a diploma.

Gaps in Employment

Employment: Employment of course is the chicken and egg problem. Without transportation to get to work, employers do not have reliable employees. Without education employment is limited. A majority of youth/young adults with an SED diagnosis are also not able to work. A fair number of youth/young adults with SED are on SSDI. If they can work, they may have a criminal record that reduces their chances of being hired, or their literacy skills are low.

Gaps in Housing

Eighty-eight homeless youth sought Northeast Kingdom Youth Services help in 2008. These young people were living on the streets, sleeping in cars, trading sex for housing, and/or “couch-surfing,” moving from one dangerous place to another, never knowing when they might be victimized or cast out again. These teens have no money for food, lose all their belongings, and are at the mercy of strangers for survival. Many become homeless due to family conflict,

² http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/data/dropout/dropout_completion_08.pdf

abuse and neglect, parental alcohol and substance abuse, and poverty, and lack the skills necessary to meet their own basic needs of shelter, food and clothing. Without safe and stable housing, these youth/young adults have little hope for a positive future.

Emergency resources for homeless and at-risk youth in the North Country are limited to NEKYS Elm Street Shelter. Pregnant and parenting teens also suffer homelessness, and need a high level of service. For example, pregnant young women who are over 18 years of age do not become eligible for DCF, ESD Reach Up subsidies until they are within 30 days of their due date.

In our recent survey/focus groups with youth/young adults, affordable, safe, stable, and adequate housing was listed by youth/young adults as the greatest need. Youth very clearly articulated that if they had a permanent place to live, with a phone line, internet access, and could develop a transportation system from RCT, friends, families, and peers, they felt they could settle down enough to accomplish getting an education and a job. Once again the felony issue arose, as many landlords will not rent to someone who has a felony record. In addition youth stated that the “good” (clean, decent, cared-for) rentals are never listed in the newspaper. These rentals are promoted by word of mouth and youth often miss the opportunity for an affordable rent. While low-come subsidized housing is available to them, finding landlords who will take Section 8 housing is not an easy task.

IV. Desired outcomes and possible indicators

These long-term outcomes established for the Youth in Transition Initiative are related to the goals and objectives of the five elements of the initiative and include:

- Recruit and train young adults for participation as contributing advisors to the LIT.
- Increase efforts to develop long term connections that support and assist eligible youth/young adults to access the services that will support them in independent living.
- Increase the number of youth/young adults aged with SED connected to services through outreach and referrals to partner agencies.
- Decrease by the year 2014 the number of youth/young adults under the supervision of the Department of Corrections.
- Increase the number of eligible youth/young adults participating and successfully completing the JOBS, YDP and Teen Parent Education Programs.
- Apprise all staff in all agencies of currently available services for eligible youth/young adults and when new services become available.
- Educate all staff in all agencies on the Youth in Transition Initiative.
- Increase the number of eligible youth/young adults receiving mental health services.
- Increase social marketing efforts to reach eligible youth/young adults and their families.
- Increase the focus of youth to be served by reaching out to 8th grade drop-outs who never enter high school many of whom are at least 16 years old by the time they drop out.
- With support the barrier of not being able to complete paperwork to apply for services will be overcome. An outcome that we would see is the completion of enrollment forms and more youth/young adults receiving necessary services.

One baseline we will use will be young adults currently under the supervision of the Department of Corrections (St. Johnsbury – Appendix F). We will work to reduce the current status in both age categories:

Current Status ³	Age 17 to Under 22	Aged 22 to 25	Total
In Prison	10	24	34
On Furlough	14	23	37
On Parole	2	5	7
On Probation	71	56	127

Our objective will be to show a decrease in the number of 22 to 25 year olds by the year 2014 under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. Meaning that those who are currently under Department of Corrections under age 22 will have successfully transitioned into adulthood and are not contributing to the numbers for 22 to 25 year olds.

