

**Orleans / Northern Essex
Local Interagency Team**



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

The following plan is in response to the SAMHSA Youth in Transition Initiative Invitation to Vermont Communities. This 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. Orleans and Northern Essex County Regional Vision

Our vision is to provide a seamless system of support that will help our local transition-aged youth 16 through 21 (inclusive with their families) with SED (Serious Emotional Disturbance) to have adequate preparation and the necessary supports to be productively engaged in the community and free from incarceration. We will engage in identifying and nurturing those caring relationships that can and will motivate youth/young adults to voluntarily participate in all available services. These services will ultimately provide the knowledge, skills and opportunity to receive physical health care, mental health care, education, employment and housing and sustain their caring relationships.

Orleans and Northern Essex County Regional Goal

To provide an accessible system of care for young adults aged 16 – 21 (inclusive) who are challenged with social and emotional difficulties, and their families, through services that are coordinated and based on caring relationships.

The primary strategies for achieving this goal are 1) hiring a transition facilitator to engage youth and refer them to existing services and 2) creating a youth advisory board. This board will provide leadership around strategies for developing caring relationships between providers and young adults and for engaging young adults at a place that works for them.

The Orleans and Northern Essex Local Interagency Team (ONE LIT) will expand on our current ONE LIT Procedures and Protocols (See Appendix B) and Principles in Action. Our current Procedures and Protocols highlight ten principles. Within these principles we will add the language, where appropriate, “inclusion of SED young adults ages of 16 through 21 (inclusive)”.

We will increase our Principles in Action to eleven. The additional principle 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) (Appendix C – a draft) for youth served through this initiative. Other principles may be identified by youth/young Adults as their voice and participation grow.

The eleventh principle could include the following:
Youth Driven/Directed/Guided - Youth representation will increase in the form of a youth/young adult advisory board specific for addressing ONE LIT issues for individuals aged 16 to 21 (inclusive).

- 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 voice 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 be self-advocates and peer advocates in the policy making process

The ONE LIT goal of the future is to provide opportunities to meet the needs of all children and youth in the region by facilitating open and thoughtful dialogue among the individuals to be served and their service providers. The ONE LIT will advance the opportunity to reach out to youth/young adults with SED needs who are aged 16 through 21(inclusive) by expanding their current membership to include the transition facilitator, who will represent the youth/young adult advisory board. Youth/young adult members on the board will be trained to help themselves and others design and receive the services needed for their individual life plan for success. This outreach will be founded on the training and professional development of youth/young adults and community partners to better understand each other and the transition facilitator, who will be the key liaison between youth being served and service care providers.

I. Description of Community

The Northeast Kingdom (NEK), which is comprised of Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties, is located in one of the most isolated and sparsely populated corners of Vermont. As a result of this isolation and sparse population this region has consistently been among the most economically distressed in the state. The countryside is dotted with picturesque villages that are losing traditional economic foundations such as timber and dairy farming, leaving behind poverty and a community infrastructure with few means of support.

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. The sustainability to our plan will come in the form of professional development opportunities which we will use to build a cadre of staff and community members who are certified to train others within our service agencies, schools and communities. As we provide in-house resources we will then institutionalize the programs to live long beyond the funds. These YIT funds will also provide an opportunity to increase mental health services to our youth and young adults.

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. The Northeast Kingdom Human Services (mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities) agency manages offices in various locations in the three counties. The AHS Field Services Director now serves all three counties. The same is true for the non-profit Northeast Kingdom

Community Action (NEKCA) Agency, and Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NEKLS). In addition all other agencies are state governmental agencies and have a similar structure.

II. Description of Services

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 adult** - who are ages 18 to 21 (inclusive). The need for this is based on the change in services that are or are not available depending upon age and a multitude of variables such as being under the supervision of the Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (DCF), the Department of Corrections, or having an Individual Education Plan that provides some services up to age 22. We have identified three distinct target populations based on current service systems and eligibility criteria that change the available services within these groups as the individual's age or status changes. 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 groups and the young adults who are parents with young children.

The following is a description of services provided by the Orleans and Northern Essex County agencies that includes support for Youth in Transition (aged 16-21, inclusive, and their families) with SED, especially those who are out-of-school. These services include access to medical insurance, medical treatment, behavioral health treatment, family intervention and supports, education, employment skill building, employment supported by special programs, access to housing information, emergency shelter as needed, transitional living programs, life skills, Parent Child Center services, and all programs affiliated with the Department of Corrections and Department of Children and Families. Resources currently available in our community include the following:

- Runaway crisis intervention programs which assist youth and their families with a goal of keeping the youth linked to their biological family
- Street Outreach Program which provides support to youth who are disconnected from their social network
- The Teen Drop-In centers in Canaan and Newport that provide a safe haven, education around a variety of topics, and refer to local resources
- Transitional Living Program
- Youth Development Program
- ACCESS Crisis intervention
- After-hour crisis service for youth in need

The ONE LIT considers this entire system of care for children with complex needs when working with families. Through their collective experience they identify local systems needs, evaluate the effectiveness and availability of services and attempt to fill service gaps. The ONE LIT also identifies priorities for the annual Vermont System of Care Plan and is the problem-solving component of the system of care when coordinated services plans are being developed and implemented.

Listed below are some of the teams that exist in this region to serve and support children and families (Appendix B for a detailed explanation): Treatment Team, 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 with Coordinated Services Planning, (Appendix B) and will add Individual Life Plan Services for the youth/young adults to be served in response to this initiative.

A Coordinated Services Plan (CSP) is a written addendum to each service plan developed by an individual agency for a child or adolescent with complex needs. It is developed when the child/youth/young adult has needs that require services from more than one agency. It is designed to meet the needs of the child/youth/young adult within his or her family or in an out-of-home placement, and in the school and community. The CSP is developed by a service coordination team including representatives of education, the appropriate departments or agency partners of the Agency of Human Services, the parents or guardians, and the natural supports connected to the family. The CSP includes the Individual Education Plan (IEP) as well as human services treatment plans or individual plans of support, and is organized to assure that all components are working toward compatible goals, progress is monitored, and resources are being used effectively to achieve the desired result for the child and family. The proposed transition facilitator will help to promote a social norm change within all service providers serving youth/young adults to facilitate the use this process for all youth/young adults, as the CSP is a proven system with a level of success.

