

Creating Connections

Updates for our Learning Community

Issue 2

January 3, 2014

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STAY TUNED!

- ◆ **CHET Conference—April 2014**
- ◆ **WA Behavioral Health Conference—June 2014**
- ◆ **Evidence Based Practice Institute Workforce Initiative Lectures**

— <http://depts.washington.edu/pbhip/training/EBPIlectures.php>

Phase II / Year II Plan

Our Creating Connections (CC) team worked hard over the months of August and September to develop a solid plan that represented a culmination of work completed during our Phase I year. We included feedback from our Learning Community stakeholders, surveys of mental health providers, and focus groups with social workers. We identified tangible and actionable steps to undertake in Washington that aligned our aim of bringing a trauma-informed system-level change to enhance the wellbeing of children and youth and increase cross-system collaboration.

After many hours of writing and revision, our team submitted the Phase II plan on September 30th ... and then the unthinkable occurred. The federal government shut down on October 1st.

Luckily, our government was back up and running within a few weeks and we were able to touch-base with our federal project officer who had detailed feedback on the next phase of the Creating Connections project.

The largest feedback we received was broken into three key chunks:

1) **The screening platform needs to be enhanced to include ongoing and periodic screening in addition to screening children and youth when they enter out-of-home care.** We know social workers are constantly assessing and reassessing children and youth for safety, permanency, and wellbeing – therefore, we will be equipping a CHET screener and ongoing mental health screener with a standardized and reliable tool that will help a social worker assess a child or youth's wellbeing – and the tool will be used multiple times over the course of a child's time in out-of-home care to monitor their wellbeing.

2) **We need to systematically track progress with a feedback loop for social workers and therapists.** By doing ongoing screening, workers will be able to track child and youth progress over time. We are working to create a database that allows this information to be shared across systems.

3) **We need to demonstrate a demand for an**

Evidence Based Program (EBP) expansion. This year we will work with our partners to analyze the treatment needs of our population of focus and identify EBP training demands and opportunities.

As you will see in the next few sections, our team is working hard on responding to our federal project officer's feedback and state agencies are making some serious progress! As you see on page 2, CA will be hiring three full-time ongoing mental health screeners and rolling out a new trauma tool that will be administered on children and youth in out-of-home care. Our project is also working with the Washington State Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence ("the Alliance") to develop a mental health training for all newly hired social workers [add description?]. We will have a packed year ahead of us!

The next year of the Creating Connections project is going to be an exciting one!

For background on Phase I, find our evaluation reports at: <http://depts.washington.edu/pbhip/projects-programs/page/creating-connections>

Ongoing Mental Health Screening and Progress Monitoring

As we move into Phase II / Year II of our grant, we find ourselves navigating unexpected and exciting changes! We are moving forward with embedding a trauma screening tool called the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) in the Child Health and Education Track (CHET) program. A statewide training of all CHET screeners is scheduled for April 2014, with an anticipated 'go live' date to start using the new screening tool is scheduled for June 2014.

Additionally, based on feedback from our federal partner, we have expanded the screening platform by embedding an ongoing screening process (called Ongoing Mental Health [OMH] Screeners) for a cohort of identified children and

youth who remain in care longer than 30-days. The newly created OMH Screeners will be administering two tools: the SCARED and Pediatric Systems Checklist (PSC -17). Initially, the OMH Screeners will be centralized in Olympia where they will be supervised and the volume and pace of work monitored under the CA Co-Principal Investigator and the CA Project Coordinator. To support this piece of the work, CA will re-tool the internal tracking database by expanding fields to 1) incorporate the SCARED and 2) manage the volume of on-going screening data. It is anticipated CA will establish mechanisms for monthly data reports to inform OMH Screeners of all those children and youth who will be screened.

By adding the additional screening, we aim to:

1. Increase the identification of children and youth with mental health concerns;
2. Increase the number of referrals to mental health for assessment and treatment; and
3. Increase communication between the family, caregiver, social worker, and therapist.

For now, we are awaiting federal approval for this latest proposal. Our goal is to increase the screening of children and youth in out-of-home care for trauma and mental health needs with well-researched and validated tools, and once identified, refer them into appropriate mental health services.

