We all know that Transition Planning for youth in foster care begins way before they turn age 17. We also know there are many elements to effective transition planning such as youth engagement and a comprehensive vision and set of options for our young people. However for today’s training we are going to narrow the scope and focus on some of the requirements of Florida and Federal Law.

We often meet with our young people and say, “We are here to transition you from foster care to self-sufficiency or transition you from a youth in foster care to a contributing member of the community.” I know I am guilty of the using the language.

We then say; “we are going to accomplish the goals by transitioning you from high school student to a college student or from a foster care placement to your own apartment” and so on....

When in actuality the real question we should be asking our youth is: “How do you envision the future for yourself” “What would you like to become as you are transitioning to adulthood” “Have you thought about some steps that you may need to take to support this vision for yourself”
When we are working with youth and developing a transition plan - we are not just having a staffing or a meeting...It is much more important. As a system we are developing paths and options for our young people.

I visualize it as we are building these train tracks that can go in many different directions- leading to and reaching the right destination for our youth in the process of growing into adulthood. Within this network of train tracks, I have to make sure there are places where the youth can change direction (How many of us ended up on a different path to education, employment than when we started out at age 18) I know I did. And we need to support these changes in direction and no longer look at them as if the youth “dropped out offailed out of EFC, PESS.” Many times when we reexamine the path - changing course will lead to success for our young people.

And since we are working with youth and young adults- most of them in their teens...we need to plan for the “mistakes of youth.” Yes, sometimes the train will derail...our job is to make sure there are other entry points for youth to get back on the train or path.

The first step when planning for the development of transition plans is to make sure we have ALL of the information on our youth in one place. Each CBC is structured differently- Prior to thinking of effective transition plans with measurable outcomes: Map this out- Within my CBC/System of care:

a- WHO holds the information on the youth (Bet different people depending on if the issue is permanency, education, health, etc.)

b-WHERE is the information- FSFN case notes, treatment plans, case file, report cards...

HOW is the information shared – and HOW are we ensuring the information is correct?

Much of the information we collect can be found in planning and documentation requirements specific to the teen population. Let’s review some of those requirements.

39. 6012. **Case Plan**: (When appropriate) Age 13 and older, a written description of programs and services that will help prepare the youth for transition from foster care.

39.701: **Judicial Review** requires for age 13 and older “a statement from the caregiver” on the progress the youth has made in acquiring independent living skills be included in the JRSSR submitted to the court. **Age 17 Judicial Review** within 90 days after the youth’s 17th Birthday- the youth must be supported to attend court and address the court relevant to their best interest.

39.6035: **Transition Plan**: During the 180 period after the youth turns 18 develop a transition plan. [Discuss who is required to be at transition plan development- especially documenting the youth was given the option and support to invite others they feel will assist/play a role in the transition] The transition plan is in addition any other standard case management requirements such as Age 17 Judicial Review and Case Plan updates as required in 39. 6012.

**Federal Fostering Connections** Requirement: Transition Plan within 90 day period prior to 18th Birthday
Now that we have reviewed some of the planning and documentation requirements in statute, I want to discuss what may be the most important requirement for us as child welfare staff and providers...and that is the requirement that **We Change the Way We Look at Transition Planning.**

Extended Foster Care, PESS and Aftercare are **not** Transition Plan Options...These are programs and funding sources. (Absent documented disability) - Transition Plan Options are:
1- Full Time School Attendance
2- Full Time Employment
3- Combination of School and Employment

Our responsibility is to know how to utilize EFC, PESS and Aftercare to support the young person's transition plan.

Language Change is Required: **Not**- Here is the information; Do you want to go into EFC, PESS or Aftercare Program. Stop trying to make the youth fit into one of these boxes! **Instead:** “How do you envision the future for yourself” “What would you like to become as you are transitioning to adulthood” “Have you thought about some steps that you may need to take to support this vision for yourself” Based on your choice, educational status and age I can offer the following support your plan....**then explain the appropriate program(s)**

Understand youth are going to change transition plan/path – This can be a positive: Do we really expect our young people to want the same thing at age 19/20 they did at age 17/18? Why...because they came from foster care—not expected of any other group of young people. Exploration and expansion of what they are exposed to is encouraged for young people.
We discussed that Transition Plan Development was not just a meeting or a staffing. We want to instill a sense of confidence in the transition planning process. No matter what “form” you use – Never let a youth sit in front of you and a blank piece of paper.

