

VCBH

Ventura County
Behavioral Health
Department

A Division of Ventura County Health Care Agency

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April 9, 2010

TO: Health Deputies

FROM: Meloney Roy, L.C.S.W.
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SUBJECT: **RESPONSE TO THE JANUARY 2010 SPECIAL REPORT OF THE
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY INSTITUTE (CAI) UNIVERSITY OF SAN
DIEGO SCHOOL OF LAW PROPOSITION 63: IS THE MHSA REACHING
CALIFORNIA'S TRANSITION AGE FOSTER YOUTH?**

This review is in response to the January 2010 report of the Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI) University of San Diego School of Law entitled: Proposition 63: **Is the Mental Health Services Act Reaching California's Transition Age Foster Youth?** The report describes the authors' perceptions of the impact of MHSA funding on foster youth in Ventura County and other California counties. We assert that the report does not provide a complete characterization of the use of MHSA funding for services and supports to the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) and Transitional Aged Foster Youth (TAFY) in Ventura County.

BACKGROUND:

The State-approved MHSA Community Services and Supports (CSS) Plan for Ventura County initially provided various investments for Severe and Persistently Mentally Ill TAY; defined as youth and young adults from the ages of 16-25. In Ventura County, 16-18 year old TAY and TAFY are served extensively in the Youth and Family Services Programs. Additionally, Ventura County has a dedicated Behavioral Health Program, the Child Welfare Subsystem (CWS), which provides mental health services to foster youth. These services are predominantly field-based, with clinicians following their assigned clients county-wide, despite placement changes, to assure continuity of care.

For the purposes of further discussion, Ventura County's TAY programs serve TAY between the ages of 18-25.

SUMMARY OF CSS (FSP) TAY IMPLEMENTATION:

"Resiliency, Recovery, Collaboration, Hope"

In Ventura County, both the Behavioral Health Department and county stakeholders have consistently devoted their energies to the development of a continuum of services through MHSA funding dedicated to serving TAY and TAFY. Prior to MHSA funding, the capacity of the TAY program was 40. TAY was identified as a priority population in the original plan, approved in July 2006 and a Full Service Partnership (FSP) Dual Diagnosis Social Rehabilitation Residential Treatment Program was designed and implemented. This program, a voluntary residential program where TAY may reside up to 18 months, has the capacity of 15 (at any given time). The TAY Wellness and Recovery Center is an outreach and engagement project, targeting the un-served and underserved TAY in the Oxnard region. Both programs were implemented and began providing services in December 2006. In the 2007-08 update, Ventura County: expanded the TAY FSP to include an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) community-based model and created our Systems Development "Transitions Program", which is a comprehensive behavioral health program providing outpatient services in both the clinic and community settings. In 2008/09 Ventura County expanded the Transitions Program, increasing its capacity to 250 and converting it to an FSP. Ventura County recognized the need to expand services to the TAY and TAFY of Ventura County and has developed and implemented a continuum of services to meet that need. TAY may enter services anywhere upon the continuum and transition to higher or lower levels of care, depending upon their individualized need and their journey to wellness and recovery. Ventura County has continued to monitor the needs of TAY and TAFY and to provide expanded services and supports as additional needs become apparent.

It is important to stress that prior to the implementation of MHSA funding and the development of this rich array of diverse programs for TAY (and TAFY), Ventura County had the capacity to serve only 40 TAY in a program dedicated to transitional aged youth. The development of a full array and continuum of dedicated services, was in direct response to the voice of the stakeholders and the needs of this population. The TAY sub-committee of the Ventura County Mental Health Board has been dogged in their oversight, recommendations and advocacy to ensure that there are appropriate services for this population. Ventura County and its stakeholders are proud of the services that have been made possible through MHSA funding.

TAFY SERVICES DELIVERY DATA:

The CAI report accurately notes that foster youth are at high risk of becoming homeless. Casa Pacifica, an RCL 14 and Shelter, as well as other group homes within Ventura County, serve many foster youth who emancipate. Ventura County recognizes that foster youth aging out of the child welfare system are often hesitant and sometimes resistant to interface with traditional mental health providers, or any entity which they perceive to be a part of "the system." As such, Ventura County Behavioral Health has dedicated itself to assuring less traditional portals of entry and engaging strategies in the provision of mental health services for the TAY/TAFY population.