National and Statewide Outcomes will also be supported by providing the data requested by the VCHIP evaluation team including the collection and reporting of GPRA measures as required. Data collection will include information collected from youth receiving services and when possible their families, youth/young adult-serving clinicians, and LIT members who represent the multiple agencies. Existing systems of data collection will be used to provide evaluation information as well as collecting new data for specific questions.

V. Description of priority services/strategies, including interagency agreements and methods for responsiveness to youth and families, public outreach, training for implementation, etc.

General Objectives:

To reduce the number of young adults entering the criminal justice system in conjunction with the Sequential Intercept Model’s (SIM) 5 Intercepts; and

To increase the number of young adults who successfully gain skills, knowledge, and the ability to live successful, independent lives through an Independent Life Plan (ILP) designed by them with help from the Transition Facilitator.

Upon approval of this plan the CSE LIT will craft an inter-agency agreement between the fiscal agent (identified in this plan as Northeast Kingdom Youth Services) and the CSE LIT. This agreement will address all the key points stated in this plan and will include any other points as determined by the State Team. As well as being the fiscal agent for this grant, NKYS will house and supervise the new positions that we intend to create, Transition Facilitator and Peer Outreach Worker, to carry out the major functions of this initiative.

³ Persons 25 years old or less in Vermont Department of Corrections Custody - February 28, 2009

The Individual Life Plan (ILP), (Appendix G), that the youth/young adult will work to design and complete with the assistance of the Transition Facilitator, will follow a similar service format to Coordinated Services Planning. The parent/guardian and/or other family members will be asked to participate in the process if a youth/young adult is in agreement. Service providers that are working with the youth/young adult or who might be helpful in the future will also be invited to participate in this process.

In addition through this initiative outreach to out-of-school youth/young adults or youth at risk of dropping out of school will be supported and guided in developing an Individual Life Plan (ILP).

With the guidance of a Transition Facilitator the youth/young adult will determine who should serve on his or her team to help develop his or her ILP, and then **put it into action**. It is an expectation that representatives from all agencies within the Caledonia Southern Essex region will commit to participating in the planning process when asked either through meeting attendance or consultation when this is acceptable to the youth/young adult/family. The team members will change over time as needs are identified and met. Some ways that the Transition Facilitator might assist the youth/young adult are to help them better understand the different plans within the Medicaid system and help guide the youth in the application process. The Transition Facilitator could support youth/young adults in the appeal process with landlords to help the young person succeed in attaining housing. For those youth involved with the court system, it is perhaps in this arena that through the Sequential Intercept Model of court ordered participation that youth/ young adults could be fully supported to complete enrollment paperwork as a first step to an ILP. For other youth/young adults the identification/connection with a caring adult to help them complete necessary paperwork is a strategy we will employ through the ILP process.

We will consider providing trainings in the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets⁴ and in the Circle of Courage Model⁵. These trainings will support technical assistance and trainings provided at the State level on the Sequential Intercept Model Framework as well as evaluation trainings that will allow us to monitor our progress.

The strategies identified are expressed in detail under the TIPS Guidelines and the following five domains. The plan is comprehensive in nature and coordinated in agency linkage and participation. These strategies will also take into consideration the variables that affect each individual due to age eligibility.

The CSE LIT developed Procedures and Protocols for implementation of Act 264 requirements over two years ago. These include ten Principles in Action. With the help of a youth advisory board to our LIT, which we will create under this grant, we will develop an 11th principle that will promote a youth-designed, youth-guided, youth-driven series of actions that will result in all support teams coordinating and complimenting as needed an Individual Life Plan (ILP) for youth served through this initiative. The following are examples of what the eleventh principle could include:

⁴ www.SearchInstitute.org

⁵ www.reclaiming.com

- The youth will develop goals and strategies that will have observable and measurable indicators of success based on the outcomes identified in participating youth/young adults Individualized Life Plans.
- Community partners are dedicated to authentic youth/young adult involvement and listen to their voices and make changes accordingly.
- Youth/young adults have positions and voting power on community boards and committees.
- Everyone is responsible for encouraging youth/young adults' voice and active participation.
- Youth/Young Adults are able to advocates for themselves and their peers.

