

Brenda Bean's testimony about YIT to Joint Fiscal Committee, August 12, 2014

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to be heard. I am Brenda Bean, Project Director for Vermont's 6 year Youth in Transition (YIT) statewide grant funded by SAMHSA until the end of next month. I'm going to give a very brief overview of YIT and then my team-mate, Heather Houle from Washington County, will speak from her personal experience of it. Though they won't take up the limited time for speaking, we have other young adults and their adult allies from other regions in Vermont also present this afternoon on behalf of YIT (*ask them to stand up*).

Over 40 young adults came to the State House on January 31, 2014 to share their experiences with their legislators about Youth in Transition and related system of care services and supports. Charlie Biss, Director of the Child, Adolescent and Family Unit at the Department of Mental Health spoke then about why DMH sought the grant and what it has learned, and the YIT Evaluators presented the impressive results of the work. I just gave you the hand-outs we used for the House Human Services and the Senate Health and Welfare Committees that day in January, also later for the House and Senate Appropriations Committees public hearings.

The main points from these materials are that **peer outreach, case management, and group activities for young adult leadership and empowerment change the lives of vulnerable young people and their communities for the better**. Since the spring of 2010 YIT has enrolled over 500 young people in services per year and has documented statistically significant reductions in their criminal behavior, attention by police, days in jail, and other correctional involvement; also statistically significant reductions in depression, anxiety, and opiate abuse; as well as statistically significant increases in employment and high school graduation among young people, many whom had already dropped out of school. YIT has documented over \$900,000 in cost savings from such desirable outcomes during just the first year after young people enroll in services. [*YIT Lead Evaluator Dr. Tom Delaney is here to answer questions.*]

The Legislature recognized that this work cannot be done through Fee-for-Service Medicaid alone, as the Governor has proposed. First, 5 of the 12 agencies administering YIT around Vermont do not have access to Fee-for-Service Medicaid. Second, most of the peer outreach and young adult leadership and empowerment activities are not reimbursable as a Medicaid service. But it is these activities which engage young people, build their trust, and keep them coming back for the case management and other services which meet their needs. And it is young adult groups like Teens for Change from Bennington or Washington Counties or Diversity Rocks! from Chittenden or Youth Community Rising from Orange County that change communities' perceptions of young people through the events they create to "give back" for the help they have received.

As my friend Rev. Johanna Nichols says: "YIT saves young people; it saves money; and it makes our communities safer. It's like hitting a home run with all bases loaded." So, I am - we are - here asking you to keep YIT in the game by not rescinding the \$310,640 in State General Funds the Legislature appropriated for it!

And now Heather will give you her personal perspective on YIT.