The Individual Life Plan (ILP) that the youth/ young adult will work to design and complete will follow a similar service format. The most critical need will determine the lead case manager and that person will help identify other service team members who can help the youth/ young adult have access to all needed services, thus enhancing a seamless system of care. Developing either a Coordinated Services Plan (CSP) or an Individual Life Plan (ILP) the LIT will follow similar guidelines that apply to all cases where the parent/guardian participates in the process of a coordinated service plan and families will also be encouraged if the youth/young adult so desires.

With the guidance of a transition facilitator and the identified lead agency's staff the young adult will determine who should serve on his or her service team to help develop his or her individual life plan (ILP), and then **put it into action**. In planning, consideration will always be given to both the positive and negative consequences of including certain agency representatives that may already be involved with the family. It is an expectation that representatives from all agencies within the Orleans Northern Essex region will commit to participating in the planning process when asked either through meeting attendance or consultation when this is acceptable to the family. The teams members will change over time once needs are identified and different services are needed.

The Lead agency is the agency with the assigned service coordinator 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 (Appendix B). The lead agency will maintain this status and will have support from the transition facilitator to help sustain positive 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. Youth/young Adults will be identified by a peer support person (paid position) and from referrals from agencies, organizations and schools.

The LIT, which encompasses most of the service agencies that will 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 variables of needed skills and support; the following inventory highlights some of those resources.

Inventory – What We Learned

In our initial planning sessions we identified what we knew to be or believed to be true. We saw strengths within our community in each of the five domains (Caring Relationships, Access to Health Care, Opportunities in Education, Opportunities in Employment, and Safe and Secure Housing). We found there was very little duplication of services. We named and categorized the myriad of offerings to help those in need. We found that what may appear to be duplication often was due to eligibility issues, especially when legal status changes at age 18 and a youth enters into the young adult status.

Strengths in Caring Relationships

- 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
- Case Managers in Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment, JOBS Program, Probation and Parole Officers
- Mentors, Youth Development Program, Transitional Living Program , Street Out-Reach Workers, Teen Centers, Teen Challenge
- Social Workers – Division of Child and Family Services
- School Teachers/ Counselors – often identified by many young adults
- Community Justice Center Providers / Diversion Program - relations develop depending on the length of time involved and the nature of the supervisor

Strengths for Access to Health Care

- Dr. Dynosaur – 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
- Turning Points – Alternative School
- Parent Child Center’s Alternative Program
- North Country School Alternative Program
- Lake Region Union High School Alternative Program
- Northeast Kingdom Learning Services for GED / High School completion
- Community HS of Vermont – under the supervision of Department of Corrections
- North Country Career Center – Adult Education
- Community College of Vermont – degree and non-degree courses
- JOBS Program / Transitional Living Program /Youth Development Program - all offer life skills courses

Strengths for Opportunities in Employment

- Department of Labor – YSEP – Youth Summer Employment Program
- Department of Labor – Division of Employment Training and the WIA Program
- Department of Labor – On the Job Training Programs
- JOBS Program – Vocational Rehabilitation in collaboration with Northeast Kingdom Human Services

Strengths for Safe and Secure Housing

- Foster Homes and Shelter Homes – Division of Children and Family Services
- NEKCA Shelter – Northeast Kingdom Community Action
- Rental Apartments – Gilman Housing Trust – Private Landlords
- Transitional Living Program Apartment – Northeast Kingdom Community Action
- HUD Eligibility / Section 8 Housing
- Home Provider's/Respite Northeast Kingdom Human Services

In addition, we have a strong Youth Development Program (YDP), Vermont Federation of Families, and Vermont Family Network which cross all five domains. The YDP reaches out to young adults who age out of the Foster Care system but are engaged in continuing their education or working part-time while receiving training and skills that can help their transition to adulthood.

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

The ONE LIT members working on the YIT grant have been meeting twice monthly to develop this proposal, held five youth-based focus groups, received the results of five interviews of young adults between the ages of 18 and 21, participated in multiple technical assistance conference calls, and attended the Working with Youth Conference in Burlington and the Sequential Intercept Model Training in Montpelier. In addition, representatives have read and considered the numerous resources provided by the YIT Director at the State level. Each planning session was also an opportunity to brainstorm responses to the questions raised by this invitation and this dialogue has helped us to identify some of the problem areas or barriers that limit transitional success for our youth and young adults. The results of these meetings have identified the many possible services and supports that we can provide for both cross-system

case management and individualized service plan development that will allow youth to be engaged in planning for their own futures.

Needs Assessment from Youth Voice

We began our assessment of needs and gaps by hearing the voice of youth/young adults in our community. The findings are presented here with two of the five profile summaries or interviews that were conducted in May and June by a community partner who joined the LIT planning sessions for this initiative. (Appendix D for the remaining three profiles, focus group responses, and survey results).

Profile: Filling the Gaps--Chris

Profile: Chris, age 19, suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder (“ADD”), but completed high school with an IEP through a one-on-one tutorial program meeting two hours a day. His biological father was killed in an automobile accident when Chris was very young and he has had very little support from his single parent mother (Chris has an older sister and a younger brother). He was essentially homeless and “couch hopped” for a couple of years as he finished high school. (A step father was in and out of jail, and then left the family.) Chris’s girl friend of a year or so is about six years older than he is and has had three children from a previous relationship (now with their biological father). She and Chris are now expecting a child. They are living in a single wide trailer (\$450/month) on a lot shared with a second trailer (their landlord couple, one on disability). Chris’s girl friend works odd hours. Chris has held several jobs on a short term basis but is now unemployed. Chris and his girlfriend have no phone or transportation, borrowing both from their landlords. They are about 15 miles out of town on a dirt road.

Chris is a bright, personable fellow, reasonably outgoing, and able to enter into new situations with an appearance of confidence even when they are completely unfamiliar to him. He has recently talked with Voc Rehab and was lined up for an auto mechanics course at no cost to him that meets from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the local Career Center. (He has had virtually no opportunity to work on cars, but expresses an interest in being a mechanic.) He missed the first class (he says he forgot) and faces a continuing transportation problem. He reports that his landlord will give him a ride in and pick him up (each round trip approximately 30 miles), but it is difficult to imagine this generous arrangement lasting very long. Chris is feeling pressed (both personally and by his girlfriend) to get some sort of job as soon as possible, and has just applied for a position at the cheese plant in Cabot. He reports that his landlord would lend him a car for a month to get to Cabot, and that he would then buy a car with his earnings. He applied to work any shift and could easily encounter a conflict with his auto mechanics course if he is hired.

