

Beware of Tunnels & Cliffs: Supporting Students with Mental Health Needs in the Transition Years

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Agenda

- I. Prevalence of mental health disabilities
- II. Common challenges faced by youth with mental health needs during their transition from secondary school to adulthood
- III. Identifying mental health needs in undiagnosed youth
- IV. Research-based strategies & promising programs to support youth transitioning to adulthood

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Who Am I?

- Institute for Educational Leadership
 - Center for Workforce Development
- National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth

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National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

- Strives to ensure that youth with disabilities are provided full access to high quality services in integrated settings in order to maximize their opportunities for employment and independent living www.ncwd-youth.info
- 3 levels: System (policy), Organizational, and Front line (youth service professionals)
- Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

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Prevalence of Mental Health Disabilities

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Definition



- Different Terms
- Different Systems
- Mental Health System – internalizing and externalizing (DSM)
- Education System – 13 disability categories in IDEA, including emotional disturbance (based on student's *educational performance* not just mere presence)

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Breakdown of Mental Health Disabilities among Adolescents

- 49.5% of US adolescents met criteria for MH need
 - 42% of these met criteria for a second disorder
 - 31.9% anxiety disorders
 - 19.6% behavior disorders
 - 14.3% mood disorders
 - 11.4% substance abuse disorders

- 22.2% exhibited severe impairment and/or distress
 - 11.2% mood disorders
 - 9.6% behavior disorders
 - 8.3% anxiety disorders

7 (Merikangas, He, Burstein, et al., 2010)

Prevalence of Mental Health Disabilities

- Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) from 2010 and 2012 indicate that:
 - **18.3%** of young adults aged **18 to 25** had **any mental illness (AMI)** in the past year

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2014)

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Prevalence of Mental Health Disabilities

- **6% to 8%** of young adults ages **18 to 26** are estimated to have a **serious mental health condition (SMHC)** (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2008; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2012a)

- **8%** of youth ages **13 to 17** are estimated to have a **serious emotional disturbance** (Kessler et al., 2012)

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Prevalence of Mental Health Disabilities

- Certain mental health disabilities more commonly arise during adolescence and young adulthood
 - Mood disorders
 - Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2014)

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Common Challenges Faced by Youth with Mental Health Needs during their Transition from Secondary School to Adulthood

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Prevalence of Mental Health Disabilities

- Youth with mental health disabilities can face greater challenges when they:
 - Have multiple diagnoses
 - Are involved with the foster care system
 - Are involved with the juvenile justice system
 - Experience psychosis
 - Live in poverty
 - Live in low service access communities

(GAO, 2008; Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2013; Alegria et al., 2010)

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**Why Does It Matter?
Education & Training**



What percentage of high school youth with mental health issues will drop out of school before obtaining a diploma?

- 1. 25%
- 2. 49%
- 3. 65%
- 4. It's not really an issue.

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**Why Does It Matter?
Education & Training**



- 65% with mental health illness will drop out of school before obtaining a high school diploma (highest of any disability)
- Only 11% of special education students with psychiatric disabilities go on to attend a four year college vs. 40% of the general population (Wagner & Newman, 2012)

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**Why Does It Matter?
Education & Training**



- There are longer delays in entering college, higher rates of part-time student status (Newman, 2011) and high dropout rates (86%) (Salzer, Wick, & Rogers, 2008)

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Why Does It Matter? Work & Community Living



- 60% unemployment rate for youth with a disability, 90% for youth with serious mental illness
- Over 100,000 youth in juvenile detention or correction facilities - at least 65% with a diagnosable mental disorder, 20% with serious mental health disorder
- Youth with mental health needs are 3 times as likely to live in poverty

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Impact of Employment



“Nothing that I have studied has the same kind of impact on people that employment does. Medication, case management, and psychotherapies tend to produce a small impact on people’s overall adjustment. **But the differences are often striking and dramatic with employment.**

Robert Drake, M.D., Virginia Commonwealth University

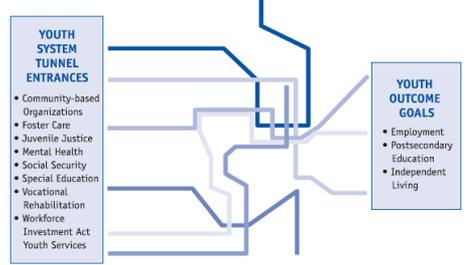
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How Do We Get There?