Within this plan the term youth/young adult is used to address the full age range of eligible participants – 16 to 21 (inclusive). When we discuss services we have to make a distinction between **youth** – who are aged 16 to 17 (inclusive) and **young adults** who are ages 18 to 21 (inclusive). The need for this distinction is based on the change in services that are available depending upon age and other variables. We have identified three distinct target populations based on current service systems and eligibility criteria.

The three primary target populations are:

- Youth - aged 16 to 17 (inclusive)
- Young Adults - aged 18-21 (inclusive)
- Families – both of the youth/young adults and the young adults who are parents.

Runaway and homeless youth are a vulnerable and underserved population. They are at risk for alcohol and substance abuse, early pregnancy, violent victimization, dropping out of school, and repeat involvement in welfare and criminal justice systems (Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs [VCRHYP] uniform database). In addition, youth who are forced into early independence suffer serious lifelong consequences, including “unemployment and underemployment, reduced access to housing and homelessness, difficulty accessing adequate health care, serious health problems, teenage pregnancy and fatherhood, substance abuse, and criminal behavior” (Teen Homelessness Prevention Project, Cornell University. 2006. Evaluation Report. www.yougottabelieve.org). Youth who have been in state’s custody are at particular risk for future homelessness, having experienced serious emotional trauma, and disrupted family and living situations. In fact, research demonstrates that approximately 50% of individuals accessing homeless shelters were once involved with the foster care system (Teen Homelessness Prevention Project, 2006). Northeast Kingdom Youth Services serves this population of youth/young adults through the Living Room Program and the Elm Street Shelter. The clients of these program will make up part of the population that we will target for services under this grant.

In addition, youth age 16 through 17 who are under the supervision of the Department of Corrections (DOC) will be targeted for this intervention. While not common there are cases of youth who are addressing both juvenile and adult offenses, some of which result in blended sentences. Some youth who are under 18 may be in prison on felony charges. Others may have an open adult sentence (a felony charge) and are not in prison but are dually supervised between family court and criminal court through both DOC and DCF. SIM Intercepts 4 & 5. We

currently have in St. Johnsbury (1) one 17 year-old on furlough and (4) four 17 year-olds who are on probation⁶. The Transition Facilitator will reach out to these youth before they exit supervision.

Young Adults: We will work to address the needs of young adults aged 18 through 21 who are at highest risk and meet SED eligibility and were under the supervision of DCF who choose NOT to enter into or stay with the Youth Development Program. Significant effort will be given to encourage and motivate eligible young adults to re-enter the YDP. Efforts will also be made to help those who had Medicaid coverage, to reapply (as is required at age 18). The Transition Facilitator will also guide and help young adults gain access to health care through arrangements for transportation to physician's offices or dental offices, mental health counselors as well as substance abuse clinicians whenever possible.

In addition we are aware of those young adults aged 18 to 21 (inclusive) who are under the supervision of the Department of Corrections (DOC) who, especially if incarcerated, receive support in housing, education, and mental health services through DOC. Early intervention in collaboration with DOC staff will be the focus for this group, which fits the SIM Intercept 4 & 5. The Transition Facilitator will network with DOC staff to reach the young adults at the earliest intercept possible.

Also there are those young adults aged 18 to 21 (inclusive) who have never been under the supervision of either DCF or DOC and are also a target population for this initiative's outreach.

Families: The Transition Facilitator and the Peer Outreach Worker will work with the youth/young adult to identify family members/informal supports to assist with the design and implementation of the ILP. This approach will be family centered in that it will honor the diversity of each family, build on the strengths and protective factors that the family has, and allow for family voice and choice. Feedback will be requested as to how the process is working for the family and modifications will be made as needed.

Evidence-Based Practice

We have chosen the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System as our evidence-based practice. The framework will be used as the guiding job description for the Transition Facilitator and as a checklist for the LIT.

