

STATE YOUTH COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

April 24, 2006

Members:

Marie Christman, Utah Dept of Human Services

Travis Cook, Utah State Office of Education

Paul Jackson, Intermountain Health Care

Leticia Medina, Community Based Organization

Cecil Robinson, Division of Youth Corrections

Lynnette Robinson, Six County AOG, Parent of Former Youth Participant

Pamela Russell, Div of Child and Family Services

Richard Walker, Department of Community and Culture

Scott Williams, USU Extension, Cache County 4H

Excused:

Tom Darais

Paul Otto

Melissa Friegang

Jill Goodman

Not attending:

Norman Johnson

Becky Cox

Rickie Bryan

Rich Parks

DWS Staff:

Jane Broadhead

Bob Gilbert

Randy Hopkins

Faye Hubbard

Julie Lay

Chris Love

Guests:

Chris Healy, Blue Bunny – Well's Dairy

Amanda Singer, Utah Dept of Human Services

Mike Beacco, Division of Child and Family Services

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Marie Christman introduced herself and asked those in attendance to do the same. She asked all members to check the sign-in directory to ensure accurate contact information.

The SYC recently included a standing agenda item, employer highlight. At each meeting we will invite a local employer to describe their business, their hiring process for young people and any special program or initiatives they have to help youth succeed in employment or education. Chris Healy from Blue Bunny has been invited this meeting so we can hear of their youth-centered practices.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Marie entertained a motion for approval of the minutes of the January 12, 2006 meeting. Cecil Robinson motioned for approval. Lynnette Robinson seconded. The group approved the minutes as submitted.

IOU COMMISSION OVERVIEW – Marie

The “IOU” commission is Utah’s response to a national initiative organized by the PEW Commission on Children in Foster Care, to improve outcomes for this population. Former Governor Walker and Chief Justice Christine Durham agreed that Utah needed a local version of the PEW commission and the IOU commission was born. The IOU commission is a nonpartisan group comprised of legislators, child welfare agencies, judges, foster parents, etc., that receives funding from PEW Institute out of Georgetown University. Justice Durham is chair of IOU Commission on Utah foster children. The PEW commission focuses on two primary areas: federal financing, and oversight of child welfare systems regarding decisions of national consequence.

The Utah child welfare system leads the nation in many outcomes and service provided. Utah’s IOU Commission somewhat mirrors the national model – ensuring input from business, education, faith-based resources, the three branches of government, etc. IOU formed five subcommittees – executive, financing, kinship care services, public awareness, and oversight for the Transition to Adult Living initiative. Focus on the public awareness idea is to educate community leaders about child welfare system and what the family goes through, how the system functions. Marie handed out a document that outlined an immersion process to demonstrate the entire process of foster care. Utah uses a similar process through court system – shelter hearing, etc. The idea behind this is to educate community leaders so they can help advocate and educate the public. Utah does not want the system defined by what the news media. The IOU Commission will do this process several times with different community leaders.

Transition to Adult Living – IOU wants to support and extend the initiatives created by the TAL Implementation Team. One of the improvements is extending Medicaid for youth aging out of foster care to 21 years old. Members of the IOU Commission and former foster care youth lobbied the Legislature and it made huge impact. TAL attempts to ensure that bringing agencies and organizations together for the benefit of at-risk youth prevents the duplication of services.

TRANSITION TO ADULT LIVING OUTCOME EVALUATION

(handout) – Amanda Singer presented preliminary data about youth affected by the

TAL initiative and their outcomes. If you need information on this presentation, contact Amanda - asinger@utah.gov. **ACTION:** She will provide SYC members a copy of the final report.

In spring 2004 when the TAL initiative was getting underway, there was a national movement to look at services and outcomes for youth leaving foster care, it did not appear that this population was doing very well. When TAL started, how did Utah kids fare? Through the data warehouse system comprised of various State agencies, DHS was able to glean outcome information about the youth who left foster care from 1999 to 2004. These youth were not doing so well. DHS examined two cohorts so far. Youth leaving foster care from 1999 to 2001, and youth leaving foster care from 2002 to 2004. What has happened to those youth?

Nine hundred twenty six youth left foster care from 1999-2004. Approximately one hundred fifty foster kids transitioned out this year. Marie stated that the majority of work in DCFS is not in foster care, but working with the households for stability so that removal is not required. Pam Russell stated there are approx 2100 children in foster care in Utah each day. Of those 2100 children/young adults from birth to age 18, youth 14 years and older number just over 1000 of these kids. DCFS is currently in the process of getting data from public education about the academic success of youth in foster care.