Programmatic Tunnels

TABLE 2.1
SERVICE TUNNELS





How Do We Get There?

Programmatic Cliffs

TABLE 2.3
THE TRANSITION CLIFF FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES
(Ages at which youth services terminate)

Vocational Rehabilitation*	
Job Corps**	
Youth Build	24
Special Education	16 to 22
WIA	18 to 22
Developmental Disabilities	22
Mental Health	18 or 22
Foster Care	18 or 22
Medicaid	18 to 22
TANF	18 or 19
Social Security	18

This table lists the ages at which youth services terminate in several federally funded programs. For example, if a program serves youth age 14 to 21, the termination date would be age 22. End dates may vary between and among states and localities based on the service options provided and on youth need.

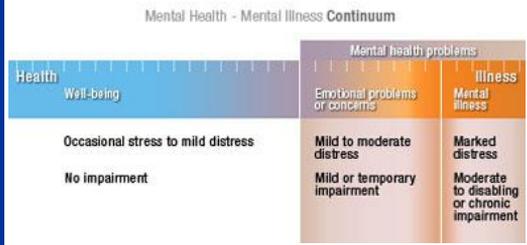
* There are no statutory age requirements associated with eligibility or services. Services are to facilitate a smooth transition from educational services to adult services and employment.

** The age limit for services in Job Corps (usually 25 or 26) may be waived for youth with disabilities.

Identifying Mental Health Needs in Undiagnosed Youth

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Definition: Mental Health Continuum



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Definition: Signs of Potential Mental Illness



There are several indications that may signal potential mental health needs in youth. One or two alone are not enough to indicate this potential, but combinations of these behaviors coupled with problems getting along with family members or peers or doing well at school may indicate a need for further evaluation. (NAMI)

- Truancy or school failure
- Encounters with the juvenile justice system
- Reckless and risky behaviors
- Persistent crying
- Lethargy or fatigue
- Irritability or grouchiness
- Over-reactions to failure
- Isolation from family and friends
- Separation anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Social phobias
- Repetitive, ritualistic behaviors
- Changes in speech and behavior
- Delusions, paranoia, or hallucinations
- Lack of motivation
- Flat emotional responses
- Disguising low self-esteem with "tough" behavior

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Appropriate Identification is Critical



- Public schools and mental health systems use different criteria
- A youth may be eligible in one system and not in another
- School's criteria more restrictive. Does not include youth with co-occurring conditions and condition needs to affect ability to learn
- Correct identification critical for youth to receive services or to get referred from system to system

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Determining Whether a Youth has Mental Health Needs



- A youth's records, behavior, assessment results, or interview responses may suggest previously unidentified or undiagnosed problems
- Youth are often identified during school years, but many more go undiagnosed, especially with late onset

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Mental Health Screening



- Partner with trained professionals who do screening
- Register as mental health screening site with the Columbia University TeenScreen Program
- Only use to identify potential problems that require referral for more in-depth evaluation
- Never use to classify a youth or deny access

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Research-Based Strategies & Promising Programs to Support Youth Transitioning to Adulthood

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Meeting the Needs of Youth with Mental Health Needs: The Guideposts

- School-Based Preparatory Experiences
- Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Youth Development & Leadership
- Connecting Activities
- Family Involvement & Supports



Which does your program do well?

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School-Based Preparatory Experiences

Youth with Mental Health Needs May Need

- Comprehensive transition plans linked across systems, without stigmatizing language, that identify goals, objectives, strategies, supports, and outcomes that address individual mental health needs in the context of education
- Appropriate, culturally sensitive, behavioral and medical health interventions and supports
- Academically challenging educational programs and general education supports that engage and re-engage youth in learning
- Opportunities to develop self-awareness of behavioral triggers in academic settings

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Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences

Youth with Mental Health Needs May Need

- Graduated opportunities to gain and practice their work skills
- Positive behavioral supports in work settings
- Connections to successfully employed peers and role models with mental health needs
- Knowledge of effective methods of stress management and accommodations to cope with the pressures of work

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Youth Development & Leadership

Youth with Mental Health Needs may Require

- Meaningful opportunities to develop, monitor, and self-direct their own treatment and recovery
- Opportunities to learn healthy behaviors
- Exposure to factors of positive youth development such as nutrition and exercise
- An understanding of how disability disclosure can be used proactively
- An understanding of the dimensions of mental health treatment
- Exposure to peer networks and adult consumers of mental health services with positive outcomes