The TIP System is designed to enhance the knowledge and skills youth and young adults have to successfully be independent. The Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System is an integrated, comprehensive program that improves the social and emotional skills customized for the individual youth/young adult.

To ensure the coordination and continuity of services and supports, the TIP system is implemented with the assistance of Transition Facilitators (different sites and service systems use terms such as transition specialist, resource coordinator, life coach, mentor, transition coach, TIP

⁶ Persons 25 years old or less in Vermont Department of Corrections Custody - February 28, 2009

facilitator, and service coordinator) who work with young people to create or access an array of informal and/or formal supports and services to facilitate achievement of transition goals across the transition domains. From the young person's perspective, access to a Transition Facilitator allows for system continuity between services that are being provided by different service providers (e.g., school, vocational rehabilitation, mental health).⁷

Drawing on the work of Clark and Davis this Transition Facilitator will “work collaboratively across all of the relevant natural support systems and the child- and adult-serving systems to secure the necessary supports and services, including the teaching of improved competencies to maximize the person's likelihood of success...the teaching of community-relevant skills is not the exclusive role of the facilitator; rather, it is a function that parents, foster parents, teachers at all grade levels, group home personnel, and mental health, rehabilitation, and guidance counselors can and should assume...”

The Transition Facilitator will initially work with youth/young adults to develop a relationship. The Transition Facilitator will help the youth/young adult develop an Individual Life Plan (ILP) for successful independent living. This Transition Facilitator's responsibilities are outlined in each domain, but at no time is any one domain a silo. The Transition Facilitator will be the liaison between the youth/young adult and the service providers/informal supports as necessary. The Transition Facilitator will report to the LIT. The reporting from the Transition Facilitator will then guide the LIT in their assessment. Developing a seamless, coordinated comprehensive system of care will take time as each provider is trained in the TIP System. This will include trainings in providing communications that enhance earliest intervention by keeping the Transition Facilitator informed of any changes or adjustments needed. The Transition Facilitator will be the liaison between the youth / young adult assuring that they have access to all services needed for the basic necessities of life as outlined in this initiative. Feedback is recommending that agency staff pay more attention to the quality of the relationships they are developing with youth/young adults. All service providers will work collaboratively with youth/young adults to develop life long connections that are not solely tied to a service.

As young adults are identified for services, they'll receive information and be asked to sign a basic contract in which they agree to actively participate in the program and will create their ILP. The program/process will continually be evaluated and changed as needed to provide optimal assistance.

Following the TIP System Guidelines the Transition Facilitator will address the seven steps.

TIP Step 1. Engage young people through relationship development, person-centered planning, and a focus on their futures.

We will begin engaging youth and young adults by housing the Transition Facilitator at Northeast Kingdom Youth Services (NEKYS) Living Room on Bagley Street in St. Johnsbury.

⁷ Transition to Independence Process (TIP) website: <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>; and National Center on Youth Transition for Behavioral Health (NCYT) website: <http://ncyt.fmhi.usf.edu>

NEKYS was chosen as a first stop to reach youth/young adults. They have taken the first step by reaching out to be with their peers in an environment that offers skill building and an opportunity to connect with service providers (negating the transportation barrier). Free to all youth age 15 through 21, NEKYS Living Room provides a safe place for youth to meet, talk and participate in positive and healthy recreational activities. The Living Room provides a peer to peer environment that allows both the youth/young adult and the Transition Facilitator to develop their relationship slowly and at the comfort level of the youth/young adult. This setting also lends to youth/young adults who frequent the Living Room to serve as recruiters for others, through the caring environment that will be enhanced through the Transition Facilitator's presence. The Transition Facilitator will not be limited to this one center. In time he or she will travel to the Lunenburg and Gilman areas to further develop a location there to serve youth/young adults from Southern Essex County.

