

Creating a "Picture of a Life" for Transitioning Youth with DD in Foster Care: Preliminary Data & Next Steps

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Creating a "Picture of a Life" Project

The Sonoran UCEDD, in collaboration with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD, state DD agency) and support from the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, has implemented a state-wide project to improve outcomes for foster youth with developmental disabilities, one of our most vulnerable populations. Our vision is that young people with DD in foster care will be knowledgeable about the full range of choices available to them for successful adult living and will be able to exercise that choice as part of a person-centered planning (PCP) process incorporating informal support and community networks in addition to paid service providers. The project focuses on developing life plans with community involvement and PCP implementation for foster youth with DD ages 16 – 18 to plan and mobilize services to meet their individual needs as they make their transition into adulthood and age out of the child welfare system. The project began August 1, 2012 and is currently in its second year.



Goals & Objectives

The goal of the project is to prepare youth with DD who are about to exit foster care to exercise choice, promote the use of informal and community supports and to make knowledgeable decisions on community living and work by:

- ✦ Growing the cadre of Person-Centered Planning facilitators in order to build system capacity and expertise
- ✦ Developing and supporting implementation of person-centered plans for youth with DD in foster care where their preferences are elicited and informal supports are utilized
- ✦ Supporting youth to attend self-advocacy and self-determination workshops

Ultimately, this model project will help to improve services for this population in Arizona by offering a mechanism for youth to exercise meaningful choice about their living arrangements, work life, social networks and services.

BACKGROUND

Statistics

- ✦ There are over 500,000 children in foster care in the US
- ✦ Studies purport any where from 20 – 60% of foster children have some level of disability
- ✦ As of March 2013 there are 14,314 children in the child welfare system in Arizona
- ✦ As of October 2013, there are over 485 children who are served by the AZ Division of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF, child welfare system) and Division of Developmental Disabilities

History of Negative Transition Outcomes for Foster Youth

- ✦ More likely to drop out of high school
- ✦ Less likely to attain post-secondary education
- ✦ 22% experience homelessness throughout adulthood
- ✦ 33% have no health insurance
- ✦ Only 43% gain employment with 47% of the employed earning wages below the FPL
- ✦ By the age of 19, 50% of young women have been pregnant
- ✦ By age 19, 38% have been arrested

Foster youth face significant challenges to leading successful adult lives; when compounded with the complexities of living with DD, this transition can be even more daunting and increase the barriers to success.

References:

Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families (2013). Child Welfare Reporting Requirements Semi-annual Report for the Period of October 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013.

National Council on Disability (2008). Youth with Disabilities in the Foster Care System: Barriers to Success and Proposed Policy Solutions.

