

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION: HARRIS TRANSITION COALITION



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The transition to adulthood is challenging for all youth, but is especially risky for youth with mental health conditions. Youth and young adults ages 16-24 with serious and persistent mental health needs and their family members often have difficulty accessing appropriate mental health, employment, education, and housing services. This is cause for concern because research suggests that decisions made during the transition to adulthood can have a dramatic effect on the rest of a person's life.

With these challenges in mind, the **Harris Transition Coalition** aims to improve service delivery for transition-age youth with mental health conditions in Houston. Engaging transition-age youth and their family members and caregivers in program planning, design, and implementation is an important and unique component of the initiative. The VOICES of youth,

caregivers, and service providers join together for positive change.

The eight Houston-area service providers involved in the initiative include:

- Communities in Schools of Greater Houston
- Star of Hope Mission
- Baylor College of Medicine
- City of Houston Health and Human Services
- Family Services of Greater Houston
- Easter Seals of Greater Houston
- Disability Rights Texas
- Harris County Child Protective Services

During the first phase of this five-year grant, these agencies participated in a year-long process of planning for thoughtful and deliberate youth engagement – conducting interviews, focus groups, and council meetings to hear directly from transition-age youth about what services and programs mattered most to them. Many important changes and services have been incorporated because of these meetings, including but not limited to:

- **Easter Seals of Greater Houston:** incorporating driver's education classes, career preparation and career search classes, and peer support networks into daily programming.
- **Disability Rights Texas:** creating "Your Rights, Your Voice," a guide for youth with mental health concerns who are transitioning to adulthood.
- **Harris County Child Protective Services HAY Center:** incorporating peer support specialists and housing support services into regular programming.

The efforts of these agencies are ongoing, and transition-age youth continue to lead the positive changes being made to ensuring that programs and services stay meaningful and relevant.

Together we aim to make services and supports in Houston more relevant and effective for transition-age youth in Harris County!



Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
ADVANCING RECOVERY AND WELLNESS IN TEXAS

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YOUTH SERVICES
THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.