Complementing WA state initiatives

The outcome measures Creating Connections (CC) aims to improve are paralleled by many reforms happening in our state related to service, practice, and system level change. As a result, we are aiming to align these complimentary initiatives across the continuum.

Services

Family Assessment Response (FAR):

The first phase of FAR began this January and parallels our project's focus on prevention; moving practice from incident-based assessments to comprehensive needs assessments.

TR Settlement:

This settlement is working to develop and implement a sustainable system (Wraparound with Intensive Services, or WISE) that will work for delivering intensive home and community based mental health services to the children and youth in the CC target population who are in need of intensive mental health treatment.

Universal Developmental Screening:

Implementation continues to make available developmental screening to all children in Washington from birth to 8 years of age, which helps to create a culture and establish a standard that screening is not just something done by physicians.

Practice

Solution-Based Casework (SBC)

practice model: This

evidence-based case management model will work hand in hand with CC efforts to improve identification of mental health needs AND improve linkages with appropriate community based services. CC also shares SBC values of prioritizing the voices of families.

Evidence-Based Programs

DBHR is providing support for a new CBT+ Learning Collaborative initiative that will increase the mental health systems capacity to serve children and youth in foster care with mental and behavioral health needs.

Training

Social worker training is now housed with the

Washington State Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, who Creating Connections will be partnering with to build a core mental health training curriculum. The training will provide social workers with skills to identify mental health needs and match them with appropriate services.

System

Braam settlement:

Creating Connections will complement CA efforts that helped them to meet full compliance on measures related to mental health screening and placement stability.

Behavioral Health Dashboard:

CC is working to integrate child welfare indicators into the system-level dashboard monitoring key outcome indicators in collaboration with the Systems of Care Project.



We aim to recognize the intersections between all state initiatives

Are there other initiatives that align with Creating Connections? Send your thoughts to anneb2@uw.edu

Youth Voice

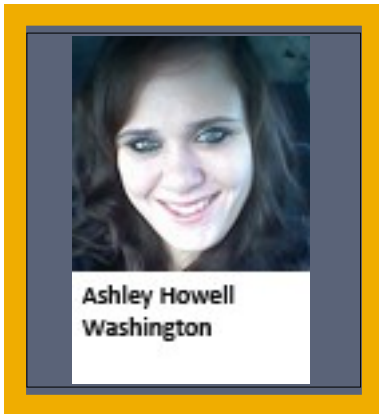
This last quarter we have reached out to several foster youth and alumni entities to introduce, update, and discuss the Creating Connections Grant. Groups included: Passion to Action, The Mockingbird Society, the UW Champions and Achievers Program, and Independent Living Services and Supplemental

Education Transition Planning Program (SETuP) Providers. Our goal is not only to include the youth/young adult voice in the work we do, but to ensure that we are listening and incorporating their voice in our work. Many of the young people we spoke with shared a genuine interest in being involved with the Cre-

ating Connections grant; some ideas include participating in training curriculum development, joining a panel on the Culture of Foster Care, attending pertinent meetings, and internships for students who are foster care alumni. We look forward to consulting, learning, and sharing with these great folks!

Celebrate and Be Recognized!

Each year, Foster Club recognizes 100 Outstanding Young Leaders throughout the nation. Two of this year's Outstanding Leaders include Passion to Action's **Ryan Cummings** and **Ashley Howell!***



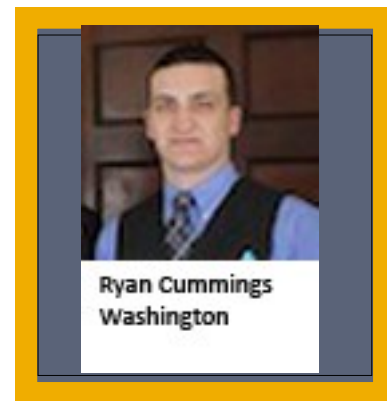
Ashley knows her own success story is powerful yet limited and so she encourages youth: "I can give a voice as to my experiences in care and hopefully help the system improve, but mine is only one story out of thousands so it's important for all youth to tell theirs." It took Ashley three years, five cities, and six placements before she landed in a

house that she will forever call 'home'. Ashley was ten years old when she met her mom and dad that would help Ashley turn into the woman, mother, wife and volunteer she is today. In May 2014, she will become a college graduate, holding a BSW. She will work to advocate in her community/city/state and to be a voice that foster youth feel they may not have. Experience on the board of Passion to Action will contribute to Ashley's resume as will her many years as a volunteer mentor to foster youth in college.

