

TNOYS

TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES

TNOYS TODAY: A Quarterly Newsletter



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THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.



Report Advances TNOYS' Youth Homelessness Work

On November 15, TNOYS and Texas Appleseed released the most comprehensive study to date on youth homelessness in Texas. "Young, Alone and Homeless in the Lone Star State" provides insight into the situation of youth experiencing homelessness in our state and provides recommendations on policies that can help.

The key finding of the report is that the lack of a cohesive policy and funding approach to address the problem of youth homelessness in Texas has resulted in high levels of youth who are homeless and poor outcomes for these young people. The report reveals that youth homelessness doesn't just affect youth who find themselves without homes, it also has broader implications for the communities in which they live because of the impact on the criminal justice systems, education, and other key institutions. These problems can be prevented with smart policy solutions.

The report has already received significant state and national attention, including media coverage in outlets such as the Texas Tribune, Houston Chronicle, and NPR. The attention is critical to raising awareness of and support for homeless youth services, which currently receive no appropriated funding in Texas.

TNOYS has already been working to affect policy change on this issue, lobbying successfully in 2015 for legislation that resulted in the first statewide look at youth homelessness, a study called "Youth Count Texas." TNOYS was contracted to coordinate that study, which found that there are nearly 16,000 students in Texas schools who are homeless without a parent or guardian. The new report enhances this work by highlighting policy strategies for Texas to address the issue, and TNOYS will be lobbying for many of the recommendations in this report during the next legislative session.



An Update on Recovery Through Participation

Recovery Through Participation: Year 1

Many youth in foster care or other systems do not have opportunities to participate in decisions impacting their lives or their care. This is problematic because research indicates that opportunities to have a voice help youth in their recovery journey by increasing motivation for change. Recovery through Participation is a two-year project that provides training, technical assistance and other resources for youth services organizations in Central Texas as they develop or strengthen opportunities for youth voice in their work and promote recovery from past trauma. As we close in on the first year of the project, we are excited to share what we have accomplished so far:



5 research-informed and practice-based **training sessions** for Central Texas providers

16 **partnerships** and advisory partnerships formed with Central Texas organizations

68 **organizations** provided with resources, training, and opportunities

2 **youth partners** hired and integrated into planning, meetings and other activities

What's to Come in Year 2?

As we enter the second year of Recovery Through Participation, TNOYS plans to:

- Expand our **research-based training materials** to support adult professionals and youth leaders
- Continue to offer **support, training, and technical assistance** to our partner organizations and their youth advisors as they make progress toward their youth voice and youth engagement goals
- Organize **events that allow for idea sharing** among Central Texas and Harris County organizations
- And much more!

Thanks to the St. David's Foundation's Opportunity Grants Initiative for the funding that makes this project possible.



TNOYS Brings Back Emergency Shelter Task Force



You may have seen headlines last year about children sleeping in state offices due to lack of foster care capacity. TNOYS is helping

address this crisis by reconvening our Emergency Shelter Task Force. The group has met twice in 2017, giving emergency shelter providers opportunities for representation, networking, and support.

The first meeting was held in August at Jonathan's Place. At the meeting, the Governor's Office shared opportunities to serve victims of minor sex trafficking, after a recent University of Texas study found that 79,000 Texas children and youth are victims of this crime and many of them are in foster care. Dr. Wayne Carson, CEO of ACH Child and

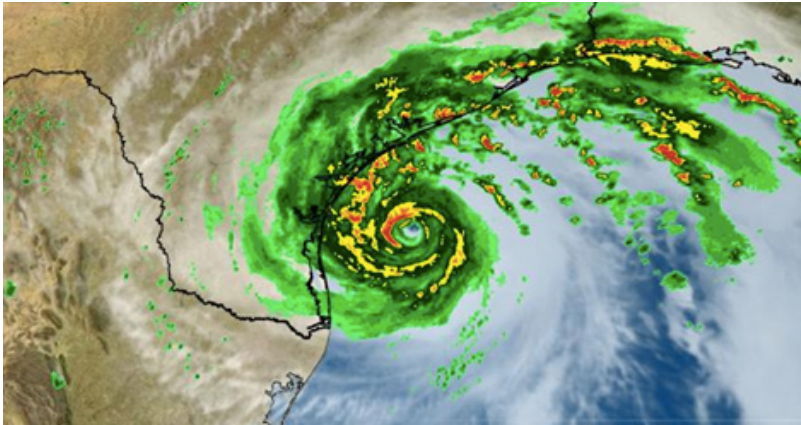
Family Services, advised on how shelters can adapt to the changing child welfare system.

In October, the task force met at SAFE in Austin to hear from leadership at Child Protective Services on its forecast for the demand for foster care services across Texas in upcoming years.

