

PRACTITIONER'S CORNER

Continued from inside

Are services provided differently in your scattered-site and single-site models?
All THP-Plus services are provided in each model; the biggest difference is in where we provide the services. In the single-site THP model, more services are available at the housing sites. For example, we have a psychologist coming to each housing site to do parenting classes and assessments. We have a regular housing meeting, which allows us to bring different services to the participants during the meetings. The case managers spend a lot more time at the single site locations, since there are more participants there.

In the scattered-site program, case managers visit participants at their apartments, but because they live throughout the community, we do not organize the same type of housing meeting as we do at the single site programs. Case managers work with participants to access other Bill Wilson Center services and to set up appointments to access services off-site.

How do you integrate your THP-Plus program with your other services?
We integrate our THP-Plus program with our ILP program, our outpatient counseling services, and our drop-in center. Our drop-in center also provides women's and men's groups. We just recently started providing mental health services through Medi-Cal. We will have a psychiatrist and a therapist to provide counseling at our Medi-Cal offices, which are located next door to the THP case management offices. We work with Adult Ed to provide GED services.

Our expectation is also that participants will maintain employment with wages that are three times their rent. While they are in the single-site program, they put aside 30% of their income toward Program Fees, and at the end of the program, they get the savings back. It's a way of experiencing what it's like to come up with this money every month. When participants are in the scattered-site program, we work with them on budgeting, and at setting up and maintaining a savings account.

What would you identify as the greatest strength(s) of your program?
One of our greatest strengths is our ability to help youth get into and stay in college.

We have a number of youth in junior college, planning to go on to 4-year schools. It's not just a matter of getting them interested, but finding out how to enroll in and pay for school. We help them to secure grants and financial aid and stay on top of their paperwork. We support them financially and emotionally. We continue case management even if they move to a school out of the area.

Being able to stay connected with the youth is very important. We can see them getting more independent over time. When we start out, we may be doing just about everything for them. Over time, they take on more responsibilities and gain greater independence.

We treat each youth as an individual, and don't get stuck on what the program should look like. This allows us to tailor our services and resources to each participant.

What are some of the challenges you face?
Helping participants with managing their finances is one of the biggest challenges that we face. We find that participants frequently know the "right" thing to say, but their actions are contradictory and may undermine their success.

What words of wisdom or lessons learned can you share with other providers?
The program doesn't look anything like it did when we started. I would encourage providers to talk to their peers from different programs, be open to what works for their program specifically, and to be open to changing the program. For example, when we first started, I expected that once a participant had a job, we'd be home free. I realized very quickly how many jobs an 18 year old will typically have, and that getting a job is only the first step.

It's also important to have a clear idea of your program boundaries and expectations, and to be willing to work with each individual participant around these expectations.

Lynn Morison is the Program Director at Bill Wilson Center. If you would like further information about the Bill Wilson Center THP-Plus program model or would like to contact Lynn Morison directly, she can be reached at (408) 925-0229 or lmorison@bwcmail.org.

THP-PLUS INSTITUTE FIRST EVER THP-PLUS INSTITUTE DRAWS STATEWIDE PARTICIPATION

Continued from front page
supportive services that are required of all THP-Plus programs, along with 8 additional recommended supportive services. Many of the practitioners interviewed for the publication were featured presenters at the Institute.



Photo: Howard Pasamanick

Presentations from the Institute, along with a full conference report and photos from the event are available at www.thpplus.org. The recently completed publication about required supportive services can also be downloaded at www.thpplus.org.

Given the level of interest expressed at this year's Institute, plans are already underway for the 2008 Institute, which will likely be expanded to two days. The tentative dates are July 17-18, and it will likely be held in the same location at the Center for Healthy Communities in Los Angeles. To participate on the Institute Advisory Committee, or to request a printed copy of any publications, e-mail Michele Byrnes at michele@johnburtonfoundation.org.



NEWS

Welcome to *THP-Plus News*, a quarterly newsletter of the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project. The Project is a partnership between the John Burton Foundation, the California Department of Social Services, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing. Our goal is to expand access to THP-Plus, California's only housing program for former foster youth. THP-Plus provides former foster youth with affordable housing and a rich array of supportive services, including job training, educational advocacy, mentoring, and case management.

INSIDE:

- Letters of Intent
- Budget News
- Evaluation
- Practitioners Corner

To submit a question to a practitioner or to comment on the newsletter, e-mail michele@johnburtonfoundation.org.

This is a publication of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes – a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California dedicated to improving the quality of life for California's homeless children and developing policy solutions to prevent homelessness.