Ryan feels that his voice could potentially help youth in vulnerable situations reach stability in a more timely manner. "The past seven years of advocating have forever re-shaped my life and have helped given me closure on my own experience in care. I believe that my experience made me stronger and with that strength I have a duty to prevent more innocent children from suffering because of flaws the system continues to overlook." After 11 years in foster care and bouncing around a half dozen homes with his biological sister, Ryan has entered Seattle University where he

was awarded the prestigious Governors Scholarship in 2011. He is majoring in Networking and Computer Security. He would like to join the US Special Forces. But in the meantime his work and volunteer hours at his youth board Passion to Action, The Washington State Supreme Court Commission for Foster Youth, and The Mockingbird Society, will keep him sufficiently busy.

*Summaries written by Meagan Tuhy, Foster Club volunteer



Expanding our Core Team

We are welcoming two new lead partner members from Division of Behavioral Health Resources (DBHR) and Children's Administration (CA).

LaRESSA Fourre, is a Children's Mental Health Program Administrator with DBHR. Mrs. Fourre will be replacing Greg Endler who has been working on this grant for the past seven months. Ms. Fourre is a contributing member to the Core Team providing valued input from her experience as both a Child and Family Therapist in the Community Mental Health field

coupled with her many years working in the Child Welfare System at CA. Ms. Fourre's primary roles include furthering the use of trauma informed care and promoting the expansion of evidence based practices in children's mental health and across all child serving agencies in the State of Washington.

Dae Shogren, is a Mental Health Program Manager with CA. Ms. Shogren coordinates the CA internal effort and participates in the day-to-day operations which include planning, coordina-

tion, identification of tools, implementation of the grant, training, and communication with CA Regional Administrators and Regional Leads. Ms. Shogren's major role lies in the communication and coordination of the planning process that will identify and strengthen referral protocols. Ms. Shogren has nearly 20 years of direct service experience including eight years of program management.

We would also like to thank Brenda Kaufman, who recently stepped down from the team, for her incredible contributions to the project. We are working to engage another veteran parent, as well as a foster parent who can represent the perspective of those who have experienced these systems.



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CREATING CONNECTIONS

Children's Bureau Grant
 #90C01103101

Learning Community Evaluation of Organizational Readiness and Fit

On August 15th, 2013, we held our annual Creating Connections Learning Community: a group of approximately 100 stakeholders from across Washington State, representing the multiple systems in which children and youth in foster care with behavioral and emotional health needs (and their families) are sometimes involved. The goals of the meeting included updating the Learning Community on our project status, disseminating findings from the previous' years process evaluation activities, enlisting their expertise to generate and prioritize solutions, and evaluating organizational readiness and fit of the project with the current systems. Of the 100 Learning Community members, a total of 75 people participated in the Learning Community meeting across three locations that were connected via videoconference; a central location in Western Washington, and two locations in Eastern Washington (Kennewick and Spokane). Participants represented over 30 different organizations in Washington State and included alumni of care and veteran parents.

At the end of the meeting, those Learning Community (LC) members that participated were asked to complete a survey. The evaluation team designed the survey to assess several important constructs. These included: 1) Satisfaction with the work of the LC, 2) The "fit" between the Phase II / Year II plans and the current system, 3) Inter-system partnerships: communication, trust, alliance, and coordination; and 4) System readiness.

The results from our survey with the Learning Community demonstrate that there is still work to be done to build a collaborative group to focus on these efforts. This was expected because the Learning Community is in its beginning stages and it represents a large number of stakeholders representing a broad array of services and agencies. At this early stage in development, we would not expect that any large and broad coalition of stakeholders would score highly on collaboration. However, while there is room to grow over the next several years, the Learning Community feedback shows there is a reasonable fit between our planned activities and organizational context, and there were very few major weaknesses in collaborative capacity. We expect that the two low scoring items on collaboration—trusting one another and feeling that members could be full representatives of their organization—will improve over the next several years as the Learning Community continues through its next developmental phases.

Average scores for factors of collaboration