The following programs dedicated specifically to serving TAY and TAFY have been developed and funded through the MHSA funding:

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www.vchca.org

Recovery Innovations of California (RICA):

In recognizing that TAY/TAFY may be much more responsive to outreach provided by TAY Peers, and/or TAY with lived experience, Ventura County Department of Behavioral Health has contracted with Recovery Innovations of California (RICA) to provide ongoing training to consumers with lived experience, training them to be Recovery Coaches/Peer Support Specialists. Peers are trained in the concepts of Wellness and Recovery, in facilitating Wellness and Recovery Action Plans (WRAP), Wellness and Empowerment in Life and Living (WELL), and Medication for Success Classes. Further, Ventura County recognizes the value of peer participation on treatment teams, both in planning and implementation. Transitions Program TAY Peers facilitate WRAP classes, provide one-on-one counseling, provide effective outreach to TAY and TAFY consumers and are vital members of the Transitions treatment team. TAY and TAFY may receive peer support and peer mentoring within the continuum of services offered to TAY in Ventura County, in Transitions, at the TAY Wellness and Recovery Drop In Center, in WRAP, WELL and in Medication for Success Classes.

Expansion of Transitions from a capacity of 40 to 250

The Transitions Program (FSP) provides a comprehensive outpatient treatment program in both the individual and group modalities using a "whatever it takes" model of service delivery. The Transitions Program not only addresses the TAY's mental health and substance abuse treatment needs, but also focuses upon assisting TAY in addressing their age-appropriate developmental tasks, including launching. The Transitions Program provides housing, employment and educational assistance, with both housing and "whatever it takes" funding. Programming includes rehabilitation services such as: living skills, social skills, an employment development group, and mind and body groups. Treatment groups focus on trauma, recovery, and on developing healthy coping skills. In addition, there is an Integrated Dual Diagnosis Treatment (IDDT) group, as well as Life Enhancement Treatment (a modified DBT treatment) and art therapy groups. The Transitions Program facilitates both relationship groups and parenting treatment groups that focus on attachment, helping TAY and TAFY young adults, who through their own history and trauma may have had insecure attachments to their own parents, attach in healthy, secure ways to their own children. In addition to the group modality, TAY and TAFY may be offered individual treatment, intensive case management, individual rehabilitative services and psychiatric treatment. With a client-centered and client-driven treatment approach, woven throughout services are the concepts of wellness and recovery. TAY may receive services from a variety of different team members, who work together to focus on the individualized need of the TAY and support TAY in seeking their own life goals. The Transitions Program has assisted some of our TAFY in obtaining grants, in obtaining housing (though financial and other support), returning to school to obtain higher education, and as parents.

Implementation of a 15 bed social rehabilitation FSP TAY residential program at Casa de Esperanza for Severe and Persistently Mentally Ill TAY at risk of homelessness with co-occurring disorders

The Residential TAY Social Rehabilitation Program provides both on-site social rehabilitation services to 15 TAY as well as Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) services in the community. Activities and services are designed to increase the TAY's skills and ability to function in the community, and to help them achieve the highest level of independence

possible and desired. Activities are designed for socialization, education, and recreation. All TAY enrolled in this FSP develop a Recovery Plan, identifying their hopes and dreams, and then work with staff who assist them in achieving their goals. Intensive case management and rehabilitation is provided through ACT teams.

Implementation of a TAY ACT Community Program to serve an additional 15 TAY in the community.

The TAY ACT community program provides a continuum of options for TAY, both as they 'graduate' from the residential social rehabilitation program, as well as ensuring that community supports are available to those TAY who do not select or need a residential program. The program utilizes the Assertive Community Treatment model, and operates in high fidelity to SAMHSA and Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) ACT standards. The program provides 24/7/365 wraparound type, community-based services and supports to ensure members' success in the community; promote hope, wellness and recovery; and prevent unnecessary utilization of higher levels of care. Flexible funds are utilized to do "whatever it takes". Utilizing the individualized recovery plan as the basic treatment document, services are driven by the needs and goals of each member, with input from program staff. The individualized recovery plan is viewed as a living document, which evolves with the member's changing needs and desires.