We can already see that these meetings are helping shelter leaders fill gaps in the child welfare system and plan for the future, and we are looking forward to more productive meetings with this group in 2018!



TNOYS' Network Shows Strength During Hurricane



When Hurricane Harvey hit Texas' Gulf Coast in late August, many youth service organizations in TNOYS' membership were right in the path of the disaster. The Texas Department of Family Services, roughly 1,300 children in state foster care were in dangerous conditions due to the effects of Hurricane Harvey and about 3,000 caseworkers were also impacted.

TNOYS and our member organizations across the state quickly took action to help out. TNOYS assisted the state child welfare agency in finding placements for children in foster care who had to evacuate, and we coordinated updates on program evacuations and program needs on our website so that stakeholders across Texas knew what was happening and how they could help.

Meanwhile, TNOYS member organizations such as Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives in San Antonio, ACH Child and Family Services in Fort Worth, and Connections Individual and Family Services in New Braunfels opened their doors to displaced foster kids from locations throughout South Texas.

Not all Houston organizations evacuated, and those that were able to continue operating during the storm did so to the best of their ability, knowing that in times of disaster youth and families who are already in crisis are some of the most vulnerable.

Harris County Protective Services (HCPS) reported that its staff worked throughout the hurricane, including personal deliveries to Guardianship wards, staying overnight in the HCPS shelter and setting up a shelter in the community. Covenant House Texas did not turn anyone away who needed access to their emergency shelter and their staff worked around the clock to keep the 70 youth under their roof safe. And Star of Hope Mission continued to care for over 1,000 homeless men, women and children in the Houston area throughout the devastation caused by the storm.

TNOYS is proud to work with our strong network of member organizations that truly came through for each other and the clients they serve in a time of need.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives (RMYA) has been operating in the San Antonio area for over 40 years, with the aim of helping youth recover from the trauma of abuse and integrate back into the community so they can lead healthy and productive lives. The organization has grown with the San Antonio community and its needs over the years, and today operates two facilities that provide a variety of services, including preventive counseling, a charter school, an emergency shelter, and a transitional living program.

RMYA has been involved with TNOYS for almost as long as it has been in operation and says TNOYS membership provides many benefits. Dr. Julie Ann Strentzsch, Chief Program Officer at RMYA and a TNOYS board member, says it is important to have a relationship with TNOYS in order to stay connected to other youth services work being done across the state. That relationship has clearly paid off, with Strentzsch crediting connections created by TNOYS as being pivotal in securing a new state grant that is allowing RMYA to expand its work.

The grant came from the Child Sex Trafficking Team at the Texas Governor's Office, and has allowed RMYA to open an additional emergency facility including beds specifically for youth who are victims of trafficking. The opening of the center, called Centro Seguro, has allowed RMYA to serve upwards of 60 youth at any given time, up from the 20-30 it had capacity to serve before.

RMYA learned about the grant when it co-hosted a summit on child sex trafficking with TNOYS in December 2016. Strentzsch says that summit was what allowed RMYA to form partnerships with the governor's office and other agencies that led directly to them being able to secure the funding to expand their emergency services.

"Without TNOYS, we wouldn't have had the expansion in this direction," she says.



Upcoming Event Highlight: Expert Training Series



TNOYS is excited to be offering a series of training workshops across the state led by a variety of experts, including young people with lived experience. Upcoming workshops include:

- Dec. 6: Evidence-Based Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (San Antonio)
- Dec. 14: Promising Practices for Latina Youth (Virtual Webinar)
- Jan. 24: Evidence-Based Motivational Interviewing (Ft. Worth)
- Feb. 9: Ethical Decision-Making, featuring youth partner as co-presenter (Austin)
- Jan. 31: Trust-Based Relational Intervention (Austin)

To learn more and register, visit: tnoys.org/events



TNOYS' Mission and Approach

Whether you are new to TNOYS or have been familiar with us for many years, we encourage you to take a look at our mission and approach, which provide our thinking on what motivates our work to support Texas' youth and the service providers who support them:

TNOYS' Mission

The mission of Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) is to strengthen, support, and protect critical services for Texas youth and their families to ensure their success. TNOYS is the only organization that strengthens services across the full continuum of care for youth and families in Texas.

TNOYS' Approach

TNOYS takes a unique comprehensive approach to our work that includes policy advocacy, training and program development, and working in partnership with young people:

- **Policy** – We advocate for public policies and priorities that benefit young people in at-risk situations and their families.
- **Practice** – Our training and program development services ensure providers are fully equipped to meet the needs of the youth and families they serve.
- **Participation** – We work in partnership with youth to demonstrate what they are capable of when people invest in them.

Experience the benefits of our network. Visit www.tnoys.org/members to join today.

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