Transition Planning is a “conversation” where it is important for young people to have confidence that “we” know them...When I use “we” I am stressing the collective “we” as a system – I am not singling out IL staff, Life Coaches or Case Managers. We discussed the importance of having comprehensive and accurate information on the youth.

The transition planning conversation should be a “confirming” of the information we were diligent in collecting prior to the transition plan meeting/staffing.

Example:

According to the information I have is that you attend ABC High School and are in the 11th grade is that correct? Yes, that's great. Is there any information you want to add or even discuss about school that you want us to discuss as part of developing/updating your transition plan?

That is so different from having a blank form and saying “So what schools do attend? What grade are you in? If that happened to us, the majority would be thinking...really you don't know! Considering you make every decision for where I will live, go to school etc. If there were an emergency- you really would not know where I attended school!

Remember, when we are discussing next steps in the transition at age 18—-it is not about having a flashy brochure/flyer and say here is EFC, PESS & Aftercare.
Transition Planning – It is a “Conversation”
- Confirm this is the school you attend- This is your educational plan for the next 3/6/12 months. Confirm medical/mental health, family visitation, extracurricular, employment experience….everything we report to the court
- What is the best plan based on the “individual” needs of the youth
  - Good Student? Maybe with EFC “work” is the qualifying activity and taking one/two classes in Math or English is the better plan (Secondary and Post Secondary)
  - Maybe EFC with a career plan within their work organization
  - Nope- Going to PESS

EFC, PESS & Aftercare - These are not options: They are programs/funding sources...School, Employment, and a Combination of School/Employment are OPTIONS. And you develop an initial transition plan that is a 3 month, 6 month plan based on the “individual” needs of the youth.

In the transition plan we can formalize tasks, times and action plans for the youth and providers. Remember the youth has to be responsible for their part in making a successful transition.

No matter how we got here based on prior (sometimes ingrained) practices...we can probably all agree the transition planning development meetings often center on money and the level of case management oversight and freedom. Often it is:
1- Youth wanting stipend in hand and freedom live where and whom they live with
2- For the CBC: Level of case management services, oversight and legal responsibility for youth

We often push PESS as the answer. With PESS- Check in hand to young adult (problem solved) and as a provider. I am no longer responsible for your actions (problem solved).
In Florida we have great post-secondary benefits: Free tuition to bright futures eligible schools and financial support. However, when our youth access PESS when they are not ready- we see the results:
1- Low rate of graduation/obtaining a degree or certification
2- Youth are not successful in post-secondary and often owe financial aid/have to pay extra for classes-since they used up free tuition for certain classes.

It is not enough to discuss the benefits of PESS and free tuition. We have to make sure our youth are ready to be successful in post-secondary education. Successful students demonstrate competencies in the areas of study skills, time management, and conflict resolution

Our youth (like many youth) are often unprepared for post-secondary...So maybe we need to look at how we discuss options, services, and programs differently.

Does it make sense for a young person who struggled academically in high school or a GED program to move to “full time attendance” at a college or university? If the youth barely passed Math or English-perhaps it makes more sense to access EFC and work as the qualifying activity and take one/two classes (that English/Math they struggled with)...and work up to a full course load and PESS.
So we make our case about options and our youth are “nope...going for the PESS check” and then our youth are not successful at first and our response is...Warning Letters and Termination: Be successful in full time college or else...you are terminated!

Instead we need to approach the situation from a learning lesson and point of empowerment. We can say, “Lets approach your path to school differently...Here are more options for you..... EFC and part time school or just part time school under ETV (again based on the individual needs of the youth)

Because guess what- our youth who “flunk” out of college just joined the rest of the population in a normal experience. 2014 Report from the National Student Clearing House: Students who entered school in Fall 2008.
 Overall – 55% of first time college students (undergraduate level) completed their degree within 6 years.

