



## Texans Care for Children Mental Health Forum Youth Aging out of Foster Care

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### Federal Child Welfare Outcomes

- Safety
- Permanency
- Well-Being
  1. Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
  2. Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
  3. **Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

## The Texas System

- 14,000 children will pass through the Texas CPS system in one year
- 91% will exit the system to a family
- 9% or 1,400 will emancipate from foster care to no one...
  - Average # of Placements: 8.6
  - Average Length in Care: 61.5 months
  - Median: 49.2 months

### My life crammed into a plastic bag

- faded photographs of other people
- every letter I had ever received
- mismatched holey socks
- dimestore tennies
- highwater jeans
- a tattered bible
- art supplies
- my pride
- hope



The official  
luggage of the  
foster care system

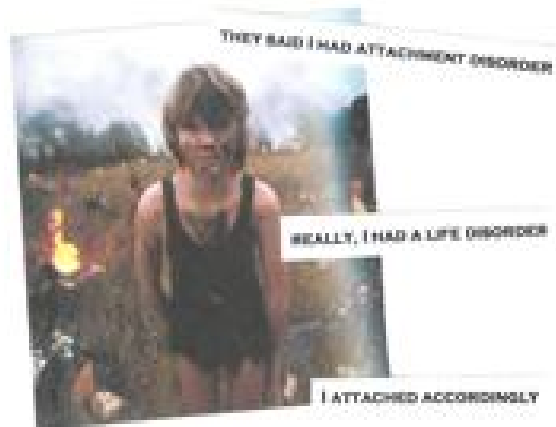
## Where Do the Children Come From?

- From families who love them but are struggling with...
  - Disenfranchised communities
  - Substance abuse
  - Mental illness
  - Poverty
  - Domestic Violence



## Growing Up in Foster Care Impacts Mental Health.....

- Misdiagnosis
- Overmedication to control behavior
- Behavior addressed rather than trauma
- Failed permanency attempts
- Frequent moves and more loss
- Congregate Care and RTC's



## What's Working Well for Our Youth

- Circle of Supports -- Transition Plans
- Federal Chafee Resources
- After Care Programs in each CPS Region
- Texas' Tuition & Fee Waiver
- Transitional Medicaid (Star Health)
- Re-Integration Project
- Extended Care
- Return to Care

## Youth Voice!!!!

- Foster Care Alumni of America (FCAA)
  - Started from a national foster care alumni movement in 1999
  - Alumni of foster care and allies may join

It's my life.

## FCAA Builds Communities that Celebrate the Culture of Foster Care

- An alumni community that is....
  - organized
  - supportive
  - independent
- An alumni community that builds....
  - skills
  - knowledge
  - resources
- A community that WILL impact positive change in the foster care system!





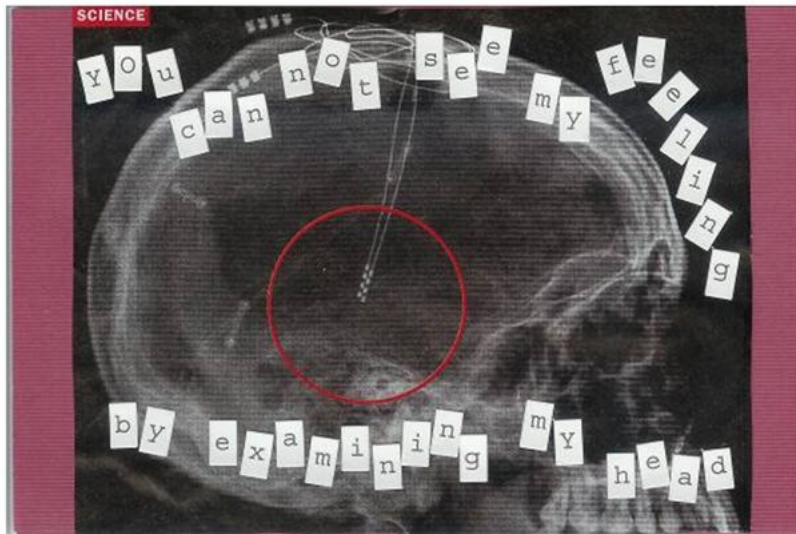
## **RB21 Youth Aging Out Subcommittee**

- Improve communication and coordination
- Identify and resolve entrenched problems and barriers
- Find creative, collaborative solutions
- Work in partnership to identify and take advantage of opportunities!



## **Mental Health Workgroup**

- Improve outcomes for youth aging out of care with persistent and severe mental health needs
- Improve coordination between systems serving this population (MHMR, DARS, CPS, ASH)
- Identify solutions and work to promote systemic changes



## Building Bridges

- Must prioritize youth with identified mental health needs early
- Need more mental health professionals willing to take Transitional Medicaid
- Need safe and supportive housing arrangements
- Need Mental Health Specialists at CPS
- Need Child Welfare Specialists in DARS and MH Authorities

They believed in me all along until I finally started to believe in myself.

[www.lifeworksweb.org](http://www.lifeworksweb.org)

[www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)

On any given night,  
up to 500 homeless youth  
do not have a safe place  
to sleep.



## To Contact Us:

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