

## THP-PLUS COUNTY REPRESENTATIVE AB 12 IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY

### Summary

April 2011

The John Burton Foundation conducted a survey of county THP-Plus representatives in March and April of 2011. The purpose of the survey was to gather input into the implementation process of the new THP-Plus Foster Care placement created by AB 12. Provided below is a summary of the results.

Respondent characteristics: This survey had 25 respondents. The majority of the counties that responded had contracted out for THP-Plus services for 1-5 years. Their number of beds ranged from 8 to 143, and averaged at 46. A little more than half of the counties that responded had contracts with 1-2 providers.

#### I. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THP-PLUS PROVIDER & COUNTY WELFARE AGENCY

- **When asked what should happen if the youth is not doing what he/she agreed to do in order to continue to remain in foster care past age 18 (e.g. going to school or working), 68% felt that there should be a meeting with the county social worker, the youth, and the THP-Plus Foster Care provider to try to solve the problem.** The majority of the respondents felt that the meeting should take place right away. Almost unanimously, respondents DID NOT feel that foster care funding should stop.
- **88% felt that the THP-Plus Foster Care provider should be given a copy of the Mutual Agreement when the youth is living in THP-Plus Foster Care.**
- **When asked how a disagreement between the THP-Plus Foster Care provider and the youth regarding program expectations or other issues with the living arrangement should be resolved, 71% felt a team meeting with the youth, the THP-Plus Foster Care provider case manager, and the youth's county social worker should be convened.**
- **When asked to whom notice should be sent prior to termination of participation from a particular THP-Plus Foster Care provider program in the event that a youth is not meeting the program requirements, 76% said youth and county.** Other suggestions were to involve the CASA (if one exists); another support person as identified by the youth, such as an ILP staff; and the attorney and court.

#### II. RULES FOR PLACEMENTS: YOUTH SAFETY

- **71% agreed that allowing youth to live with a roommate(s) who is not in foster care is a good idea.** However, arguments against included *"...By having a mixed population, you introduce mixed expectations for acceptable behavior in programs. You also open participants up to exploitation by other family members who are in need of housing"*

- **79% agreed that allowing youth to live with a roommate(s) who is in the standard THP-Plus program, but no longer in foster care is a good idea.** Arguments against referenced difficulties in accessing different funding (i.e. MHSA vs. TITLE IV-E), and differences in mandates and levels of supervision required.
- **When respondents were asked if they think it's a good idea to require roommate(s) not in foster care to get a criminal background check, 62.5% said yes, and 37.5% said no.** Comments referenced liability issues and the need for youth safety vs. establishing "real world" scenarios and age appropriate living conditions.

### III. RULES FOR PLACEMENTS: YOUTH RESPONSIBILITIES

- **96% felt that requiring the THP-Plus Foster Care provider to make sure that the youth is meeting one of the participation requirements is a good idea.**
- **88% felt that requiring youth to participate in services is a good idea.**
- **96% felt that requiring youth to pay a portion of their rent is a good idea.**
- **83% felt that requiring THP-Plus Foster Care providers to give youth a certain portion of the monthly foster care benefit each month to manage and spend on their own is a good idea.** Arguments against described youth handling their money irresponsibly; and some of those in favor felt that this should be required only with the stipulation that they incorporate money management and spending guidelines into the case management.

*Note: "X County initially formatted each of the THP-Plus components with this concept in mind, but found that several of the youth participants tested the waters with dropping out of college, and quitting their jobs because they had the cash cushion to rely on. When the County removed that stipend from the agreement, each of the youth participants resumed their commitments to pursue an employment salary leading to a living wage, and advancement in their post-secondary education pursuits."*

- **Opinions were mixed when respondents were asked whether they thought the THP-Plus Foster Care provider should have any say in how that money is spent/managed if the youth is provided with a monthly allowance: 29% said yes, 50% said no, and 21% said maybe/I don't know.**
- **When asked what were appropriate reasons for asking a youth to leave THP-Plus Foster Care:**
  - 28% said being found intoxicated**
  - 60% said following program rules**
  - 84% said not meeting one of the five participation requirements**

Other suggestions included: Violence/dangerous behavior to self/others, and stealing from a roommate (this respondent felt this was more serious than being found intoxicated). Respondents also noted that a harm reduction approach should be considered, and that "not following participation requirements" should not be "hard and fast" (terminations should be based on multiple factors and involve multiple team participants on the youth's case).

#### IV. RULES FOR PLACEMENTS: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Opinions were mixed when asked how often a THP-Plus Foster Care youth advocate or case manager should visit:**
  - 24% said once per week**
  - 28% said once every two weeks**
  - 20% said once per month**

Others felt this could vary depending on 1) how long the participant had been in the program (more frequent visits for new participants); and 2) what the participant's needs are (individualized case management to assess visitation needs)
- **92% felt that there should be a minimum case manager to youth ratio for THP-Plus Foster Care providers.** 48% felt that 1:10 was appropriate; 26% felt that 1:15 was appropriate; and 17% felt that 1:8 was appropriate.
- **75% respondents felt that all 15 supportive services included in the THP-Plus program SHOULD be provided in THP-Plus Foster Care,** however, 1-2 people felt that the following supportive services should NOT be provided in THP-Plus Foster Care:
  - System of payment for rent, utilities, & phone
  - Food & necessity allowance
  - Individual & group therapy
  - Mentoring
  - Post-program housing assistance
  - Alumni services
- **73% felt that there SHOULD NOT be any required differences in services between THP-Plus and THP-Plus Foster Care.** 27% felt that there SHOULD BE required differences in services between THP-Plus and THP-Plus Foster Care: *“Increased emphasis on assisting youth in THP FC with long term housing assistance. THP FC should not become a feeder for THP-Plus.”*
- **Almost all respondents felt that youth should both 1) meet eligibility requirements, AND 2) gain approval from provider in order to move into a THP-Plus Foster Care placement.**

#### V. PROGRAM APPROVAL STANDARDS

- **84% report that their county has a standard, consistent process in place to approve THP-Plus programs.**
- **When asked what methods are used for approving THP-Plus programs:**
  - 92% reported they review the provider plan**
  - 88% reported they review the budget**
  - 92% reported they conduct a site visit**
  - 79% reported they review program outcomes**

Other methods reported: youth interviews, case file reviews

- **87.5% felt that their county's process used to approve THP-Plus programs is just right, and that their county should use its current process to approve THP-Plus Foster Care.** No one reported that their process was too stringent or thorough, however 12.5% felt that their process was not thorough or stringent enough.