YR1 ACTIVITIES & DATA

Activities

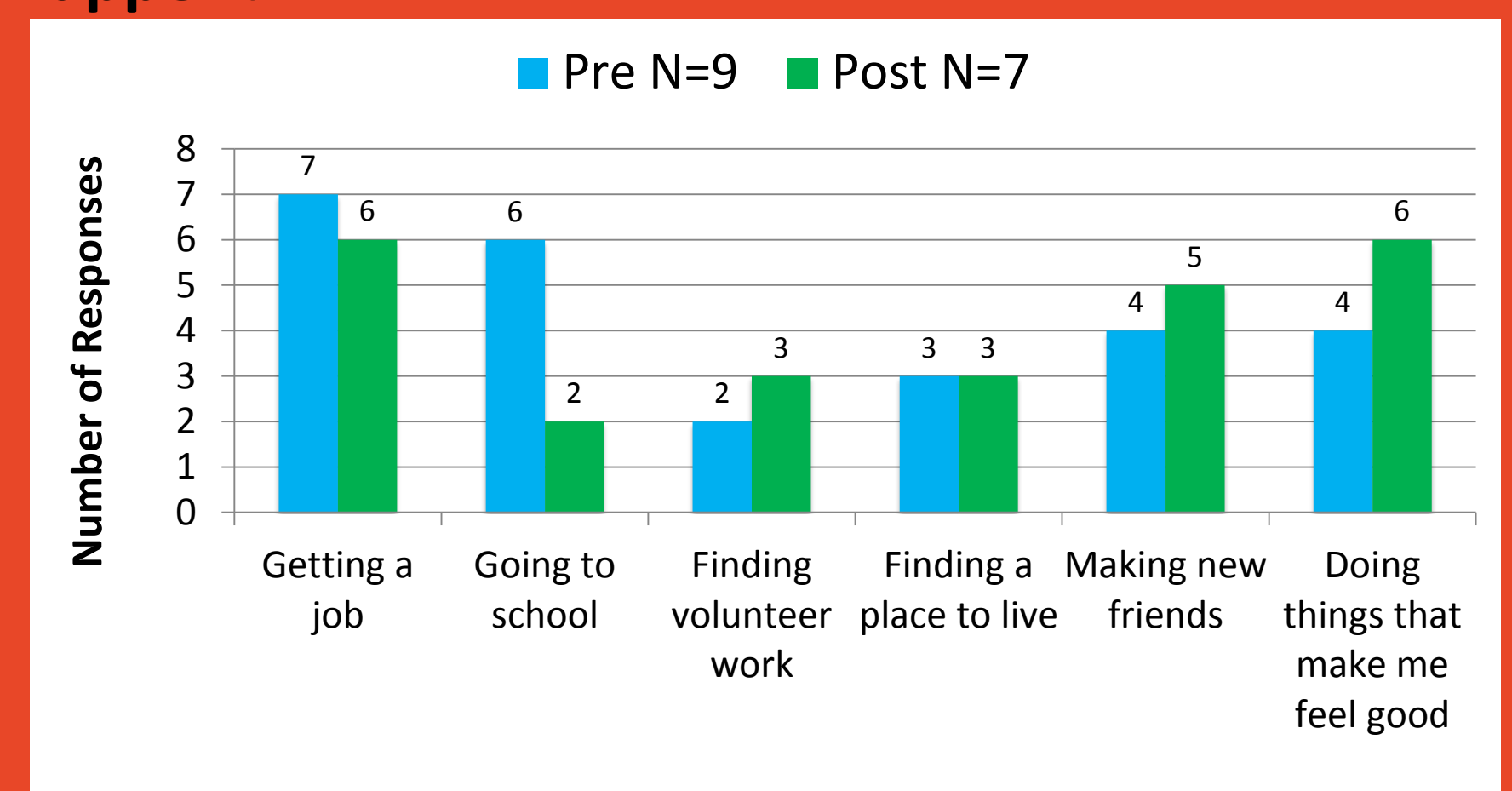
- ✦ 10 youth enrolled in DCYF/DDD
 - Counties: Maricopa – 7, Pima – 2, Cochise – 1
 - Completion of person-centered plans & follow up
- ✦ Trained 10 PCP Facilitators
 - 2-day in person training with Michael Smull
 - Four 2-hour webinars with Michael Smull – topics included “toxic to healing environments,” “handling sensitive information,” “building trust & enhancing partnerships,” and “strategies for dealing with difficult or complicated team dynamics”
 - Facilitators’ web forum for peer support and resources
- ✦ Evaluation
 - Pre & Post planning surveys for both youth and facilitators
 - Surveys incorporated both quantifiable and qualitative questions
 - Review and analysis of PCPs and webinar transcripts



Preliminary Data & Highlights

| Youth: | Outcome | Measures by # of Youth | Percentage |
|----------|---|------------------------|------------|
| Pre = 9 | PCP has concrete steps for obtaining permanent living arrangements | 7 | 70% |
| Post = 7 | PCP has concrete steps to plan for future employment incorporating job exploration and post-secondary education opportunities | 8 | 80% |
| | Youth are better prepared for life after high school | 5 | 71% |

PRE: What kinds of plans do you have right now?
POST: What kind of things are in your PCP that you want to happen?