Implementation of a TAY Wellness and Recovery Drop-In Center in Oxnard, CA to serve 100 TAY

The Wellness and Recovery Center (TAY Tunnel) was designed to promote wellness and recovery and to increase access to mental health services as well as other needed supports and resources for TAY within Ventura County. VCBH recognized that youth aging out of systems of service are prone to 'drop out' of treatment programs and often end up facing the challenges of homelessness, substance abuse, incarceration and increasing severity of mental health issues. Ventura County recognized that a wider range of culturally competent and age-appropriate access to mental health services, reflecting greater choices and treatment options for recovery and wellness were imperative for the TAY community and their families.

From its inception, The Ventura County TAY Wellness and Recovery Drop-In Center forged a relationship with the local residential treatment program to assure outreach and engagement of emancipating foster youth. Wellness and Recovery TAY peer support specialists meet directly with TAFY who are 16, 17, and 18 years old in the hopes of building trust, a relationship and a bridge to the services provided by the Center. Beginning in 2008, The TAY Wellness and Recovery Center has hosted several emancipation conferences and since early 2009 has worked with the Ventura Chapter of the California Youth Connection.

TAY who are resistant to engaging in and receiving mental health services are able to find a welcoming and safe environment at the Wellness and Recovery Center. The population identified for this program is Seriously Mentally Ill TAY ages 18 to 25 who are, or are at risk of homelessness, substance abuse, incarceration and increasing severity of mental health issues. Located in Oxnard with a population that is 66% Hispanic, many of those individuals accessing services through this center are Latino. Additionally, with a rate of poverty of over 15%, these young adults are at risk of homeless and/or legal involvement (33% of

incarcerated youth in Ventura County are Latino). TAY and TAFY may receive assistance with temporary housing and linkage to resources such as mental health services, education, housing, employment and benefits.

Since opening January 2008, 160 unduplicated TAY/TAFY have been served by the TAY Wellness and Recovery Center. Since July 2008 (when we began collecting data on TAFY), 89 TAY have self-identified as emancipating foster youth, (52 females and 27 males.) Additionally, approximately 50% of the Center's membership has been homeless, with 100% of them being linked to short-term housing options and 25% to more stable housing. 50% of TAY requesting assistance in securing employment have been successful.

Of the eight staff at the TAY Wellness and Recovery Center, seven are identified as having lived experience. The TAY Tunnel provides outreach engagement, "whatever it takes," peer support, and offers at least four hours of learning experience per day. These classes range from Wellness and Recovery Action Plans (WRAP), life skills, creative expression, physical and mental wellness, nutrition, as well as a parenting class for TAY parents. In September 2009, recognizing the need for parent education and support, the program has facilitated a monthly TAY Parent Night. Partnering with Public Health, the Center provides education and support for TAY parents who are expectant or have children 5 and under (included in this program is child care). The TAY Tunnel has 22 unduplicated TAY parents. 99 % of those participants have been in the Foster Care system.

REVIEW OF CAI RATING CRITERIA:

TAFY Focus: Does the county offer a program designed solely and specifically for TAFY? Has it tailored a component of a program specifically to TAFY?

Points: The CAI awards Ventura County: 0 out of 10

Facts: Ventura County has a continuum of mental health services and supports dedicated to serve TAY/TAFY. They include a 15-bed residential social rehabilitation program, a TAY ACT Community Program, a TAY Wellness and Recovery Center and a comprehensive mental health full service partnership provided through the Ventura County Behavioral Health Transitions Program. Within the array of programming, services are individualized and may include housing assistance, educational assistance, employment assistance, support, linkage to resources and flexible funding to assist and support TAY /TAFY in addressing mental health and other needs. Parenting classes and treatment groups focus upon assisting TAY parents in forming healthy attachments to their own children. All programming provided in this continuum of services integrates the concepts of wellness and recovery, promotes the accomplishment of the appropriate developmental tasks of launching, and the development of meaningful and purposeful lives. These services do specifically address the needs of TAY and TAFY.

Priority Population: Does the county designate TAFY to be a priority population? How many other priority populations are served by the program? If not named expressly as a priority population, how likely is it that TAFY will fit into one of the named priority populations?

Points: The CAI awards Ventura County: 5 out of 10 points

Facts: Unserved and underserved TAY, at risk of homelessness and with co-occurring disorders, are a priority population. The Wellness and Recovery Wellness Center targets outreach and services to TAFY, with half of its members self-identifying as TAFY. Although not named expressly as a priority population, it is 100% likely that TAFY do fit into the named ("TAY") priority population.