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Connecting Activities



- Youth with Mental Health Needs may Need**
- An understanding of how to locate and maintain appropriate mental health care services
 - An understanding of how to create and maintain informal personal support networks
 - Access to safe, affordable, permanent housing
 - Access to flexible financial aid options for postsecondary education
 - Case managers who connect and collaborate across systems.
 - Holistic, well-trained, and empathetic service providers

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Family Involvement & Supports



- Youth with Mental Health Needs also Need Families and Caring Adults who**
- Understand the cyclical and episodic nature of mental illness
 - Offer emotional support
 - Know how to recognize and address key warning signs of risky behaviors
 - Monitor youth behavior and anticipate crises without being intrusive
 - Access supports and resources
 - Extend guardianship past the age of majority when necessary

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NCWD/Youth Case Study



- The Village Integrated Service Agency's Transitional Age Youth program- *Long Beach, CA*
- Options- *Vancouver, WA*
- Our Town Integrated Service Agency- *Indianapolis, IN*
- The Transitional Community Treatment Team- *Columbus, OH*
- YouthSource- *Renton, WA*

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How Do We Do It? Design Feature 1



- **A Place to Call Their Own**
 - Distinct program identity, including a separate physical location
 - Avoid co-location with adult mental health services
 - Youth do not want to feel that they are transitioning into the adult mental health system, rather the adult world of living independently

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How Do We Do It? Design Feature 2



- **Staffing Choices that Maximize Engagement**
 - Blend of knowledge of mental health, youth development, work development strategies
 - Balance between adult expertise/guidance and peer support/sense of youth ownership
 - Professional development of all staff, including gaining knowledge of community resources youth need to become successful adults

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How Do We Do It? Design Feature 3



- **Mental Health Intervention without the Stigma**
 - Personalized approach: meaningful trusting relationship
 - Honest discussions: allow the clients to initiate self-exploration
 - "Anywhere, anytime" treatment: integrated counseling/treatment into daily activities
 - Outreach and follow-up to keep the youth engaged or to re-engage them if needed

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How Do We Do It? Design Feature 4



- **Assessment and Service Planning Processes that Build on Individual Strengths**
 - Assessment and service planning process that addresses current status and future goals across multiple life domains
 - Distinguish between skills, talents, and gifts

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How Do We Do It? Design Feature 5



- **Employment- Preparing For It, Finding It, Keeping It**
 - Identify and build on strengths and career interests
 - Teach how to set career goals and design step-by-step processes to get there
 - Exposure to jobs and career paths, opportunities for temporary work & immediate income
 - Meeting youth "where they're at" increases the chances of employment success. Career development is critical for all youth, regardless of the severity of their condition.

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How Do We Do It? Design Feature 6



- **Housing as a Critical Part of the Service Mix for Older Youth**
 - Establish partnerships in the community for the use of transitional housing units
 - Utilize Federal or other grants to subsidize the expense of housing

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NCWD/Youth Mental Health Resources



To find all resources go to www.ncwd-youth.info and search "publications by topic"

GUIDES:

- **TUNNELS & CLIFFS: A Guide for Workforce Development Practitioners and Policymakers Serving Youth with Mental Health Needs**
http://www.ncwdyouth.info/resources_ & Publications/mental_health.html
- **Transitioning Youth with Mental Health Needs to Meaningful Employment and Independent Living**
<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/white-paper/transitioning-youth-with-mental-health-needs>

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More NCWD/Youth Mental Health Resources



BRIEFS

- Entering the World of Work: What Youth with Mental Health Needs Should Know About Accommodations**
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/transitioning.htm>
- Successful Transition Models for Youth with Mental Health Needs: A Guide for Workforce Professionals**
<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-23>
- Helping Youth with Mental Health Needs Avoid Transition Cliffs: Lessons from Pioneering Transition Programs**
<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-24>
- Supporting Transition to Adulthood Among Youth with Mental Health Needs: Action Steps for Policymakers**
<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/policy-brief-02>

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Additional NCWD/Youth Resources



- National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth: www.ncwd-youth.info/
- The Guideposts for Success: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts>
- Professional Development: Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/professional-development>
- 411 On Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>
- Office of Disability Employment Policy: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>
- Mindy Larson larsonm@iel.org or 202.822.8405 ext. 169

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