The Youth Development Program and Transitional Living Program provides life skills instruction both individually and in-group settings to youth transitioning from foster care and for youth who are homeless or without help of their legal guardian. Program staff helps youth find safe living arrangements, assesses life skills, provides emotional support, guidance and advocacy and is a referral source for coordination of other agency services. These programs offer additional support that the Transition Facilitator can draw upon as the youth/young adults develops an ILP.

It is in this setting that the Transition Facilitator and youth/young adult will complete an intake and functional assessment that will lead to transition planning and service coordination. The Transition Facilitator will be supported in this new role by experienced staff who are also culturally competent in the needs of the youth to be served.

TIP Step 2. Tailor services and supports to be accessible, coordinated, appealing, developmentally-appropriate, and build on strengths to enable the young people to pursue their goals across all transition domains.

The Transition Facilitator using the results of the intake and assessment, will guide the youth/young adult in the first of many problem-solving decisions as together they work on the individual's life plan. In user friendly language the Transition Facilitator will provide the support as the youth/young adult navigates the steps needed to work toward an identified goal. An advantage to this process can be capitalizing on the Youth Development Program guidelines that are similar in nature to this process.

Our region recognizes the need to further improve the relationships between law enforcement and this population. Often youth/young adults see law enforcement as punitive or to be avoided. Through the SIM training, we recognized the importance of the collaborative work with law enforcement. Currently law enforcement participates in activities with youth at the Living Room. Youth have responded positively to these opportunities.

TIP Step 3. Acknowledge and develop personal choice and social responsibility with young people.

In participating in their ILP the youth/young adult will practice setting realistic goals and a plan to achieve them. Conflict resolutions skills will be addressed as well as other decision-making/problem-solving skills that are needed to support behavioral changes. Youth/young adults who go to the Living Room participate in community service projects. The development of youth advisors to the LIT will inform service providers and other community resources as well as build leadership and a sense of community investment in youth/young adults.

Tip Step 4. Ensure a safety-net of support by involving a young person's parents, family members, and other informal and formal key players.

The Transition Facilitator will encourage the youth/young adult to identify the caring people in their life. Part of the process of developing an ILP will be to complete eco-maps and genograms to identify important people, organizations and affiliations in their life. The ILP will address maintaining and further developing important relationships. The Transition Facilitator will mediate any conflict that arises between youth and those supports identified.

At all times, the Transition Facilitator, service providers, and others will work to create an atmosphere of hopefulness, fun, and a focus on the future.

TIP Step 5. Enhance young persons' competencies to assist them in achieving greater self-sufficiency and confidence.

Goals and activities to develop competencies for greater self-sufficiency will be jointly identified by the Transition Facilitator and the young adult. The opportunity for real life practice will be an important part of competency development. Creating these opportunities is not seen as the sole responsibility of the Transition Facilitator, but a shared endeavor between many members of the community.

The youth/young adults will be encouraged and guided to complete their high school education or GED, seek technical or undergraduate courses for employment skills, or participate in the JOBS Program for hands on learning of skills. They will also be helped to increase social relationships, have the ability to answer and ask questions, understand rights and responsibilities and other competencies necessary for knowledgeable participation in a variety of adult activities, like entering into contracts such as a lease. The young person will be guided in the process of research and completion of the applications required for health insurance (Medicaid, VHAP, and Catamount), education (college loans and applications or high school completion plans), employment (resumes, cover letters, and employment applications), and housing (understanding a lease).

TIP Step 6. Maintain an outcome focus in the TIP system at the young person, program, and community levels.

The Transition Facilitator will use the Developmental Assets Questionnaire to assess skills and competencies with the results informing the ILP. The questionnaire will be administered again after the youth/young adult has worked on their ILP to assess progress. The Youth Behavior Checklist will be administered at intake and again after involvement for six months.

If challenges and barriers are identified LIT is available to provide support and further guidance. We will encourage youth/young adults to attend LIT to talk about successes and challenges.

TIP Step 7. Involve young people, parents, and other community partners in the TIP system at the practice, program, and community levels.