Analysis: If Chris is to avoid being trapped in a series of dead end jobs, it is likely that he will be needing occasional support to fill gaps, especially with things like transportation, as well as some motivation to focus on the long term as well as his immediate needs. He might well have dropped the auto mechanics class after missing the first session had he not been admonished that he risked losing the support of his Voc Rehab person. He had agreeably signed up for this class without having any clear plan for getting there, and has dropped out of other programs in the recent past, including a full auto mechanics course at Vergennes that the

Department of Labor had gotten him into. Chris' existence has been pretty chaotic for most of his life, but with some touch stone of order and discipline, and with modest support through particular difficulties, he appears to have reasonable prospects for functioning well in the long run.

Profile: Supplying the Missing Pieces -- Dave

Profile: Dave was adopted by his paternal grandparents when he was six weeks old. Six years later, his grandparents separated and his grandmother took him out of state. When he was ten, he was returned to his grandfather amid allegations of physical abuse by his grandmother. At age 15, Dave's grandfather called the police after Dave took a car without permission that was titled to his grandfather. (Dave was at the time in the process of buying this car from his grandfather.) Dave was placed in foster care, going through three placements in about a year. When he was 16, he and some other minors again took a car without permission and left the state. When they were caught, Dave was placed in a residential facility for about two years, completing his GED and getting some work experience during that period. When he was still 17, he moved back to a previous foster placement in his home town, and "aged out" when he turned 18. Not long after leaving DCF custody, however, he was again caught after taking a car without the owner's permission, and spent several weeks in jail. When he came out, he returned to DCF's 18 and over program and now has his food and housing paid for under this program.

Analysis: Dave has a reputation for being a capable young mechanic, having worked on cars on his own for much of his life and having had several jobs as an apprentice-level mechanic, sometimes working on a commission basis. He has, however, had nothing but bad experiences (in his vigorously expressed view) with educational institutions, and has declined seemingly attractive opportunities for formal training as a mechanic. He is remarkably good at finding work and generally appears to perform well, reporting that he enjoys working. In addition to working as a mechanic, he has worked in an auto body shop and, since he is tall and strong and is a good worker, he has been able to find work as a laborer as well.

When he was living on his own after turning 18, Dave was working as a mechanic at a shop about 25 miles from where he was living. When the car he was using to commute to work would not run at the end of the work day, he spent several hours trying to fix it, and some additional time trying to locate a ride home. When no one came forward to give him a ride, he finally began walking at about 11:00 p.m. After walking for a couple of hours, by then in a hard rain, he reports that he spotted a pick up truck in a driveway (these are remote country roads). Finding it unlocked, he got in thinking he'd wait for the rain to let up a bit. Getting in, however, he found the keys were in the ignition, and he drove the truck home. He was caught a couple of days later trying to "ditch" the truck in the woods. (Undamaged, the truck was returned to its owner.)

One of the gaps in Dave's support network is the lack of strong "caring relationships." It is possible that this and/or other instances of "operation without the owner's consent" might have been avoided, had there been such a relationship to draw upon for a ride in an awkward situation. (Dave's grandfather is severely disabled, has very limited resources, and does not drive.)

Dave developed a good working relationship with a therapist while he was in DCF custody. This person has shifted to his own practice now, but remains in town. Dave has expressed a willingness to return to some kind of working relationship with this person, but does not appear to know how to pursue this. It is possible that an "outreach" worker could help re-

establish this link and, with some effort and encouragement over time, even bring Dave into some kind of training program to improve his skills and job prospects as a mechanic.

As in so many cases in the Northeast Kingdom, there is also a continuing problem with housing and transportation. At this writing, Dave would like to move to a trailer that is available for \$150/month much closer to his current work place than is his present residence. (He currently has no vehicle and has lost his license as a result of recent infractions.) Steady, long-term employment is difficult to find and, even with his evident skill at finding work, getting there and back again, as well as grocery runs and other essential transportation needs constitute a major obstacle, especially without a vehicle or a driver's license. If these problems could be resolved, and if Dave could find ways not to re-offend, he could come much closer to being self supporting financially than he is now.

Focus Groups Responses (See Appendix D)

In addition to these profiles, over 30 youth/young adults participated in our focus groups. Representation of youth voice came from young persons at the NEKLS Learning Center, the LRCAN coalition, Community High School of Vermont, the JOBS program, Diversion, Teen Center and Parent Child Center. (Please refer to Appendix F to review the unedited charts and notes.)

YIT Survey (See Appendix D)

A third tool we used to reach out to youth was a survey. While we did not get as many of the surveys back as we had hoped, six young persons responded to the questions and had similar feedback to those who attended the focus groups (see Appendix D):

Analysis of Responses – Identifying the Gaps and Weaknesses

Overall, the young adults providing input into our needs assessment voiced a great deal of frustration. This frustration was 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 also highlights the major gap to the degree in which they have caring relationships; those youth and young adults that have someone to call, someone to reach out to, are more successful in *getting a ride* to appointments, to work, to service providers, than those youth who have no one.

A full two hour planning session was spent discussing how we can reach out to bridge this divide and build trusting caring relationships. We know that the motivation to participate and develop the skills and knowledge they need only comes when they trust and believe someone cares about them.

Our assessment reveals a need to train providers, case managers, corrections personnel, educational personnel, and employment personnel on the power of relationships. Caring relationships are only successful with reciprocity. We will include work in this area by providing trainings in the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets¹ and the Communities that Care

¹ www.SearchInstitute.org

Model² in addition to trainings in the Circle of Courage Model³. These trainings will support technical assistance and trainings provided (hopefully) at the State level on the Sequential Intercept Model Framework (Appendix D) as well as Evaluation Trainings that will allow us to monitor our progress.

Meetings spent working on writing this plan continue to be eye-opening and have brought to light the number of gaps in knowledge about existing services. The dialogue has helped all ONE LIT team members explore and investigate how in some cases these young adults fall into the cracks in services due to eligibility requirements that prevent them from receiving services.

