Transitional Age Youth Support Program

What sets the Transitional Age Youth Support Program (TAY) apart from traditional outpatient mental health programs?

Engagement
Participants only have to tell their story once because their counselor is the one who conducts the initial assessment. Intake Specialists are only used when it would serve the client best, namely to get them into treatment sooner. Our team of therapists is committed to high quality client care, teaming with the youth to ensure their treatment is participant driven and adequately meets their needs.

Peer counselors are part of the service as well. Having experienced mental health challenges themselves as a youth, they share their inspiring stories of resilience and recovery providing hope to the adolescents and young adults receiving our services. Working one on one with the youth and as a team with the therapist, our peer counselors also model a successful transition to adult roles of independence and self-sufficiency. Peer counselors also conduct outreach to youth who may be hesitant to start services, or those who have disengaged from treatment. An engagement plan is made for all participants to address any existing or potential barriers to receiving services.

Flexibility
Our program is designed to be flexible to meet participants when and where they need support (Home, Community or Office-based). Our services include 24/7 crisis response for those in Intensive Services, with a focus on crisis prevention through safety planning that works to identify triggers and address them before the youth reaches the point where it is a full mental health crisis.

A Focus on Transition
We focus on transitional age youth (15-24) whose mental health challenges can be exacerbated by their developmental stage. Informed by research and 40 years of experience as an agency serving this population, our approach is tailored to the unique needs of adolescents and young adults using a youth-driven model that engages and empowers youth to drive their own lives, while also providing guidance and support to make helpful decisions and healthy behavior changes. This approach promotes a successful transition to adult roles of independence and self-sufficiency.

Outcome-Based
Progress is measured consistently by the participants and therapists in every session, and is reviewed at 3-month increments. Progress is measured on each goal, comparing it to a Needs and Strengths Functional Assessment and connecting it to the specific therapeutic interventions used in sessions. This gives a more objective view of how treatment is going, empowers the youth to drive their own treatment, and validates that changes they make or choose not to make, directly effect how they are feeling and where their life is headed. It gives the therapist a chance to evaluate the approach to treatment and make changes where needed or seek consultation for input on what can be done differently.

Strength-Based
The Mental Health Assessment does not just look at Needs and Diagnosis with a quick acknowledgment of some of the youth’s strengths. Strengths such as Resilience, Resourcefulness, Support System, Talents and Interests are explored and measured. In creating a treatment plan, we create goals around how to build up Strengths in a way that the participant is can use them to meet their own Needs. Progress is measured not just in the reduction of Needs but also the increase in Strengths.

Integrated Services
To Improve Coordination of Care:

• We have designed our program to have a continuum of care that allows youth to go up and down in levels of service based on need WITHOUT changing their assigned therapist or peer counselor.
• The therapist attends psychiatric appointments with participants when they are referred to psychiatric services for medication, which helps us assist the youth in managing medications by using a team approach.

• A Care Coordinator is assigned when there is a need for intensive services or if the participant is involved in multiple systems. Using a Youth-Driven Wraparound model, the Care Coordinator facilitates a team-based approach that coordinates with families or caregivers, the Justice System, Children Welfare, Schools, Specialized Care, and Natural Supports.

• When youth are referred to other support programs within Community Youth Services to meet needs such as shelter, housing, employment, or education, coordinating their care is easier due to the fact that all programs are housed within the same agency and youth are more likely to follow through with the referral. With the addition of our new Electronic Health Record System that we are rolling out in 2016, participants will have one agency file which will significantly improve our team approach, making it a seamless service agency. It will also enable us to track progress throughout their time in services at CYS regardless of which program they are in.

**Inspired**

We have a team of very driven, passionate and dedicated staff and administrators. We are constantly learning and working to provide mental health in new ways that reflect the best interests of our clients. We use new and emerging research-based practices to achieve the best possible service model for our clients. We choose practices that fit with our values around Positive Youth Development and are adaptable to the individual needs of Transitional Age Youth. We then integrate these practices into one unified model that is functional and sustainable.

We also hold a vision of an improved mental health system that allows and encourages programs like this to flourish by reassessing our local and state-wide system’s current practices and brainstorming innovative approaches to problems which have led to poor care or struggling operations in the past. To make this vision a reality, we work closely in partnership with Thurston and Mason Counties, the Thurston-Mason Behavioral Health Organization, and the Washington State Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery as well as the Washington State Legislature. We also partner with the University of Washington's Evidence Based Practice Institute and Portland State University's Pathways Program, who are doing pioneering work in researching effective treatment and understanding the unique needs of Transitional Age Youth. We understand that we are a part of a System of Care, and as such, coordination and collaboration with other providers and agencies within our community is vital for the success of our participants. We have taken a lead role with our locally formed Systems of Care group and Family and Youth Systems Partnership Round Table as well as with the Thurston Thrives Youth Collaborative working towards improving the health and wellbeing of our community.