The CSE LIT in its' advisory capacity for this initiative will work to create a youth advisory component that would be active at the end of year two. Ideally this group will be comprised of youth/young adults who have successfully navigated the system, are familiar with services offered in the community, and/or who have had experience with educational programs. They will, with support from technical assistance, develop their guidelines and structure. The information that will be reported back to the LIT by the Transition Facilitator includes: how many youth have participated in the program, overall progress regarding assets gained, and goals from ILPs achieved. We are also interested in how many family/informal supports have been brought to assist the youth/young adults.

Our hope is by being given the opportunity to become skilled collaborators, team players and advocates for transition-aged youth and the system of care, some of these youth/young adults will be interested in taking on leadership roles within our community.

The youth advisory component will assist us to advocate for system development, expansion, and evaluation -- and for reform of funding and policy to support a responsive, effective service system for young people in transition and their families.

Integration of the 7 Steps to the Transition to Independence Process System into the five Domains

Domain 1: Access to Health Care (including insurance and especially for co-occurring mental health and substance abuse treatment)

For those without health insurance, eligibility will be assessed for each participant. The Transition Facilitator will research and secure the necessary applications for health care coverage based on eligibility. The Transition Facilitator will help youth/young adults complete the appropriate forms. In those cases where there is no eligibility for health care coverage the Transition Facilitator will bring that case to the LIT for further research on resources. In those

cases where young adults may be required to pay a premium for coverage, but do not have a job or source of income, again the LIT will be consulted for additional resource information as there may be sources of discretionary funds that could help in that situation.

During the monthly LIT meetings all providers will be updated on any areas of concern where more services may be required. In addition to helping the participant secure health insurance, the transition facilitator will guide and as often as possible help the youth/ young adult secure access to all health providers for health care, emergency care, but equally as important annual physicals, teeth cleaning, eye exams, and appropriate vaccines or medications.

Domain 2: Post-secondary education (also training, and options for completing high school)

While post secondary education is more likely to be a long-range goal due to economic and transportation barriers, we know that for most of our youth and young adults high school completion will be the first priority.

For high school completion we have several service providers. Northeast Kingdom Learning Services is the adult basic education service provider in our region. They provide high school completion programs, GED certification, and other adult education courses including some technical skills courses. For those young adults under the supervision of DOC, there is the Community High School of Vermont. We have several alternative education programs for high school age students and older youth with SED challenges.

In many cases the young adults who will be served through this initiative may not be aware of their eligibility for continued special education services through the public school system. Through the support of the Transition Facilitator they may regain access to some educational services.

For post secondary education, service providers include CCV and assistance through VSAC, which can include driver education.

The Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) in partnership with the Department of Economic Development (DED) is funding twenty-two sessions of Career Readiness Certificate Training through June 2010 that will be open to the public. Training will be delivered by the Community College of Vermont (CCV) on a scheduled basis at up to eleven locations statewide. Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) training was developed in response to a long-standing awareness that certain workplace skills and characteristics are essential across a wide range of occupations. Workers who possess fundamental work skills and a solid work ethic are more likely to obtain employment, and once hired, they are more likely to remain employed and advance to higher positions as they gain experience.

In 2009, the Department of Labor⁸ made more than 15 Summer Youth Employment Grants to schools, businesses and non profits around the state to work with Vermont's young people to help them learn much needed skills. Funds were targeted to provide opportunities for at risk youth, out of school youth and low income youth. These grants enabled hundreds of

⁸ <http://labor.vermont.gov/>

Vermont youth to learn valuable skills and work experiences that will help launch them on a career pathway. We are hopeful that this will be replicated next summer.

The Northeast Kingdom Workforce Investment Board is responsible for coordinating workforce training needs in Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties. They strive to gather input from employers and workers across the three counties, and to work with local educators to assure the necessary training is available.

The Transition Facilitator will become familiar with and network with all of these organizations to help secure the most developmentally appropriate program for education goals.