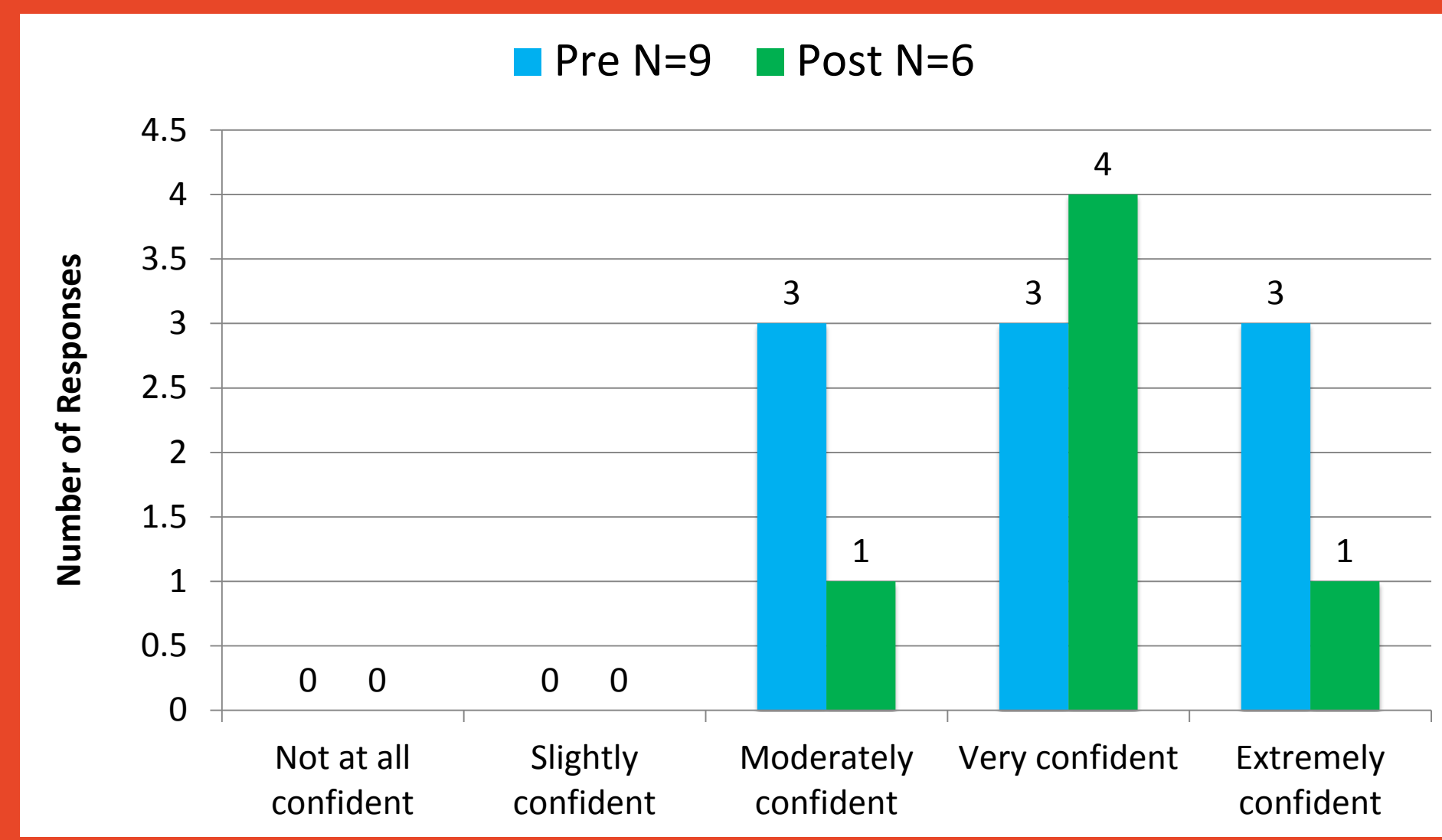


The program empowered the youth and were interested in focusing on getting a job, making new friends, and doing things that made them feel good. The social aspect of staying connected with others is an important area to focus on regarding making sure that these resources are available to them.

Facilitators:

Pre = 9 (project director served as facilitator, recused from evaluation)
Post = 6 (3 facilitators dropped out)

How confident do you feel about taking action steps for implementing the youth's vision?



We are not comparing the post with the pre. The main point is that the facilitators went into the program feeling fairly confident. During and after the process of PCP, facilitators became more aware of the issues and potential challenges and the responses were more varied. Yet, there was a positive shift toward gaining more confidence.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ Nature of DCYF placement
 - 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, DCYF, behavioral health (BH), special education
- ✦ Obtaining full participation and everyone on the same page
- ✦ Circle of support limited to paid professionals
- ✦ Time and effort needed to complete plans

NEXT STEPS

Expansion of Activities in YR2

- ✦ Facilitators
 - Trained 30 new facilitators – 18 accepted for project
 - Provide 4 webinars with Michael Smull
- ✦ Youth
 - Follow along with YR1 cohort (plan implementation & tracking outcomes)
 - 20 new youth – PCPs
 - Provide self-advocacy & self-determination workshops through 2 state independent living centers (ILCs)
- ✦ Evaluation
 - YR 1 Cohort – 2 follow up surveys for youth to track outcomes and 1 end of year survey for their facilitators
 - YR 2 Cohort – Pre & Post planning surveys for both youth and facilitators; webinar transcript analysis
- ✦ Strengthen & Create New Partnerships: ILCs, VR, BH, DCYF

For more information or comments, please contact
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