Editor: Michele Byrnes
Design: Kesler Communications



FALL 2007

THP-Plus Letter of Intent Due to CDSS

See inside for details!

Expanding Housing Options for Youth In Transition

THP-PLUS INSTITUTE FIRST EVER THP-PLUS INSTITUTE DRAWS STATEWIDE PARTICIPATION



Photo: Howard Pasamanick

The first THP-Plus Institute was held on Monday, July 16th at the Center for Healthy Communities in Los Angeles. The Institute was attended by nearly 300 people from 140 community-based organizations and 60 public agencies from around the state.

The Institute featured 11 workshops on a wide range of topics related to THP-Plus implementation, including property management, parenting youth, and the host family model of THP-Plus. For many, the highlight of the event was a lunchtime youth panel, which highlighted the experiences of seven youth participants from the different THP-Plus models: host family, scattered-site and single-site.



According to Michele Byrnes, Project Manager for the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project, the purpose of the Institute was to build the collective knowledge about how to successfully operate housing programs for youth formerly in the foster care and probation systems. On that front, she considers the Institute a success.

"There was a lot of practical information shared about how to make THP-Plus work," said Byrnes. "Equally important was bringing together practitioners, administrators, researchers and advocates from around the state, who are working together to expand access to this important program."

During the Institute, the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project debuted its new publication, *Effective Practices for THP-Plus*. This comprehensive publication provides recommendations about the 15

Continued on back page

LETTERS OF INTENT

THP-PLUS LETTERS OF INTENT

Planning is already underway for THP-Plus in the 2008-09 fiscal year, which starts July 1, 2008. Counties who are interested in providing THP-Plus housing and supportive services in FY 08-09 must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

Counties that are already implementing THP-Plus or have CDSS approval to begin implementing THP-Plus in the current fiscal year are also required to submit a Letter of Intent to CDSS. The tentative deadline is October 15th.

The Letter of Intent provides CDSS with important information to inform the development of the 2008-09 THP-Plus budget. The required elements of the LOI include: a brief summary of the county's demographics and need for a housing program; the number of youth emancipating from the county annually; the number of anticipated beds/units planned for 2008-09; the THP-Plus rate paid to the provider(s); the anticipated start date; and the contact information for the county THP-Plus representative.

The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project will provide additional information to the county THP-Plus representatives in the coming weeks. Please contact Michele Byrnes at Michele@johnburtonfoundation.org or (415) 693-1323 with any questions.

BUDGET NEWS

FINAL STATE BUDGET INCLUDES \$35.7 MILLION FOR THP-PLUS

The California budget was signed on August 24th by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and it includes some good news for California's youth in foster care. The budget includes a \$35.7 million investment in THP-Plus for housing and supportive services for former foster and probation youth. Of this amount, up to \$10.5 million can be used for any approved costs incurred by counties during the 2006-07 fiscal year that went beyond the initial budget. At this funding level, THP-Plus will enable 44 counties to provide housing and supportive services to approximately 1,200 former foster and probation youth.

Now that the budget has been signed by the Governor, the California Department of Social Services will allocate the total THP-Plus budget to individual counties, so that they know how much funding is available for their individual THP-Plus programs. This process is usually complete 30 to 45 days after the budget has been passed, and is communicated through an All County Information Notice (ACIN). Once complete, the THP-Plus Implementation Project will distribute the ACIN on its listserv. If you have any questions, please contact Michele Byrnes at (415) 693-1323 or michele@johnburtonfoundation.org.

EVALUATION

THP-PLUS EVALUATION

The goal of THP-Plus is to reduce homelessness and improve outcomes for former foster and probation youth throughout California. All THP-Plus providers, county administrators, and key program stakeholders are committed to that goal - but how do we know if we are achieving it? What is the measurable impact of THP-Plus on the lives of former foster and probation youth in California?

Currently, THP-Plus State regulations require that participating counties collect data about their programs to submit to CDSS as a report at the end of the year. In the process of collecting information for the first THP-Plus statewide annual report, the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project found that different THP-Plus counties and providers currently collect many different types of information about their local programs in a variety of formats. Furthermore, few providers or counties have data management systems currently in place that allow easy reporting on program-wide outcomes, such as the overall percentage of THP-Plus participants who have obtained jobs or enrolled in higher education. As a result, it is very difficult to compile information about the impact of THP-Plus statewide, and impossible to compare participant outcomes among different programs or THP-Plus models. Several counties and providers have requested statewide data to help assess their local THP-Plus programs, as well as technical assistance in developing evaluation processes.