Domain 3: Employment

The Northeast Kingdom has a high percentage of unemployment amongst the population as a whole. Networking with the various state agencies (Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Labor) as well as private agency programs such as the JOBS Program and Job Corps that serve the employment needs of youth/young adults will be a critical activity for the Transition Facilitator as these youth/young adults will require supported employment in most instances. The Transition Facilitator will also educate the Northeast Kingdom Workforce Investment Board as to the needs of the youth/young adults involved in this project.

Domain 4: Housing (safe, stable, and adequate)

There sole resource for emergency shelter in our community is NEKYS Elm Street Shelter Program. While this initiative does not allow for any funding for housing, the Transition Facilitator will be able to provide referral information to the young adults in regards to emergency shelter.

The Transition Facilitator along with other case managers will be instrumental in helping youth to mend relationships with their families so they can return home.

Youth will be offered opportunities to build life skills. The Transition Facilitator will work to educate youth/young adults and build competencies around maintaining their own housing.

Domain 5: Caring relationships (with adults who nurture positive youth development).

We will continue to develop a common language of trust, respect, responsibility and support. From our focus groups we recognize that this is an area youth want to work on.

“Efforts should focus on helping youth establish the kinds of peer relationships they value and helping to ensure that these peers are supportive and positive influences in both job and other arenas.” (p 83)⁹

⁹ Clark and Davis – Transition to Adulthood

In building caring relationships the Transition Facilitator, in collaboration with all case workers or service representatives serving the youth/young adult under this initiative, will give youth voice and guidance as they develop their own life plans for independence and sustainable success. This will include assisting youth/young adults to identify, develop and possibly repair those relationships with their families, friends and informal supports as we know that these are the connections that everyone maintains over the course of their lifetime, not relationships with services providers and professionals.

VI. Management structure, fiscal agent, and contact people (for administration and evaluation of the grant)

The CSE LIT will be the guiding advisory committee meeting monthly with the Transition Facilitator. The CSE LIT will also meet with the youth advisory board quarterly. The Northeast Kingdom Youth Services, referred to locally as NEKYS, will become the employer of record and the fiscal agent for this grant. NEKYS has been an integral member of the Local Interagency Team.

NEKYS' work is sustained via partnerships with business and community leaders, state and local organizations, area schools, and collaborative provider networks. In addition to current organizational and individual partners, NEKYS has approximately 137 community volunteers serving on Diversion Boards, mentoring youth, engaging in community service and fundraising events, and facilitating educational presentations or trainings.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & PROGRAMS

NEKYS Management Team is led by Executive Director Marion Stuart, along with the Service Coordinator, Program Developer/Evaluator, and Human Resources Coordinator.

Structurally, their programs may be broken down into three categories: Prevention; Justice; and Transitional Services. NEKYS' current programs include: Prevention – Summer Central Calendar and Scholarship Program, and JUMP Mentoring; Justice – Caledonia and Essex Court Diversion, Pre-Sentence Alternative Program, Alcohol Safety Program, and Balanced and Restorative Justice; and Transitional Services – Family Connections, Parent Education, Transitional Living and Youth Development Programs, Living Room Drop In, Elm Street Shelter, and Street Outreach. We are governed by a community-based, volunteer Board of Directors with 11 members. NEKYS currently employs 22 staff members.

Our Management Team consists of: Executive Director; Human Resources/Comptroller; Service Coordinator; and Program Developer/Evaluator; two additional supervisors.