Capacity: What is the capacity of the program? How does capacity compare to estimated need?

Points: The CAI awards Ventura County: 1 out of 35 points

Facts: Prior to the implementation of MHSA funding up to 40 TAY were served in a behavioral health program dedicated to TAY. Since the implementation of MHSA funding we have increased the capacity of programs solely dedicated to serve TAY to 380. (This number does not include the TAY, who continue to receive mental health services in the Adult System.) This growth represents a 950% increase in capacity in a continuum of mental health programs dedicated to the provision of mental health services to TAY and TAFY.

CAPACITY:

Transitions Program (FSP)	250
TAY Wellness and Recovery Drop in Center	100
Casa de Esperanza Social Rehabilitation/ACT Residential Program:	15
TAY ACT Community	15

Total: 380

UNDUPLICATED CLIENTS SERVED TO DATE THROUGH MHSA FUNDING:

Transitions Program (July 2007)	350
TAY Wellness and Recovery Drop in Center (January 2008)	160
Casa de Esperanza Social Rehabilitation/ACT Residential Program (December 2006)	55
TAY ACT Community (January 2009)	27

Total: 592

Ventura County has served at least 113 TAFY, well over the "72 TAFY in Ventura County the CAI report identified who could potentially qualify for Prop. 63 funded services." The Wellness and Recovery Center has served 89 TAFY, 4 TAFY have been served in the ACT program, and a review of the current caseload of Transitions clients indicates that 20 current clients in the Transitions Program are former foster youth.

Sufficiency of Services Provided: How many of the optimal elements are included in the program? Optimal elements for TAFY are deemed to be mental health services, immediate shelter, long-term housing, peer support/mentoring flexible funding, education and employment assistance.

Points: The CAI awards Ventura County: 25 out of 30 points

Facts: Although CAI has awarded Ventura County 25 out of 30 points, CAI was evidently unaware of the existence of two of programs: the TAY ACT Community and the Transitions Program. The Transitions Program is a comprehensive Full Service Partnership that provides an array of services including individual and group treatment, rehabilitation, intensive case management and psychiatric treatment. See the descriptions above. The Transitions Program served 350 TAY in providing not only mental health services, but all of the above named elements: mental health, immediate shelter (through housing and flexible funding), peer support and mentoring, flexible funding, education, employment and volunteer assistance. The TAY ACT Community programs provides intensive case management and rehabilitation in the community, assisting the TAY in accessing housing, education, employment and has flexible funding to support the TAY in their programs.

TAFY Tracking: *To what extent does the program track TAFY participation and outcomes?*

Points: The CAI awards Ventura County: 1 out of 5 points

Facts: Ventura County has developed Outcome Measures for all FSP programs, as well as for the Wellness and Recovery Center. All TAY/TAFY enrolled into FSP's complete a form that inquires about living arrangements (with foster placement as a choice.) Three of the four TAY programs in Ventura County are FSP's and thus track recent foster placements. The TAY Wellness and Recovery Center also tracks TAFY participation and outcomes as indicated in the programming descriptions.

Total: The CAI awards Ventura County final points: 32 out of 100

Final Grade: Regarding its use of Prop 63 CSS funding to meet the needs of Transition Age Foster Youth Ventura County's grade is F.

SUMMARY: Prior to the implementation of MHSA funding up to 40 TAY were served in a behavioral health program dedicated to TAY. Since implementation of MHSA funding we have capacity to serve 380 at any given time. However, it should be noted that Ventura County has served far more than 380 TAY since implementation of MHSA funding. In fact Ventura County has served nearly 600 TAY, many of whom have been TAFY. (See the question regarding capacity.) Programming is diverse and delivered within a continuum of services to meet the individualized needs of TAY and TAFY within Ventura County. We are always willing to look at our programs from a process improvement perspective and are more than willing to have further discussion with The CAI regarding the services we provide.

MR:gmc

cc: Marty Robinson, Chief Executive Officer, Ventura County
Michael Powers, HCA Director, Ventura County
Pam Roach, Chair-Mental Health Board
Dave Holmboe, Chair-TAY Subcommittee of the Mental Health Board