Life After High School for Young Adults with Mental Health Conditions

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Agenda

- Life after high school
- Challenges
- Suggestions
- Resources
Center for Change in Transition Services

- State Needs Project funded by WA Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Housed at Seattle University since 2004 (UW 1990–2004)
- Provides training, technical assistance & resources to every school district in Washington State with high schools
- Conducts follow-up studies with every special education student one year after graduating or dropping out of high school to determine rate of attendance in post-secondary education, training and employment (6,993 young adults for the last study)
Washington State Post-School Special Education Data 2011–2012 Leavers

- Not Engaged: 34%
- Higher Education: 25%
- Competitively Employed: 23%
- Other Education or Training: 5%
- Other Employment: 13%
- Not Engaged: 34%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>State Graduates</th>
<th>State Non-Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Engaged</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Employment</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Education or Training</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitively Employed</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One in five young people have some type of mental, behavioral or emotional problem; one in ten are significant issues.

One in eight adolescents have depression.

20% of adolescents with major depression develop bipolar disorder within 5 years of onset.
Definition of Problem (cont.)

- Only 30% of students struggling with these issues receive treatment.
- Untreated mental health conditions can lead to problems in school, dropping out, criminal activities, and a higher risk of suicide.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people 15 – 24.

(National Institute of Mental Health, 2012)
Gaps in Young Adult Outcomes
Life after High School

- Fewer than half of students with mental health conditions complete high school.
- Employment is consistently less robust than peers without mental health conditions.
- Homelessness and arrests are high.
- In a 2012 study in WA state, 59% of youth with EBD dropped out.
Post-School Employment

- U.S. Population: 62%
- NLTS2 All: 55%
- NLTS2 ED: 42%
WA State Special Education Post-School Data by Disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>State EBD</th>
<th>State SLD</th>
<th>State ID</th>
<th>State Others</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Engaged</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Employment</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Education or Training</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitively Employed</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Service Gaps
In Age Continuity of Services

Between Child & Adult Mental Health Services

Within & Across Systems

In Effective, Developmentally Appropriate, and Appealing Services
Public Service System

**CHILD SYSTEM**
- Special Education
- Child Welfare
- Juvenile Justice
- Child Mental Health

**ADULT SYSTEM**
- Criminal Justice
- Adult Mental Health
- Housing
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Substance Abuse

**18-21 Yrs.**

**Birth** → AGE → Death
Recommended Practices for Transition to Life after High School

- Student-focused planning
- Student development
- Interagency collaboration
- Family Involvement
- Self-determination
- Advocacy
Student-focused Planning

- Decision-making
- Planning
- Setting realistic expectations
- Understanding the effects of behavior and choices on plans
Issues for Student-focused Planning

- Disability may disrupt plans for the future and fragile emerging identities
- “What will I become as an adult?”
- “Who have I become since the illness/disability?”
- “What are my strengths and challenges?”

Student focused planning provides opportunities to probe beyond the surface answers and get to the core of the goals, hopes, fears and dreams students have for their futures.
Student Development

- Academic skills
- Personal care
- Home management
- Safety
- Employment
- Communication
- Self-management
Interagency Collaboration

- Agencies identified based on post-school goals
- Disability Student Services (2- and 4-year colleges)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (employment-training)
- Employment Security (employment)
- Mental health services
- Community resources for recreation and leisure activities
- Advocacy organizations (DBSA, NAMI, other)
Family Involvement

- Family involvement predicts post-school success and contributes to autonomy and self-determination
- Families can influence the transition process by creating a future vision, participating in the planning process, and facilitating self-determination
- Families can help guide student through the medical agencies
Self-Determination

- One’s ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (Field & Hoffman, 1994)
  - Know strengths & weaknesses, needs & preferences.
  - Know options & what is important
  - Accept & value one’s self
  - Recognize & respect rights & responsibilities
  - Take care of one’s self
  - Plan & act; take risks, be persistent, deal with conflict, negotiate, communicate
  - Experience outcomes & learn
Self-determination, continued

- Choice-making
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Goal-setting and attainment
- Self-observation skills
- Self-evaluation skills
Advocacy

- Advocating for self
- Awareness of discrepancies
- Advocating for others
- Support groups
- Personal voice
- Collective voice
Strategies must...