To address these issues, the THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project is in the process of developing a comprehensive evaluation framework that will allow the collection of consistent information from THP-Plus providers across the State. A key step in this process will be collecting input from county administrators and providers on how to ensure that the THP-Plus evaluation is compatible with existing data collection efforts, meets program self-evaluation needs, and incorporates user-friendly systems. Once developed and implemented, the statewide evaluation framework will make possible the consistent reporting and analysis of THP-Plus outcomes in areas such as participants' employment, education, relational permanency, and housing stability.

Measuring the results of THP-Plus is vital for program self-evaluation and improving outcomes for the young adults served. In addition, data about the impact of the program statewide can provide compelling evidence for legislators and other stakeholders about the value of continuing to support this important program.

For more information please contact Michele Byrnes at michele@johnburtonfoundation.org.

PRACTITIONER'S CORNER

INTERVIEW WITH LYNN MORISON, PROGRAM DIRECTOR AT BILL WILSON CENTER



Lynn Morison

This month, THP-Plus News interviews Lynn Morison from Bill Wilson Center about their single-site and scattered-site housing programs in Santa Clara County.

Can you tell me a little about the history of Bill Wilson Center?

Bill Wilson Center has been around since 1973. It started out as an outpatient counseling center. We then added a shelter for homeless and runaway youth, ages 11-17, and family reunification services, primarily for status offenders. Sparky Harlan has been our Executive Director for over 20 years, and it has been her vision to fill in the gaps in services in Santa Clara County. As a result of that vision, we have continued to adapt and develop new programs.



Bill Wilson Center

When we had our youth shelter, we were not able to serve youth once they turned 18, and we saw them being forced into adult services. In 1995, we started a transitional housing program (THP) for homeless young adults ages 18-24, as well as a drop-in center. The housing program is funded by HUD and Health and Human Services homeless youth funding. Thirty to 40 percent of youth in our THP have aged out of the foster care system. Most of the others are from the streets or the juvenile justice system.

We have always sought to provide a continuum of care for homeless and runaway youth. Many of these youth are also former foster youth, and we then started working specifically with these young adults. We are now a contract agency with the county to provide Independent Living Program (ILP) services to foster youth when they turn 16.

Our housing programs now include a Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) for foster youth ages 16-19, our THP program for homeless youth, and a THP-Plus Program for former foster and probation youth ages 18-24.

Please describe your THP-Plus program.

We became a certified THP-Plus provider earlier this year. The services and support that we provide through THP-Plus are based on the work we've been doing within our transitional housing program for homeless youth for 12 years. THP-Plus has allowed us to expand our program to reach more young adults. We are one of three THP-Plus providers who offer scattered site housing in Santa

Clara County. In addition to the scattered site programs, the County also provides a host family model and dorm housing.

Our THP-Plus program is a combination of single-site and scattered site housing. Our single-site housing program serves 18 single young adults and 18 parents and their children. Seven of the slots are set aside for THP-Plus. These are shared living situations, with a housing monitor living on site and a case manager who is assigned to each site. Participants live in apartments and in single family homes. This program is fairly intensive and structured. Our focus is on getting participants set up with a job and assisting them with continuing their education so that they can move out on their own. Participants can stay in this housing program for up to one year. When they graduate, they can move into our scattered site program or move out on their own.

For our scattered site model, we primarily work with young adults who are slightly older (21 or 22), who are ready to rent their own apartments. We provide all of the THP-Plus services, including case management and ILP services. We work with participants to set up apartments in their own name. Our case managers meet with participants in their homes and at our program site. We also offer ILP groups every Thursday night.

Can you describe some of your supportive services?

Bill Wilson Center pays up to \$550 of the rent, and the participant is responsible for the remainder. There is a wide variety of housing situations, although participants usually have a roommate.

We connect participants with Nova, a local employment training agency, and connect them with a job developer who works at our drop-in center. Our transportation assistance can take a number of forms, including monthly bus passes and gas money for participants with cars. For new participants in our single-site program, we may even drive them a few times until they get oriented and know the transportation system.

How does the referral process work?

We take referrals directly from Santa Clara County, as well as self-referrals. If we are working with someone on the waiting list through our other services, we provide the STEP-TILP to the county and can enter them into the THP-Plus program.

Participants can enter the single-site or scattered-site program. They can also enter the single site program and then transition to the scattered-site. Having both models offers us some flexibility. There are some youth who are emancipating from foster care, and do not have any skills or experience with living independently. For some of these youth, moving them directly into their own apartments would be setting them up for failure. The single-site program provides a greater level of structure, so that they can try out some of these new skills and experiences without serious consequences. Other participants are ready for more independence, and they move directly into our scattered-site program.

Continued on back