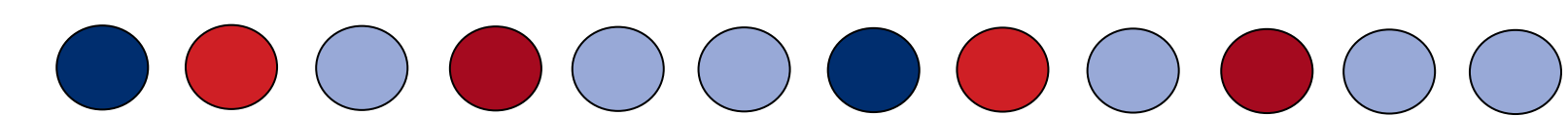


Creating a "Picture of a Life": Empowering and Supporting Foster Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities toward Positive Futures

Jacy Farkas, MA; Lynne Tomasa, MSW, PhD – Sonoran UCEDD, University of Arizona

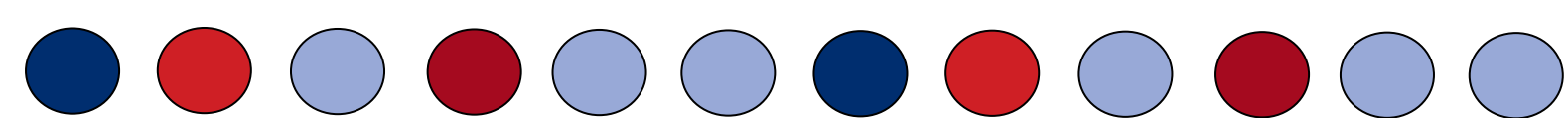
Melissa Kushner, MSW – AZ DES, Division of Developmental Disabilities

"Picture of a Life" Project



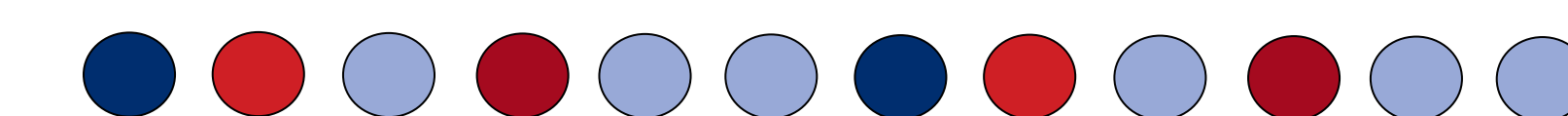
- Collaborative state-wide project funded by the Arizona DD Planning Council and managed by the Sonoran UCEDD and DDD (state DD agency) – Currently in third year
- Targets young adults age 14-18 years with DD making their transition into adulthood and aging out of the child welfare system
- Focus on youth ineligible for Arizona Long Term Care Services first

Goals and Objectives



- Improve transition outcomes for foster youth with DD**
 - Develop PCPs for 35 youth built on strengths, dreams and choices
 - Increase knowledge about options available
 - Build on strengths of informal and formal supports and community networks to support young adults
 - Support youth to attend self-advocacy & determination trainings through partnerships with ABIL & DIRECT
 - Support youth to create personal Health Care Organizers to improve long-term health and well being through partnership with the Office of Children with Special Health Care Needs (OCSHCN)
- Train facilitators – grow the cadre of people able to facilitate plans in Arizona**
 - 45 trained to date – 20 active in project
- Ultimately, to improve services for youth with DD exiting foster care in Arizona by offering a mechanism for youth to exercise meaningful choices**

Year 3 Evaluation



Youth

- Survey: Pre, Post, Annual Follow-up
 - Identification of health changes in past year
 - Help or support received from mental health providers
 - Self determination through decision making/choices
 - Self advocacy through asking what individual wants or needs
 - Skills necessary to find work
 - Process and steps to finding a job
 - Definition of "success"
 - Sense of achievement
- Interviews – 3
- Review of PCP | ISP