Court involvement

Amanda continued the presentation by drawing attention to the fact that 37% of youth exiting foster care in the second cohort had felony or misdemeanor arrests within 3 years of leaving care. When combining data about the first and second cohort and looking at all arrests for all youths having been out of foster care for three years or more, up to 45% had arrests. Someone asked about whether or not this data includes youth who moved from foster care to the juvenile justice system. Amanda indicated that all were DCFS kids at the point of data collection. She is working on collecting outcome data for youth involved with the juvenile justice system later. The Transition to Adult Living initiative intends to positively affect the lives of both youth in foster care and youth involved with the juvenile justice system. In terms of good news, when comparing youth leaving care in 2003 with those leaving care in 1999, the 2003 group had 36% fewer felony arrests, but a 70% increase in misdemeanor arrests. The first two years after leaving care seem to be the most difficult in relation to the justice system, with some improvements showing in the third year.

Child bearing

Amanda discussed the birth rate of youth leaving foster care. There was a 52% increase in child bearing within 3 years of leaving care between 1999 and 2003. Young women leaving foster care are giving birth at a rate two and a half times the average of their peers in the general population. Someone asked if these young women are working, and receiving employment support childcare services from DWS. Amanda did not have an answer, but she can do additional research.

Employment/Wages

The good news is 86% of the youth in the second cohort had wages reported through DWS wage data system within 3 years of leaving care. The bad news is these young people live below the poverty level within 2 years of leaving care, and some of them are living considerably below. Someone asked if the data would improve if the time reviewed were the past 5 years instead of three. The answer is yes; however, the period was limited to three years for this particular study. Historical data shows that over time, wages typically improve. DCFS could run a comparison between the two cohorts and the public of similar ages.

Amanda explained the income of these youth compared to their peers. These young people earned an average of \$5,754 while their peers earned \$8,116, an average of 70% of their peers' average. Wages are not improving over time; it appears that these youth are not working full time in even a minimum wage job.

Employment and Training

TAL created a solid partnership between DCFS and DWS/WIA youth programs and DWS/WI provides employment and training programs to TAL youth. In 1999, approximately 4% of the WIA youth population was youth in foster care. By 2004 the WIA youth populations was approximately 17% youth in foster care. The WIA system delivers Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds to eligible youth involved with foster care. The funds help youth pursue post secondary education and provide necessary support. The program began in September 2004 when six youth received funding. There are currently 43 Utah youth receiving ETV funds, a 416% increase, half of which continue to get payments in 2006. The WIA system assists young people with career planning, assesses vocational skill needs, and helps youth make informed decisions about educational direction. The intent is to get youth into appropriate post-secondary training, not necessarily just four-year degrees. Pam reiterated that ETV is not just for bachelor degrees, but for technical and vocational training as well. ETV differs from WIA in that it can support up to four years of post-secondary education, where WIA supports a maximum of two years.

Supportive Services

Food Stamps. Fifty per– 50% of youth who left foster care received Food Stamps within 3 years of exit. This population receives them at a rate 9 times higher the general comparative population. The presumption ties this phenomenon to low wages. Foods Stamp participation has doubled from 1999 to 2004. There was discussion about why this may be, and Food Stamp participation may be lower for the public in the comparative age because youth under age 21 are typically living with or getting resources from their family. Many foster parents continue a connection even after age 18, but many youth want to break that connection and be on their own. Some foster youth will reconnect with a former foster family after they become an adult. Foods Stamp participation occurs more in first two years after leaving care then decline afterwards.

Medicaid. This year, the Legislature extended eligibility for Medicaid until foster youth turn 21. This represents an additional two years of eligibility. Medicaid participation for

the first cohort was very limited. Data indicates a small increase in 2002, which has leveled off in 2003/2004. Someone asked why the increase in 2002? Pam interjected that it is likely the result of marketing to youth and their foster parents while still in care. There are still fewer participants that expected and some of the reasons are youth do not want to participate; some earn enough that they are not eligible. Part of the problem is that once a youth leaves care, DCFS has difficulty finding them so they can inform them. DCFS is working with the Health Department on presumptive eligibility for those leaving care at 18. Eligibility would continue unless a youth specifically ask to not receive it.

Why does health insurance matter? Forty seven percent of youth leaving care have diagnosis of depression or other mental health issues before leaving care. Sixteen percent of 18-24 year olds report being depressed. Other reported conditions include obesity, diabetes, and asthma. Pam stated that DCFS researched and reported on the physical and mental health conditions of 354 high-risk youth for the legislature. Out of these, 323 were on some type of medication. This list did not include birth control.