In addition to the resources provided by the State YIT, the trainings such as the Sequential Intercept Model, the speakers at the Working with Youth Conference, the technical assistance calls, and the evaluation advisory team have provided a host of additional resources from which we can draw new ideas to incorporate into existing services and make them better. Our strategy now is to take what we have heard from the youth and what we have learned and begin the process of creating an effective system of care.

The first step will be to address the communication issues. The youth discussed at length how most of them do not have a stable phone number or cell phones or access to computers while couch surfing or staying in a shelter. They exist in survival mode, with limited ability for consistent communication. This means they are patient (which can be perceived by others that the young person is apathetic), just waiting for an opportunity to connect with someone for a ride or to receive some form of basic necessity. When help is offered the youth or young adult usually responds to the help. Most of those we need to serve do not have the 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. With the endurance of patience lasting just so long, the reaction eventually becomes anger or unhealthy choices such as substance abuse.

Communication and understanding are closely linked. A lack of understanding around why to apply for services was expressed by youth members at the planning meetings and agency staffs confirm this; most young adults who understand the purpose of paperwork fill out the forms and go through the process. Youth members continued on to say that they believe that for some, the lack of trust and caring relationships is in all likelihood the number one cause for not caring about filling out paperwork even when guided. Also, literacy and reading levels can be a barrier to “signing up” for services and with support this barrier could be overcome.

Transportation is a pivotal problem revealed through youth/young adult responses during our assessment. Their responses regarding the problem of a lack of transportation were wide and varied. For many, it was the inability financially to own a car, pay for insurance, or pay for driver’s education (estimated at \$800 if not taken while one was in high school); in most towns, schools driver’s education is offered during the school day but has limited enrollment and wait lists. Some youth have a hopeless feeling even toward getting a learner’s permit, as there seems

² www.SearchInstitute.org

³ www.reclaiming.com

little hope for a car, the insurance, or the gas to make it run. The cost of owning a car, even a used vehicle, now runs about \$3000. It is nearly impossible to save enough money to buy a car which in most cases would have to be on a payment plan then pay for insurance, and put the gas in it to get to work to pay for the car. All of this becomes so overwhelming to many of the youth/young adults that maintaining their status quo has more appeal than the motivation to get through the transportation issue and then beyond to a more sustainable life style.

Employment comes second because of the transportation barrier, but also employment is often low-wage for most of our young adults due to limited decision-making and problem-solving skills. Vocational training opportunities are limited to those with the ability to secure post-secondary financial help. Additionally, young adults experience a lack of adequate housing because landlords are not always willing to rent to young adults who do not have references or support. The housing issue negatively reinforces the belief that they are *not trustworthy*. Finally, once they hold a job, many young adults suddenly find that the amount of earned income impacts their eligibility for other necessary services.

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 reaching many youth. Family connections are broken and young adults don't have a caring or trusting relationship. The ONE LIT will inform young adults and their families of all YIT services earlier on to reduce the number of young adults who may end up in homeless, unemployed, or incarcerated situations. Often the time spent with youth/young adults by any service agency staff is limited to the immediate response required by the reason for the meeting.

- **Gaps in Access to Health Care**

Access to health care presents limitations for individuals needing mental health and substance abuse treatment after age 18. While most SED young adults are eligible for Medicaid, some plans effect mental health and substance abuse treatment. There are also varying plans that effect eligibility for services. In addition, small employers in Vermont can't afford to offer health care for their employees. The role of the transition facilitator will be to better understand the different plans within the Medicaid system and help guide the youth in the application process. For youth under 18 the gap in services is not as wide. Our youth have told us that the gap in insurance for anyone who exceeds the economic income indicator is the cost of the co-pay premiums. When a young person 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 a low priority.

- **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 there are multiple complications including social and emotional issues and obtaining a GED or High School diploma seems unattainable. The paperwork that often feels overwhelming along with

simply not knowing all their options to further their education and where to start. Individual's criminal background can also further complicate eligibility for VSAC.

- **Gaps in Employment**

Employment: Without transportation to get to work and the necessary skills to do a job, employers do not have reliable employees. Without education and training employment is limited. If they can work, they may have a criminal record or low literacy skills, both of which reduce employment opportunities.

- **Gaps in Housing**

Housing (safe, stable, and adequate): Housing was identified as a need by respondents. Youth clearly articulated that if they had a permanent place to live, with a phone line and 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 issue arose, as many landlords will not rent to young adults without references or those with past involvement in corrections. 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-income subsidized housing rent is available to them, finding landlords who will take Section 8 housing is not an easy task. The transition facilitator and peer support worker or case lead could support youth in the appeal process with Landlords to help the young person.

IV. Desired outcomes and possible indicators

These long-term outcomes are related to the goals and objectives of the five domains of the initiative and include:

- Recruit and train young adults for participation as contributing advisers to the youth/young adult advisory board
- Increase efforts to develop and monitor the success of caring relationships that motivate eligible youth/young adults to access the services that will support them in independent living
- Increase the number of youth/young adults aged 16-21 (inclusive) with SED accessing services through outreach and referrals by 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 graduating from the JOBS, YDP and Teen Parent Education programs
- Apprise all staff in all agencies of currently available services for eligible youth/young adults and update them 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 screenings and assessments
- 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

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 ONE LIT. 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 inter-agency agreements and methods for responsiveness to youth and families, public outreach, training for implementation, etc.

Program Objectives:

To reduce the number of young adults entering the criminal justice system by applying 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.

The strategies identified for our regional plan 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.

We have identified three distinct target populations based on current service systems and eligibility criteria that change the available services within these groups as the individual's age or status changes. 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 groups and the young adults who are parents with young children

Youth aged 16 to 17 (inclusive) are at highest risk when they meet SED criteria and lack supportive living arrangements. Youth in custody through the Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (DCF) are provided with foster or group homes or may live with their families, or in kinship care. These youth have assigned social workers, are eligible for Medicaid, and receive educational and housing support. These youth are also at greatest risk for entering the criminal justice system shortly after reaching the legal age of 18 due to varying degrees of disruptive family environments that led to their placement in the Family Services Division. These youth may also participate in the life skills and other assessment programs beginning at age 15 through the Youth Development Program.