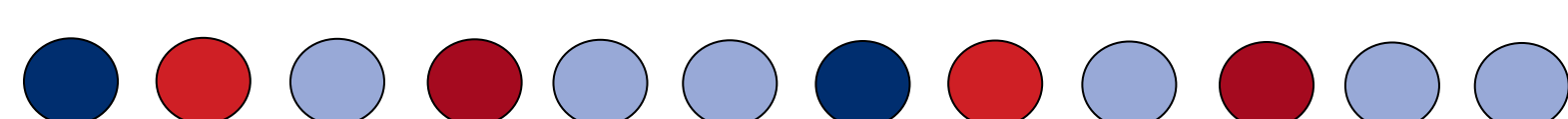
Facilitators

- Surveys: Pre, Post, Annual Follow-up
 - Impact the foster care system has on youth
 - Defining "success for the youth"
 - How well facilitator definition of "success" matches that of youth
 - Rating of youth's achievement
 - How well did expectations about "achievement" match that of youth
 - Ability to address sensitive topics such as abuse
 - Coordination across multiple service systems
 - Improved communication among service systems
- Facilitator Interviews – 3

Youth with I/DD in Foster Care: Tools to Achieve Success

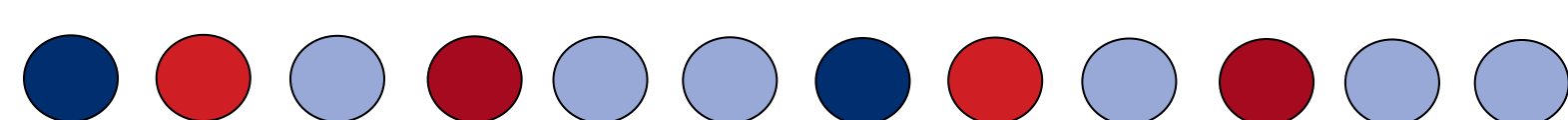


Challenges



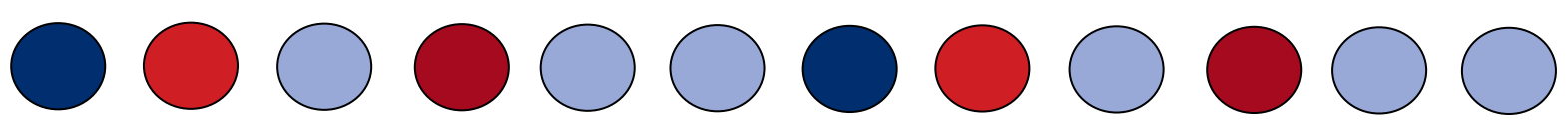
- Nature of Child Welfare placements
 - Complicated personal histories – trauma, abuse
 - Issues of victims becoming perpetrators
 - Issues surrounding reunification with family members who were abusers or practice unsafe lifestyles
- Enrolled in multiple service systems: DDD, DCS, VR, behavioral health, special education
 - Obtaining full participation and everyone on the same page
 - Turnover/Changes in case managers/support coordinators
- Transient lifestyle – transfer to new residential placements
- Circle of support limited to paid professionals
- Time and effort needed to complete plans

Lessons Learned So Far



- Starting early is important
- Participation from different players difficult to obtain - Lack of consistency of people in youth's life
- Due to sensitive information, a pre-meeting with the youth to build rapport and contact with case managers/support coordinators
- Ongoing support and education for facilitators

Acknowledgements



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Planning for the Future: Person-Centered Planning

Need for more intensive transition planning to address:



- Hopes & Dreams
- Preferences
- Strengths & Abilities
- Housing
- Employment
- Independent Living Skills



Self-Advocacy & Determination

- Picture YOUR Life Academy**
6 weekly workshops provided by 2 Independent Living Centers
 - Promote informed decision making
 - Promote involvement in community
- Health Care Organizers**
 - Facilitators support youth to create their own
 - Training & materials provided by OCSHCN

Systems Support

- MOU between VR & DDD**
2 dedicated VR Counselors to work exclusively with DDD eligible youth in foster care
- Department of Child Safety (DCS – Formerly CPS)**
Legal Guardians of youth in foster care – increased involvement of Case Managers in PCP Project
- Behavioral Health**
Many of the youth have co-occurring behavioral health diagnoses