General Assistance. DWS provides General Assistance for those not eligible for SSI. Thirteen and a half percent of youth leaving care were on GA. In 1991, this statistic was 10%, in 2004 it was 7%. Someone asked for information about the comparative general population. Amanda indicated that she did not have that.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). DWS delivers TANF benefits to single head-of-households, which are generally women with children. Sixty eight percent of the former foster care youth who were mothers received TANF within 3 years of leaving care. That statistic increased to 86.36% in 2003 when the economy in Utah was declining.

Employment Support Childcare. DWS delivers subsidized child care eligible families who are working or in training. Thirty eight percent of former foster care youth who are mothers received childcare within 3 years. This is an increased when comparing the first cohort with the second. Thirty one percent of those who left care in 1999 received subsidized childcare; the 2003 data indicates 50% receiving childcare. The most recent data shows that wages are going down for this population of young mothers. For example, in 2003, after 3 years out of foster care, these youth earn 58% of the wages earned by the mothers who left in 1999.

ACTION: The group suggested that Regional Youth Councils increase the service priority point value for pregnant or parenting youth.

Other Follow up Services by DHS. Data indicates that 3% received other follow up services from DCFS in 1999, 50% in 2004. Counseling services increased five times since TAL began. Data indicates that youth leaving foster care received some sort of domestic violence services; 1% in 1999, 3% in 2004. This data is about youth who received services within 3 years of leaving care and the services were for those who were perpetrators or victims.

Transitional Support Funds. Transitional Support Funds are available to youth leaving foster care in the amount of up to \$2000.00 per year per youth. Not all youth access these funds, and the intent is that the use is to assist with successful independence. There has been a 793% increase in the use of these funds from 1999 to 2004. This huge increase is the result of many factors, including a marketing campaign, and more availability from 1999 –2004.

Driver's License. This is one of the big issues that youth wanted the TAL Implementation Team's assistance with overcoming the barrier of their inability to get a driver's license. Current data indicates that there was a 64% increase in the number of youth leaving foster care and getting a driver's license within 3 years of leaving care. Rural areas demonstrate the biggest increase. There is a correlation between having a driver's license and wage earning.

In Summary:

- Able to obtain Driver's license
- Increased E & T services (WIA)
- Increased participation in Medicaid
- Reduction in felonies arrests
- Continuing Issues
- Increased misdemeanor arrests
- Low wages, living in poverty
- Increased births
- Low participation in Medicaid

Recommendations:

- Help youth maintain employment and earn a living wage
- Maintain supportive relationships during the first 2 years after leaving care
- Target youth at risk of criminal activity
- Improve access to health care – mental health, substance abuse, and physical health
- Reduce birth rate

Marie asked the group to e-mail Amanda with any other suggestions/recommendations so she can incorporate them into the study. **ACTION:** Amanda will send the final report to this group, the IOU commission, the TAL Implementation Team, and the State Council. Jane asked the group to take this information to Regional Youth Councils and review it there for recommendations. Paul asked if we could get this information by each region and use numbers instead of percentages. Amanda stated she would break the data down to the Regional level, include the numbers, and send to everyone.

EMPLOYER HIGHLIGHT

Chris Healy, Human Resources Director at Blue Bunny gave a presentation about the St. George frozen and fresh foods processing company. Blue Bunny moved an arm of it's Wisconsin firm to St. George approximately three years ago. The parent company is

Well's Dairy, established in 1913. It is a private company worth nearly one billion dollars. The goal is to become the third largest frozen and fresh foods processing company, which would place them behind Nestles and Unilever. Approximately 3000 people work for Blue Bunny, most of them in LaMars, Iowa. Chris stated that Blue Bunny is most different company that she has ever worked.

There are five plants altogether. The "milk" plant processes and packages cottage cheese, yogurts and dips. The plant in St. George processes and packages various sizes of ice cream. There is also a Blue Bunny ice cream parlor in St. George, and one in LeMars, Iowa. The parlor in St. George is part of their marketing effort.

Blue Bunny is a youth-friendly employer. Young people can begin their career working in the ice cream parlor, which is a pleasant place for introduction into the workforce. Staff at the ice cream parlor concentrate on ensuring the youth learn work-readiness skills such as punctuality, responding to instruction from supervisors, leadership and conflict resolution. They employ youth as young as 15 and provide a stimulating and fun work environment. The average workday includes a lot of singing and dancing and having fun. After the age of 18, a youth can work in plant doing facility maintenance for starting wages of \$10.72 per hour. Machine attendant starts \$11.75 per hour. A machine operator or assistant operator earns \$17.00 per hour. Ice cream freezer stackers earn \$17.00 per hour. Maintenance workers earn \$20-25 per hour. A college education is not mandatory for promotion; however, Blue Bunny recognizes the value of a college education and provides a tuition assistance program based on the number of years of service. Chris mentioned that Blue Bunny is enthusiastic about working with WIA eligible youth in area as a cooperative project.

REGIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL REPORTS

Leadership Development Projects

Northern – Futures Through Training: Got kids together to organize clothing, food, toy drive for needy families. Case managers put five youth on committee and identified families. Hold fundraisers with school and community with a get-together in park, providing food and music. Anticipate 40 youth participating.

Western – St. George, Kanab, Cedar City, Beaver: Brought youth together to volunteer at Best Friends Sanctuary to assign youth different responsibilities in planning project. Will be clearing tumbleweeds and painting fences, making trails so volunteers can walk animals through these trails.

Delta office: Working with Millard County USU extension painting fences at Millard County fairgrounds, 10 youth involved, 25 anticipated to participate.

Fillmore: Stenciling numbers on back of chairs at old Statehouse.

Nephi: Chamber of Commerce agreed to donate funds for small gifts to give residents of care center. Youth to visit care center and spend time with residents there. Showing video "Making Memories" with music video from their era. Serving cookies and punch.

Manti: Suggested volunteering in library for June for story hour. Through month will volunteer.

Richfield, Loa, Junction: Sending supplies to soldiers in Iraq. Speakers at National Guard offices on services available to returning service people.

Panguitch: One youth participating, working with him to do service project at New Veterans Memorial Center.

North: Identified elderly shut in people who need help with yard work, light repair work around home, organized groups of 8-10 people of Box Elder county and Cache county to partner and work with youth city councils on this project. Identified 8-10 elderly people in each county for this kind of work.

Central – Two youth groups, one in SLC and Tooele. Tooele met with leaders to determine project, special flower planning project for city of Tooele. Working with local vendors and county people on how many flowers and where to plant them for 30 youth. In SL County met with agencies and community groups for YWCA domestic shelter. Have several youth to tie quilts of different sizes for children. Mother's get some quasi interviews and determine specific items needs. 25 youth will go to gather donations and contributions to meet those needs.

Eastern has 3 different projects.

Vernal: Youth chose *Turn off the TV* week. Partnering with Uintah County, school districts, libraries, etc. involved in crafts, cooking gardening, cheerleading, camp, etc.

Roosevelt: Youth will be planting flowers in planters along Main Street. Have luncheon with motivational speaker afterwards

Moab: Annual Jeep Safari clean up. Pick up trash in area called Potato Salad Hill after the Annual Jeep Safari.

Mountainland: Youth painted murals on walls and re-carpeted the House of Hope for mothers and their children staying there. They also bought educational items for the children's room. Approximately 125 youth participated in this activity.

NEWSLETTER DISCUSSION

Distribution list has grown and we are seeking it to grow even further. If you have suggestions for distribution, please forward to Julie Lay at Jlay@utah.gov or Jane Broadhead at Jbroadh@utah.gov. We would like to feature stories from our partners as

well and ask you to submit success stories from your organizations. Suggestions and comments can also be addressed to Julie or Jane.

Table discussion for Contract Monitoring at our July meeting.

Out of time. Discussion for July, have goal setting be bulk of meeting with discussion. Set goals for PY 2006.

Exploring self-interests – sent via email to all members. Bring to meeting in July. Items from two-year state plan in relation to engaging ourselves as a group. Make sure youth council is meeting your needs as member as well as making plans for improving services and outcomes for youth.

Jane will send out electronically the information that Steve Maas presented in state council yesterday to help with goal planning.

70% FUNDING – Jane

Law requires we spend 30% of WIA youth one on out-of-school youth. With reauthorization will move to increase to 50-50 or 70-30 split in other direction. Instruction from DOL requesting to move to common measures. Nine measures are related to youth. Move will simplify our lives because won't measure younger and older youth. Skills will be easier to strategize service delivery around. Instructions from DOL say must spend more money on out-of-school youth. 30% of money spend on in school will be on targeted populations – foster care, Juvenile Justice, most at risk of dropping out and provide services to these populations.

Jane's recommendation is to move from 50% to 70% out of school youth level. Will we still have latitude in regions to modify contracts to do both? Yes. 70-30 split with 70% out of school. If feel too high can set at whatever group decides. We are currently meeting 50-50 expenditure. Report is in packet under state youth council tab. Statewide expenditure level is 61% out-of-school youth. Nearing 70% mark. This is expenditures, not # of youth served. Paul moved for approval of the 70-30 split Richard seconded the motion. The motion carried. Will use next year to transition from July 06 - June 07.

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: July 20