Another target population is youth aged 16 to 17 (inclusive) who have never been under the supervision of either DCF or DOC. These teens are often the hardest to reach due to homelessness and they may lack trust and caring relationships, health care coverage, employment, and many have not completed high school. Often they leave their homes at age 16 or even younger with no parental regard for their whereabouts. The most understated group is those youth who drop-out of school at the end of 8th grade or do not complete 8th grade. These youth are often not counted as drop-outs because they have not entered a high school *to drop out*

of. These youth self-report these choices in our focus groups and in our teen centers, transitional living programs, and other supports provided for homeless youth.

In addition, there are other youth aged 16 to 17 (inclusive) who are under the supervision of the Department of Corrections, (DOC). 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 probation and a DCF case manager. The outreach for this group will be earliest intervention with collaboration with correction’s officers as these youth exit DOC supervision; SIM Intercepts 4 & 5. We currently have in Newport (3) three 17 year-old who are on probation⁴. (Appendix E)

One baseline data shows important information in regards to graduation rates. The data indicates 18-19% of youth in our community did not graduate last year.

Graduation Rates by	Gender for School Year 2007-2008 based on 4 year study ⁵	
Lake Region UHSD #24	37 females	83.78% cohort* graduation rate
	81 males	82% cohort graduation rate
North Country UHSD #22	136 Females	80.15% cohort graduation rate
	148 Males	81.76% cohort graduation rate
Canaan Schools	14 Females	85.71% cohort graduation rate
	17 Males	88.24% cohort graduation rate

*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.

Other baseline we will use will be young adults currently under the supervision of corrections (Newport) between the ages of 22 to 25. (Newport statistics Feb. 2009 -- 12 in prison; 26 on furlough; 38 on probation, and 4 on parole). Our objective will be to show a substantial decrease in the number of 22 to 25 year olds under the supervision of the Department of Corrections by the year 2014. . Working with all youth begins with SIM Intercept 1. This work will start with building more positive caring relationships with all members of the judicial branch of government through the transition facilitator and the LIT.

Young Adults: We will work to address the needs of young adults aged 18 to 21 (inclusive) who are at highest risk and meet SED eligibility. Youth previously under the supervision of DCF who choose NOT to enter into or stay with the Youth Development Program often lose their housing support and may not continue their education. Significant effort will be made to encourage and motivate eligible young adults to enter the YDP Program. Efforts will also be made to help those who had Medicaid coverage learn how to reapply (as is required at age 18) for Medicaid.

⁴ Persons 25 years old or less in Vermont Department of Corrections Custody - February 28, 2009
⁵ http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/data/dropout/dropout_completion_08.pdf

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) and receive support in housing, education, and mental health services. Early intervention in collaboration with correction's officers as these youth exit DOC supervision will be prioritized, which fits the SIM Intercepts 4 & 5. The transition facilitator will be responsible for networking with DOC staff and connect the young adults with support and reach them at the earliest intercept possible. Currently in Newport 14 18 to 21 year olds are in prison; six are on furlough, 43 are on probation; and 1 is on parole⁶. The ONE LIT will be available to review cases that require further consultation.

Families: Systems of Care for families and teen parents will work with DCF reunification programs and the Parent Child Center in an attempt to break the cycle of generational patterns of high risk behaviors of parents and their children. This area will evolve more as the youth and young adults we serve provide the input on how to best build or re-build family relationships. In addition, we will provide parent education opportunities for parents of teenagers in the community. Families with youth/young adults ages 16-21 (inclusive) through the assessment process will identify family systems issues through the input of the youth we serve. Feedback gathered will be used to identify ways to strengthen the System of Care for families and teen parents to help break the cycle of generational patterns of high risk behaviors.

Evidence-Based Practice – TIP System

We have chosen the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System as our evidence-based practice. The framework will be used in guiding the job description for the transition facilitator and a resource for the ONE LIT committee to continuously evaluate the progression of the youth's voice and engagement within the system of care.

The TIP System is designed to enhance the knowledge and skills youth and young adults need to successfully be independent. The Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System is an integrated, comprehensive program that improves the social and emotional skills through a practice model that can be delivered across a seamless system of care customized for the individual 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 facilitator, and service coordinator) who work with young people to create 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) (p. 38)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;

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

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>

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 be hired to help support and guide young adults by being the first stop in developing a caring relationship. The transition facilitator through the established systems of care will help the youth/young adult develop an individual life plan (ILP) designed by the young adult 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 young adult and the service providers.

The transition facilitator will be a staff member of the Northeast Kingdom Community Action Agency under the division of the Community Action Youth Services (CAYS); the CAYS director sits on the ONE LIT as an active member. The transition facilitator will attend the regular monthly ONE LIT meeting. Reports from the transition facilitator will then guide the ONE LIT in their assessment of how well the program is creating a social norm change among the service providers. 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 not be a mental health employee or mental health licensed but will be the liaison assuring that the youth/young adult has access to all services needed for the basic necessities of life as outlined in this initiative.

As young adults are identified for services, they will 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 system of care

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 Community Action (NEKCA) Newport Teen Drop-in-Center on Main Street in Newport. This location was chosen as a first stop to reach youth and young adults who have taken the first step by reaching out to be with their peers in an environment that offers skills and opportunity for services. For those who are “roaming” there is not a major emotional age difference between those who are 16 and those who are 21. Many of the older young adults are emotionally younger than others of the same age who do not have SED challenges. The Transition Facilitator will offer support to the NEKCA teen center in Canaan VT and overtime we will look to expand services in Essex County.

CAYS Teen Center is located in the basement of the Main Street NEKCA Building. The Teen Center provides a safe place for youth to meet, talk and participate in positive and healthy recreational activities. This Teen Center provides a peer to peer environment allowing both the

young adult and the transition facilitator to develop their relationship slowly and at the comfort level of the young adult. This setting also lends to youth and young adults who frequent the Newport Teen Center to serve as recruiters for others.

Our planning focus groups, which included personal youth interviews with young adults from Diversion, the LRCAN teen action coalition, the Community High School of VT, Northeast Kingdom Learning Center, and the JOBS program as well as the NECKA Parent Child Center and Teen Center identified transportation and economic factors as the primary barriers to participating in available services or employment. Starting with the Teen Center as a physical location to reach out to youth allows the services to go to the youth instead of the current system of care in which the youth or young adult must go to the provider's facility for that initial assessment and relationship building starting point.

The decision to house the transition facilitator at the Newport Teen Center on Main Street is in response to the voice of these youth and young adults. The Newport Teen Center provides a networking system of safety and access. Over time, as social marketing efforts take place, more young adults will know to call the transition facilitator at the Newport Teen Center. The transition facilitator will then make arrangements through the various resources including RCT, system service providers, and other regional resources to help the young adult get to the Teen Center to engage in this first step.