Members of Management Team and supervisory staff have experience in the following areas: therapeutic intervention and case management for at-risk youth and families; assessment and treatment planning; maintaining confidential client files and Medicaid billing records; mediation and crisis response services to youth and families; collaborating with area providers and state agencies; assisting in the development of reunification plans for families with children in state's custody; parent education and support; provider team and meeting facilitation; administration, program development and curriculum design; training, coordinating and

supervising direct service and administrative staff; grant writing and grants administration; bookkeeping and financial management; office management; human resources coordination; organizational leadership and strategic planning; statistical and program evaluation; and community outreach and relations. The current supervisor of the TLP at NEKYS will be the supervisor for the Transition Facilitator hired under this grant. (Appendix H)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Recent key achievements by our organization include the 1-year anniversary of the successful opening of Elm Street Shelter for homeless youth and achieving over 100 JUMP Mentoring matches. NEKYS’ local fundraising capacity has increased dramatically over the last four years through 2 annual events (NEKYS Shelter Walk and JUMP Jazz Jubilee silent and live auctions) resulting in proceeds of approximately \$30,000 annually. In addition, we are progressively enhancing long-term sustainability through training and development activities with NEKYS’ Board of Directors.

COLLABORATION/VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Active collaboration with area providers ensures the best use of resources in meeting client needs. In particular, strong partnerships for the Elm Street Shelter include: Gilman Housing Trust; Springfield College of Human Services; Northeast Kingdom Community Action – Parent Child Center; Vermont Agency of Human Services – Dept. of Children and Family Services and Dept. of Corrections; Vocational Rehabilitation and; Northeast Kingdom Human Services. NEKYS is proud to be a contributing member of many local and state coalitions, including (but not limited to): The Housing Continuum of Caledonia & Southern Essex Counties; Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness; Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs; Vermont Coalition of Teen Centers; Vermont Association of Court Diversion Programs; and Mobius: The Mentoring Movement.

VII. Project budget summary with line item details.

NEKYS BUDGET

Salaries	
Transition Facilitator & Peer Advocate	\$28,392
40 hrs/wk @\$13.65/hr @ 52 wks	
Supervisor & Evaluation	\$ 3,843
4 hrs/wk @\$18.48/hr @ 52 wks	
Fringe 34%	\$10,959
Admin 15%	\$ 8,850
Client Support	\$ 1,040
Life Skills Development Activities	
@ \$20/wk @ 52 wks	
Equipment	\$ 1,000
Computer and printer	

Supplies for Transition Facilitator	\$ 1,000
Travel 5,302 mi @ \$0.55/mi	\$ 2,916
Youth Stipends 5 youth per month @ \$25 each @ 8 months	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
Total Expense	\$59,000

Budget Narrative:

This budget covers 1 FTE position for a Transition Facilitator and Peer Advocate for youth 16 - 21 in transition

4 hours of Supervision will support supervision, evaluation and reporting that will be inclusive of the Transition Facilitator and Peer Advocate's work

34% Fringe rate as outlined:

FICA/MEDI	7.65
LT Disability	0.71
Life Ins.	0.39
WC Ins	1.60
SUTA	1.75
Health Ins	<u>21.90</u>
	34.00%

15% Administrative cost covers rent, comptroller hours professional and general liability insurance

Client Support will cover materials to support life skill group activities

Equipment will cover the cost of a computer and printer for the Transition Facilitator and Peer Advocate

Supplies will cover the cost of necessary office materials for the Transition Facilitator and Peer Advocate

Travel will support the Transition Facilitator and Peer Advocate to provide transportation for youth to get to needed appointments and jobs to support their transition to adulthood

Youth stipends will make it possible for youth to participate on the Youth Advisory Committee

VIII. Community Readiness

Our community is ready to implement the plan we have proposed. Significant time and energy has been spent and input sought to devise a plan that can begin to address the objectives of the grant. This SAMHSA Youth in Transition Initiative is already a success through the work and planning of the last six months. The questions raised by the criteria in the initiative, the support of the State team, the dialogue as the initiative requirements evolved have all been fruitful for us who sit and serve on the Caledonia and Southern Essex LIT. We have learned more about the barriers and challenges for these particular youth/young adults. This position will help us to reach out to youth/young adults that we have historically had the most difficulty connecting with.

In conclusion, it is important to understand that there are many strong partnerships that exist in this community. We collaborate on many initiatives as well as individual family needs already. We are ready and able to integrate this opportunity into the work we already do.