Absolutely, we should be focused on education (college, vocational, technical) – however we should be focused on our youth and young adults being successful in their education. The “path” to college for our young adults can include many hurdles. Students (all students not just youth from foster care) must be prepared for post-secondary educational achievement
We need to make sure that we are explaining that there is really not that much difference between EFC and PESS

Remember: Florida Statute (409.1451) Requires that young adults who choose to participate in the Road to Independence Program (which is PESS and Aftercare) receive the skills, education and support necessary to become self-sufficient...either through Post-Secondary education supports and services (statute does not say just funds or stipend) or Aftercare services.

Statute also requires for PESS recipients that the CBC to pay directly for housing and utilities PESS until it is determined (demonstrated) the youth can manage the full amount of the PESS stipend. If we are not providing case management and oversight for PESS, how can we determine and document the PESS recipient able to maintain their housing?

I know that there is not a sentence in statute that requires PESS recipients have a “written plan” however we are required to document conversations, meetings and services/supports provided, and because statute does require the youth/young adult to be an equal partner in determining their readiness to manage their finances, I recommend that each young person in PESS have a written Support/Services Plan.
For the Road to Independence programs: For both PESS & Aftercare: The Support & Services Plan should at a minimum, address the issues and services outlined in statute under the section for AFTERCARE SERVICES. We know issues such as safe and stable housing, educational tutoring, and reliable transportation can impact success in post-secondary education...so we need to address them.

A Support & Services Plan identifies barriers and needs and documents services provided. The Plan does not have to be complicated—it needs to be thorough, timely, and signed by the young adult. The Plan must also identify measurable accountability tasks with due dates for both the young adults and service providers.

If you have a written/signed Support & Services Plan – then all parties are invested in the plan. Notes in FSFN documenting a conversation with the young person, does not constitute a service plan.

Attached is an example of Support and Services: Simple questions:
Young adult reports they have stable housing and are not in need of assistance for housing
Young adult is requesting funds to maintain housing
Young adult reports they are homeless
Young adult is requesting assistance to enroll in education program
Young adult is requesting assistance to find employment

Then document: The Task...The Person Responsible...The Due Date
RECAP: Review requirements – Follow Points on the PowerPoint Slides

Florida Statute 39.6035 Transition Plan: Remember if a youth is leaving foster care when they turn 18 – the Transition Plan has to be approved by the court.

Florida Statute 39.701 Judicial Reviews (3) Review Hearings for Children 17 Years of Age

Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008 (PL. 110-351).

Combine the requirements of the Federal Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoption Act AND Florida Statute.
Age 17: Transition Plans and Judicial Reviews

- Permanency & Permanent Connections
  - Transition Plan 39.6035: Establishing and Maintaining naturally occurring mentoring relationships and other personal support services (Outside of those paid to care for the youth)
  - EFC: In addition to Transition Plan & Case Plan EFC Requires a Permanency Review at once a year.
  - Transition Plan: Tasks, Due Dates: Accountability for Service Provider(s) and Youth/Young Adults

New Focus/Requirements on Permanency and Permanent Connections for Transitioning Youth. Permanency Reviews continue after age 18 for youth in EFC.

Age 17: Transition Plans and Judicial Reviews

- That all sounds great — But….
  - Youth do not want to participate
  - There are too many plans and JR’s to allocate 1-2 Hours for a Transition Development Meeting
  - Youth change their minds about where they are going to live — takes up too much time (wasted time) when the information keeps changing
  - Etc…Etc…

Valid Points: However, if you build your processes and policies on the “least engaged” then you will always have a transition planning system that is inadequate, unaccountable and unable to identify or track outcome measures.
This is Especially Important (not only because we want the best for our young people)

- For Road to Independence: DCF is to develop outcome measures related to the program
  - An analysis of the performance on outcomes for each CBC
  - By CBC, any programmatic or fiscal deficiencies and status of corrective action/compliance

Federal Fostering Connections
Transition Plan Requirement

Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351).

How You Collect, Manage and Coordinate Information is the Difference Between “Paperwork” and a “Plan”

- Age 17: Transition Plan
  39.6035

- Age 17: Judicial Review
  39.701

- Age 17: Updated Case Plan Specific to Youth
  39.701

Florida Statute 409.1451
(6) Accountability
Age 17: Transition Planning
January 2015

Thank You: Questions & Comments

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