NECKA oversees other programs that the transition facilitator will assist in accessing for youth and young adults. The Youth Development Program and Transitional Living Program provide life skills instructions both individually and in group settings to youth transitioning from foster care and for youth who are at risk of becoming homeless. Transitions staff help youth find safe living placements, assess life skills, financial literacy, strengths and needs, provide emotional support, guidance and advocacy, and referrals to and coordination of other agencies services. These programs offer the foundational support that the transition facilitator can draw upon as youth/young adults develop their individual life plans that will help lead to sustainable independent living.

NECKA also oversees the Runaway Program, which serves youth 12 - 18 years old and their families and provides support and advocacy to families at risk of being homeless, homeless or runaways. The Runaway program provides intervention to teens and their parents that may sometimes include short term alternative living arrangements in an appropriate community shelter home if no family and/or friends can be located. Services also include individual and family counseling/mediation; respect for all family members and confidentiality as well as a 24-hour crisis response. There may be times when the transition facilitator could make home visits but it is more likely that the transition facilitator will educate, train, and support the staff of these programs that are already providing that connection. In addition to the programs offered through NECKA, Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, the Community Justice Center, and the Agency of Human Services all have other resources for young adults in the Northeast Kingdom.

NEKCA's Orleans County Court Diversion program is a community response to first time juvenile and adult offenders of non-violent crimes. A Review Board comprised of

community residents reviews cases after the offender has met certain program criteria. The Review Board designs a contract specific to their offenses, which specifies the conditions of the offender's participation. If the offender satisfactorily completes the contract, the State's Attorney dismisses the charges. Community people control the Diversion process with a vested interest in making sure there are no repeat offenses and that victims are compensated. Diversion is the major alliance for increasing the opportunity for more caring relationships between law enforcement and offenders. This Intercept 1 offering can lead to lower rates of incarceration.

Street Checkers provide community-based support for juvenile probationers living in their communities. Street checkers hold youth accountable for their whereabouts and activities through phone and personal contact. Staff works in conjunction with DCF, parents, foster parents, school and other service providers.

Street Outreach, or the Peer Outreach Workers, provide teens with information on personal safety and well being. They have helped plan events and activities that provide positive and healthy experiences for young people and are active members of the Teen Center. They offer a resource guide specifically for teens and help facilitate referrals to appropriate agencies.

It is in this setting that the transition facilitator 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 culturally competent in the needs of the youth to be served. The transition facilitator will go to the youth or young adult as needed which in most cases will not be their parents' home, as many do not live at home but couch surf or sleep in cars.

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 youth/young adult advisory board will play an important role in ensuring that services and supports are accessible, appealing and developmentally appropriate. Members of the youth/young adult advisory board will receive leadership skills development education and will be guided by the transition facilitator to provide direction to agencies in terms of developing programs that meet the needs of the young adults in the community.

For example, the youth/young adult advisory board will be tasked with developing strategies for improving relationships between young adults and all service providers. The advisory board will also be tasked with working with the Cultural Specialist to develop strategies to encourage young adults to question authority, including the cultural norms that they have adopted from their parents, in a constructive way.

In addition to the transition facilitator, the ONE LIT plans to imbed a behavioral health specialist at the Newport Teen Center a minimum of 4 hours per week for the purpose of building relationships with the young adults. There would be an additional 2 hours per week for supervision meetings and reports for the ONE LIT.

The objective of this service is two-fold, first to combat the assumption that young adults often make that “counseling” or “therapy” is not going to help. This specialist can also make and guide youth with referral and help them access the health care application process to get them the services they may need. It is not intended that this person will become the counselor to any of the youth or young adults as this could compromise trust and safety, but rather this specialist will serve as an additional support for developing trusting and caring relationships with the young adults. Working through the transition facilitator, this counselor will first and foremost begin the process of bridging and building relationships between youth and young adults and service providers. The peer support person will reach out to peers and under-served youth, also building caring relationships and bringing them to the transition facilitator.

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

With the support of the ONE LIT and working from the results of the intake and assessment, the transition facilitator will guide the young adult in the first of many problem-solving decisions as together they continue to work on the individual’s life plan. In user-friendly language, the transition facilitator will provide the support as the young adult navigates the steps needed to work toward the identified goal. An advantage to this process can be capitalizing on the Youth Development Program and JOBS guidelines that are similar in nature to this process; as the youth/young adult advisory board develops it will play an increasingly active role in this process.

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 young adult to identify who are the caring people in their life that they would consider family. The individual life plan will include identification of people who have helped them along the way, and what characteristics are key to them as they develop new supportive relationships.

Conflict resolutions skills will be addressed as well as other decision-making/problem-solving skills that are needed to support behavioral changes.

At all times the transition facilitator and all service provider adults will work to create an atmosphere of potential, competency and creativity.

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

Competencies for greater self-sufficiency will be jointly identified by the transition facilitator and young people and the opportunity for real life practice will be instituted.

The young person will be encouraged and guided to complete their high school education at a minimum, seek technical or undergraduate courses for employment skills, participate in the JOBS program for hands on learning of skills, and increase social relationships through trainings or interactions with landlords for instance.

The young person will be guided in the process of research and self-completion of the many applications required for health care, (Medicaid, VHAP, and other applications) education (college loans or HS completion plans), employment (resumes, cover letters, employment applications), and housing (how to read a lease, how to fill out a lease)

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

TIP itself recommends monitoring and evaluation of the system and will work with guidance from the youth/young adult advisory board to develop an evaluation tool to measure program success in the community.

In the building of the Individual Life Plan for each participant, a self-assessment of the young adults' achievements will be logged and reported to VCHIP as well as to the ONE LIT. Identification of challenges and barriers will be discussed and analyzed and adaptations made as needed on a case by case basis.

Celebrating the successes will be noted as appropriate and within the boundaries of any confidentiality laws and with the permission of the young person.

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

The ONE LIT, in its advisory capacity for this initiative, will work and help support the transition facilitator in creating a youth/young adult advisory board.

Ideally this group will be comprised of young adults who have some experience navigating the system and, if possible, with some post-secondary education. With guidance from the transition facilitator, the members of the newly formed youth/young adult advisory board will develop meeting protocols to determine structure, voting procedures and frequency and times of meetings. They will be provided with leadership training that will include conflict resolution and communication skills-building.