- Be relevant
- Flexible
- Caring
**Motivation & Initiative**

- **Motivation** – moved to do something
  - Motivational interviewing
  - Identify intrinsic motivators and incorporate into activities
  - Use students’ own words when writing goals
  - Break goals into small, manageable steps
  - Help students develop self-monitoring systems
Motivation & **Initiative**

- **Initiation** – starting an activity or thought process
  - Incorporate routines into the student’s life
  - Students use technology or graphic organizers
  - Provide cuing (student’s own voice)
  - Advance organizers, checklists, series of photos, written schedules
Motivational Interviewing

- Collaboration vs. confrontation
- Drawing out vs. imposing ideas
- Autonomy vs. authority
Developing a Plan

- All plans should use the student’s language whenever possible
- Schedule as many conversations as necessary for the process to be revised and meaningful.
- Goal is to have a transition plan in place 2 years before leaving the school system
- Look for ways to involve the parent, care-taker or family
- Encourage self-advocacy
- Support students within the natural contexts of school and community
Question 1—What Am I Doing Right Now?

- What is your school schedule? What is easy for you? What is hard?
- On a scale of 1–10, what does school feel like to you? Why?
- What’s your favorite (class, teacher, event, moment in the day...)?
- How are you spending time outside of school?
- What does life feel like for you?
Question 2—Who Am I? What are my strengths?

To elicit the most information, use open-ended statements or questions such as:

- I feel empowered when…;
  - I love it when I get to…;
  - I feel great when...
- Others see this in me...

- What do you enjoy?
- What makes you want to come to school?
Question 3—What are my goals?

- If you could wish for anything to happen for yourself this year, what would it be?
- In the next year (2 years, 3 years, 5 years) what do you want to happen in your life?
- If I ran into you on the street next year, what would have changed for you? What have you accomplished?
- On a scale of 1–10, how do you rate your life now? What would make it a 10?
- What do you want your life to look like after high school?” or “What don’t you want your life to look like?
Goals for Education

- What would you like to study?
- What works best for you, small classes or large classes? Lectures or hands on?
- Where would you like to study?
- How many years do you want to go to school?
- How do you plan on paying for your education?
- Will you work while you go to school?
- Where will you live when you go to school?
- Who will make your meals, do your laundry?
- How will you get to your classes?
Question 4: What Behaviors Do I Need to Change Or What Steps Do I Need To Complete To Reach My Goal?

- What are the obstacles that will keep you from reaching your goal?
- What do you need to do in order to ____________________________?
- What behaviors do you need to change to get to ____________________________?
What is it about being [a doctor] that makes you want to become one?

What are the tasks that [doctors] do that you would enjoy?

Tell me more about what it takes to become [a doctor]?

What would you need to be doing right now in school?

What are the 3 things you would like doing the most if you were a [doctor]?

The end result is to determine the root of his/her vocational dream.
Finding Employment

- Use (and don’t be afraid to use) family and friend connections
  - Informational interviews
  - Services to search for jobs of interest
  - Developing a “package” with resume, etc.
  - Identifying “marketable skills”
Thoughts for Teachers

- Don’t turn away
- Notice every student every day
- Gather data on health, education, social needs
- Communicate with families
- Advocate for student with administrators, others
- Develop robust transition plans and provide services.
Thoughts for Families

- Listen (don’t try to fix it)
- Be careful with advice
- Be there (don’t try to fix it)
- Offer to do even small things that may be overwhelming
- Accompany to meetings that may be stressful (DSS, doctor, employer)
- Mentor, not lecture
Young people cannot be expected to take responsibility for themselves when systems communicate that they are not capable of making decisions about their own treatment or services.
Resources for Youth & Young Adults

- The Balanced Mind: www.thebalancedmind.org
- Active Minds: www.activeminds.org/
- Half of Us: www.halfofus.com/
- The Transition Year: www.transitionyear.org/
- The Trevor Project: www.thetrevorproject.org/
- Strength of Us: www.strengthofus.org/
Resources: Families

- National Alliance on Mental Illness: www.nami.org/
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance: www.dbsalliance.org
- The Balanced Mind: www.thebalancedmind.org
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov/
NAMI often has volunteer positions in the regional offices in your area: http://www.nami.org

Active Minds has internship opportunities: http://www.activeminds.org/

The Depression Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) has a new young adult group and volunteer opportunities: http://www.dbsalliance.org/
Take Action

- Contact your state and national representatives to make sure that they are on the side of individuals struggling with mental health conditions. By taking action and contacting your representatives you can help organizations get the support they deserve as well as help change laws that may be harmful to the mental health community. Here are some great websites to help you take action:
  - NAMI’s Legislative Action Center
  - Mental Health America has a great “Action Center”
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