As a guidance tool for how the youth/young adult advisory board will work with the ONE LIT, we have added an 11th principle to the current ONE Procedures and Protocol Document that guides the ONE LIT. This 11th principle is taken from the youth leaders who participate at the State Level.

The purpose of this formation is to develop leadership roles and be given the opportunity to learn the ropes so they may become skilled collaborators, team players and advocates for transition-aged youth and the system of care.

It is in the formation of the youth/young adult advisory board that encouragement will also be given to teen or recent teen parents to participate in order to promote the voice of parents and the development of stronger parenting skills. Parents/families identified by youth as caring caregivers, families working with reunification, and parents working through the Runaway Program will be asked to participate as the youth direct that participation.

Both the current ONE LIT and the youth advisory board will 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.

In addressing the necessary supports we will identify services for transition-aged youth and collaborate with other public and private service (including housing) providers, substance abuse prevention coalitions, Workforce Investment Board members, law enforcement, and criminal and juvenile justice officials are some of whom may be new partners for the ONE LIT.

Applying the TIP System to the Five Domains

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

For this first domain the plan design includes assessing eligibility for each participant. In most cases those who are under 18 will be covered under an existing health care plan. For those who are not covered, the transition facilitator will research and secure the necessary applications for health care coverage.

Using the same process, the transition facilitator will help these young adults who are 18 or older complete the appropriate forms. In those cases where the young adult may be required to pay a premium for coverage but do not have a job or source of income or there is no eligibility for health care coverage, the ONE LIT will be consulted for additional resource information as there may be sources of discretionary funds that could help in that situation. The transition facilitator will attend the monthly ONE LIT meeting to provide updates on challenges and successes.

During the monthly ONE 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.

Providing prevention/intervention behavioral health services around the use of ATOD (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) and violent behavior problems will be part of the individual

needs assessment. We will provide prevention and interventions that will address psychological and emotional development for those at highest risk. At the monthly ONE LIT meeting updates will be given on oversight of all system health services.

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 with SED challenges through the Parent Child Center and Turning Points.

The transition facilitator will become familiar with and network with all of these providers to help secure the most developmentally appropriate program.

All public high schools must provide Special Education Services. Under this program, those who are eligible and willing to stay in school, can be provided education up through age 22 if the person is on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or other qualifying program. In many cases the young adults who will be served through this initiative may not be aware of their eligibility for continued services, and 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's Education. Education through 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. A schedule of upcoming sessions follows the program description below.

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.

Domain 3: Employment

The transition facilitator will network with various state agencies in regards to employment opportunities. The Department of Labor⁸ announced more than 15 grants to schools, businesses and non profits around the state who will be working with Vermont's young people. Funds are targeted to providing opportunities for at risk youth, out of school youth and low income youth. In too many cases, these youth represent the "drifters" referred to by the Next Generation Commission report. These grants and other programs in the works will enable hundreds of Vermont youth to learn valuable skills and work experiences that will help launch them on a career pathway.

Northeast Kingdom Community Action received a DOL Grant award this past summer and placed 17 younger out-of-school youth, at risk youth, and older out-of-school youth at a variety of employers in the Northeast Kingdom. Participants completed formal and informal assessments which resulted in an Individual Service Strategy. Participants developed a portfolio to use in future job searches. NECKA learned a lot from this experience and plans to build on lessons learned from the summer participation to help youth and young adults find and maintain successful employment.

A major resource and connector for the transition facilitator will be to communicate with and inform the Workforce Investment Board (WIB)⁹ of this youth in transition initiative. The workforce development funded by this legislation will take several forms. At a statewide level, these will be coordinated by the Vermont Department of Labor and the Human Resources Investment Council. The role of the Human Resources Investment Council is to coordinate public and private partners in order to develop a highly skilled workforce that can effectively compete in the regional, national and international economic arenas. On a regional level, Workforce Investment Boards work to support regional economic development strategies by responding to workforce needs as defined by regional participants.

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

The transition facilitator will participate in regular Continuum of Care meetings which address local housing needs to make sure agencies are working together to prevent homelessness. There are resources for emergency shelter and NEKCA's Shelter funding 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.

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

Our proposal is to work toward strengthening relationships for all students, families, and participating partners or collaborators through the development of a common language of trust, respect, responsibility, and support. Monthly or more frequent focus group style gatherings will be conducted throughout the community to continue hearing and validating the voice of our youth and young adults.

⁸ <http://labor.vermont.gov/>

⁹ <http://www.nekwib.org/vermont-wibs.html>

We will, with the guidance of the transition facilitator, be guided by the youth and young adults as they develop trust and belief in a positive life focus. As mentioned previously, we will offer gateways to caring relationship building through the law enforcement connections and the consistency of the transition facilitator.

Efforts will 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.” (83)¹⁰

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

The ONE LIT will receive monthly reports from the transition facilitator and provide oversight to this project. The Northeast Kingdom Community Action, referred to locally as NEKCA will, if approved, be the employer of record.

NEKCA has been an integral member of the Local Interagency Team. We held focus groups and are now in the final stages of preparing the Youth in Transition Grant for submission and have been identified as the fiscal agent for this project. The receipt of this grant will be a huge help for youth that are in the custody of DCF. The goal will be for the youth in transition facilitator to focus on youth who have fallen between the cracks of the current system. We want to foster a relationship and get them back on track in productive activities and engaged in local resources such as the Youth Development Program and JOBS. The youth in transition facilitator will also be recruiting youth and working with community agencies to ensure we are providing outreach and raising awareness.

NEKCA has been servicing the area with a wide variety of programs designed to alleviate and address the short and long-term causes and effects of poverty since 1965. We strive to assist those who seek our aid to improve the quality of their lives by providing the means to overcome the barriers that stand between them and the achievement of full entry to and participation in the mainstream of Vermont’s economic and social life.

NECKA offers the following categories of assistance:

- food, fuel and housing assistance through our Outreach Department;
- early childhood education and child care and other programs for the strengthening of families through our Head Start/Child and Family Development Department;
- aid and counseling to distressed families, programs aimed at at-risk families with young children; job training and work readiness counseling;
- teen parent education for at-risk young parents through our Parent Child Centers;
- housing and re-entry assistance for those fellow citizens re-entering society from the custody of the Department of Corrections;
- programs to help people avoid incarceration through Diversion and associated community programs;

¹⁰ Clark and Davis – Transition to Adulthood

- financial literacy and assistance in starting a business through our Micro-Business Development program and emergency housing in our homeless shelter;
- youth programs (see below)

Organizational Quality:

NEKCA prides itself on implementing quality programs as is evidenced by all ten of its Head Start Centers having attained the highest rating in the state's Step Ahead Recognition System or STARS program. NECKA also hold a Head Start Certification and additionally we hold a Youth Shelter certification under the Strategic Plan Addressing Act 74:

Experience Managing Contracts/Grants:

NEKCA has a strong administrative management capability with a total annual budget of \$7.3 million and a low-risk audit classification with no findings or deficiencies in any of the programs listed in our schedule of federal awards. Various state agency audits, (fuel, youth programs, AHS internal) have also resulted in no findings or deficiencies in the programs reviewed.

Youth Development

NEKCA is the host of multiple youth programs and it is our hope to grow all of our youth programs for both youth in DCF custody and those not in custody. Our mission is to have appropriate services available for the needs of all youth 12-22 years of age.

NEKCA provides an array of opportunities for youth in their communities. Staff can develop an individualized package of services which may include one or more of the following: housing, food, mentoring, advocating, youth advisory groups, crisis intervention, workshops, family mediation, community involvement and employment preparation.

The current youth programs under NEKCA's umbrella are:

- Transitional Living Program, Street Outreach Program
- Teen Drop-In Centers in both Canaan and Newport
- Runaway Crisis Intervention
- ACCESS Crisis intervention
- After-hour crisis hotline for youth in need

NEKCA offers two 18 week life skills sessions a year primarily through a collaborative effort between the Transitional Living staff and the Youth Development Program staff, although other NEKCA staff are accessed as facilitators for some of the sessions. The topics presented include:

- Community Resources
- Nutrition
- Making Realistic Goals and Plans
- Teen Emotional Well-being
- Fire Safety
- Job skills/Interviewing
- Apartment Planning
- Self-Defense
- Money Management
- Teen Parent Panel

- Jeopardy Skills Review
- College Youth Conference

NEKCA hosts a food shelf and any youth in need of food receives a food shelf. The youth that participate in NEKCA programs also volunteer with the unloading of our food delivery as well as help them clean up and take care of the food shelf.

NEKCA’s teen centers hold many events and trainings as well as promote community involvement. The Teen Centers host weekly focus groups and advisory committees. They provide additional mentoring to any youth that may need extra support during difficult times. Many Youth Development participants access the Teen Center daily which ensures effective participation in our programs and the Teen Centers are a source of identifying and referral to the Youth Development Program.

NEKCA’s Runaway Youth Programs provide family mediation and make every effort to keep youth in their homes or with their biological family. As mentioned earlier, NEKCA received a Summer Youth Employment Grant and were able to hire and train 12 youth. Two times a year the Youth Development Coordinator and two or three youth attend the Care Givers meeting to provide information to potential foster homes through the Foster Parent Trainings on how they feel and what it was like to be in foster care. NECKA applied to become an AmeriCorps host agency and is currently supporting this position, which focuses on fund-raising and raising community awareness.

VII. Project budget summary with line item details

YIT		hours	rate	
Youth Service				
Coordinator		30	\$13.00	<u>\$20,280.00</u>
Supervisor		2	\$18.00	<u>\$1,872.00</u>
				\$22,152.00
Benefits				\$9,414.60
Youth Liaison		10	\$9.00	\$4,680.00
Benefits	15%			\$702.00
Travel	13,626 miles @ \$.55/mile			\$4,994.30
Space				\$1,200.00
Computer				\$1,000.00
Supplies				\$1,000.00
Professional Development				\$3,567.00
Indirect	13.8% Salaries & Benefits			<u>\$5,099.00</u>
				\$53,808.90

Youth In Transition Budget Narrative
FY 10

Staff- This will provide for a 30 hour a week youth service coordination specialist (\$20,280.00), a 10 hour a week youth peer outreach worker (\$4,680.00) and 2 hours a week supervision (\$1,872.00).

Benefits- NEKCA's current Fringe rate is 42.5% (\$9,414.60). This rate includes:

- 28.45 Health Insurance Premiums
- 1.46 Dental Insurance Premiums
- 7.27 FICA-ER/Medi
- 2.49 UNEMPLOYMENT
- 1.94 WORKER'S COMP
- .37 DISABILITY INS
- .24 LIFE INS
- .06 CATAMOUNT HEALTH TAX
- .07 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE
- .15 VACATION ADJUSTMENT

Travel- NEKCA keeps their mileage reimbursement in alignment with the federal rate, which is currently 55%. We have allowed for a substantial amount of travel in this budget in order to meet the youth where they are (\$4,994.30).

Space- NEKCA charges space costs on a per square footage basis (\$100 per month /\$1,200.00 per year).

Computer- This is a program start-up cost to purchase a computer for the staff (\$1,000.00).

Supplies- This is to provide office supplies for the program staff such as paper, ink, pens desk items, etc (\$1,000.00).

Professional Development- This will allow for program staff to attend identified trainings to enhance their service delivery and youth support (\$3,567.00).

Admin- : NEKCA has a federally approved indirect rate of 18.2% however we charge our funders a lesser rate of 13.8% (\$5,099.00).

In Conclusion:

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, and the dialogue as the initiative requirements evolved have all been fruitful for us who sit and serve on the Orleans and Northern Essex LIT. While we know we do provide an effective system of care for many, what we have learned about the barriers and challenges for those particular youth and young adults aged 16 to 21 (inclusive) will move us to seek out those who have fallen between the cracks. We can become more diligent in bringing/referring more youth/young adults to the transition facilitator. This position will give our young people a place to start. We will work to address helping our young people by taking what we have learned and using it to help support them in the development an individual life plan for themselves.

The process of this initiative as presented will not only guide us but also motivate us to perfect and improve on what we do. To validate, train, and appreciate staff and community members who are serving those most in need as well as to validate, train and give meaningful roles to the younger generation by serving them and maintaining relationships as they transition successfully out of the system. We will do this in a way that is authentic and genuine in not only hearing their voice but also following their lead whenever possible.

