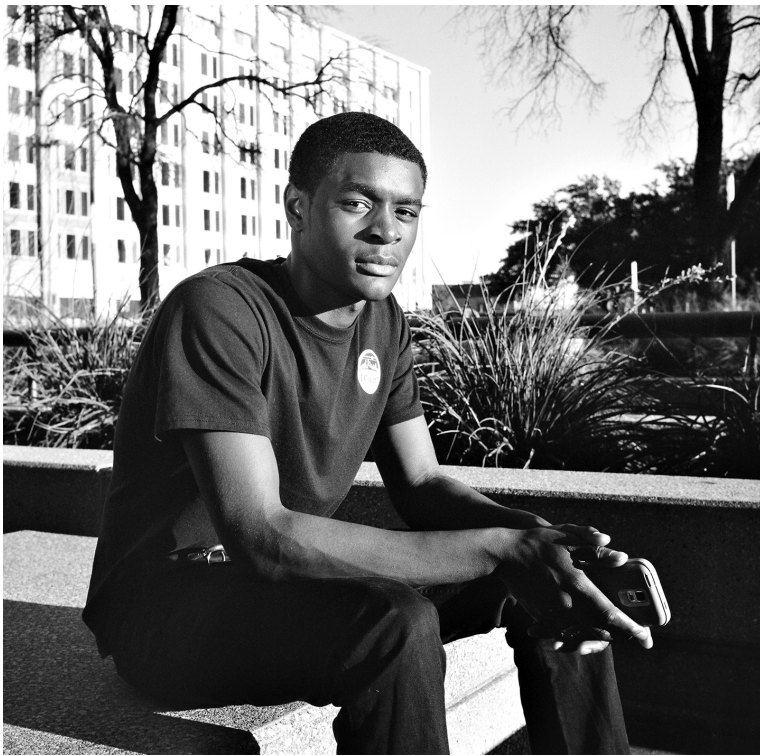


TNOYS

TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES

TNOYS TODAY: A Quarterly Newsletter



FALL 2016 ISSUE

TNOYS Conference Proves We're Stronger Together

TNOYS' 2017 Legislative Agenda

Speakers Give Context to Homeless Youth Report

New Guide Clarifies Rights of Homeless Youth

Member Spotlight: The HAY Center

Upcoming Event Highlight: Crisis Communications Workshop

Why Your Support Matters

THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.



TNOYS CONFERENCE PROVES WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER

At TNOYS, we believe we're all stronger when we come together to solve common problems, and that it is critical to involve youth and families in addressing their challenges. We put these beliefs to the test at our 33rd annual conference in Houston in August, inviting youth and families to join the event for the first time.

The result? It was a resounding success! As one conference attendee said, "The best part of my day has been learning from and alongside youth participants." A track devoted specifically to youth and families featured workshops focused on topics such as breaking down misconceptions young people face and addressing the role of social media in young people's lives.

The "Stronger Together" theme was clear during other events throughout the conference -- from keynote speaker

Tyrone Smith, a former NFL player who talked about the importance of teamwork, to the closing keynote session that demonstrated the power of music to bring people together.

The event also brought back popular features from previous years, including updates from Department of Family and Protective Services executives and affinity group sessions, where attendees in similar personal or professional situations discussed real-life challenges and developed solutions together.

As always, the conference was a great opportunity to connect with colleagues from around the state and enhance our understanding of the best practices in serving youth and families. We're already looking forward to next year!



GETTING TO KNOW TNOYS: 2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Great progress was made on behalf of the state's youth and families during Texas' 85th Legislative Session, from the creation of the first statewide count of homeless youth to a significant increase in funding for foster care services. But, there is still more work to be done to protect Texas' most vulnerable young people, and TNOYS is busy preparing to achieve important goals during the next session that begins in January 2017.

We have designed a campaign for the upcoming session that invites state leaders and the public to join us in our work to recognize and value the inherent strengths of young people. Below is an initial look at our campaign priorities:

PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION

The most cost effective way to serve youth and families is to prevent problems before they start. The Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division at the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) contracts with organizations across Texas to provide services proven to prevent youth from ending up in the more expensive foster care and juvenile justice systems. Texas should invest more in these successful and important prevention and early intervention programs.

FOSTER CARE FUNDING & REDESIGN

Foster care placements come in all different shapes and sizes. Texas should adequately fund all foster care and residential treatment services to ensure that children and youth placed in all of these settings are safe, and that their placements promote their health and well-being. Texas should also promote the careful redesign of the foster care system, to improve outcomes for those in foster care, while at the same time, continuing to improve the existing system currently serving youth.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Some young people may exhibit especially challenging behaviors as a result of past trauma. For these people, addressing their behavior appropriately is especially crucial to their health and well-being. Restraint and seclusion practices can lead to patient/client and staff injuries and are proven to be traumatizing for patients. For this reason, it is important that service environments are trauma-informed and that seclusion and restraint practices are only used as a last resort.

SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

TNOYS has been working with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to conduct a statewide survey of young people who are currently unaccompanied and without permanent housing. The information gathered helps us understand their needs and ensure their voices are heard. Texas leaders should use this information to invest in services and supports that can meet the needs of these vulnerable but resilient young people in order to help them get on their feet.



NEW GUIDE CLARIFIES RIGHTS OF HOMELESS YOUTH

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH RIGHTS

Helping Providers Navigate the Laws and Policies Affecting Unaccompanied Homeless Youth



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Laws like the federal McKinney-Vento Act ensure homeless students are able to access basic services such as education and medical care, even without a home address. But, these laws can often seem vague and difficult to interpret. That's why TNOYS has released a new guide to help providers navigate the laws and better serve this vulnerable population.

"Understanding Youth Rights: Helping Providers Navigate the Laws and Policies Affecting Unaccompanied Homeless Youth," produced with funding from a Texas

Bar Foundation grant, provides guidance on state and federal laws around issues like emancipation, emergency shelter, public education, medical treatment and government benefits.

TNOYS sees youth as resilient, resourceful people who can partner with adults in a joint effort to solve their problems, and in that spirit, the guide also includes a focus on how youth and adults can collaborate to resolve challenges associated with homelessness. Visit www.tnoys.org/publications to download your free copy.



SPEAKERS GIVE CONTEXT TO HOMELESS YOUTH REPORT



Formerly homeless youth speak at an Oct. 20 event in Austin where TNOYS released its process evaluation report for the Youth Count Texas! survey.

In 2015, the Texas Legislature voted to create the first-ever statewide count of youth experiencing homelessness in Texas. For the past year, TNOYS has been helping coordinate the development and implementation of the count through a contract with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). TDHCA will share the results of the count this fall, and on Sept. 20, TNOYS released a report focused on the process by which the count was conducted.

The process is important because homeless youth counts are being conducted in more and more communities across the country as concern about the issue grows. The report can help to inform those counts, and it also sheds light on the situation here in Texas. One of the main findings: that young people experiencing homelessness have unique characteristics and needs that are different than those of their adult counterparts.

To help illustrate the findings of the report, TNOYS hosted an event featuring speakers who experienced homelessness as young people in Texas. They shared their personal stories about facing and overcoming the challenges associated with not having a roof over their heads, and also shared their own suggestions on how state leaders can help young people in similar situations.

The event was an opportunity not only to highlight the Youth Count Texas! project, but also to demonstrate that young people can play an active role in helping to address their own challenges -- and larger community issues. Visit tnoys.org/publications to download the free report.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



The Houston Alumni & Youth (HAY) Center, a program of Harris County Protective Services (HCPS) that provides services to foster youth transitioning to adulthood, is unique among TNOYS members. That's because it is a public-private partnership that relies on both county and private funding. According to Joel Levine, executive director of HCPS, that is key to its success.

"With the public-private partnership model, we've really been able to expand our programming," Levine said. "Harris County provides funding for infrastructure and other administrative costs, but a lot of the money we need for programming and goods and services for youth comes from the HAY Center Foundation."

Initially born out of a federal grant in 2005, the HAY Center has evolved over the years into a one-stop shop where current and former foster youth, ages 16 to 25, can access various services to help them lead successful adult lives. Those services include everything from programs that match them with local volunteers and businesses for access to mentoring and summer jobs, to a food pantry and housing vouchers that help meet their most basic needs.

Because it is part of HCPS, which has been a TNOYS member since the 1980s, the HAY Center has had access to TNOYS member benefits since it began. Of particular value to the HAY Center has been TNOYS' youth engagement expertise.

"All of the programs we do are in response to needs youth are identifying," Levine said. "TNOYS has brought us a lot of resources on how to involve youth in policy decisions, funding decisions -- really, how to involve them at every level of the organization."



UPCOMING EVENT HIGHLIGHT

WHEN: NOVEMBER 9, 2016
9:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.

WHERE:
1301 N. MAYS STREET
ROUND ROCK, TEXAS, 78664

ARE YOU PREPARED?

AN INTERACTIVE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP FOR CHILD & YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Learn best practices for handling public crises and test your own crisis communications skills in this interactive, scenario-based workshop specifically for organizations that serve children and youth in foster care and other settings.

The workshop will be led by Anna Geismar of The Comms Shop, LLC and will feature guest speaker Jeff Eller of The Jeff Eller Group. It is free for TNOYS members and \$50 for non-members. Visit tnoys.org/events to learn more and register to attend.



TNOYS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

Each year at its annual conference, TNOYS recognizes individuals and organizations who have shown leadership and dedication in serving Texas youth. This year, we were pleased to present the following awards:

- ★ Distinguished Leadership Award
Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner
- ★ Steve Wick Innovative Program Award
Montgomery County Youth Alliance
- ★ June Bucy Award for Excellence
Mary Green,
Harris County Protective Services
- ★ Volunteer of the Year
Cathy Hamilton, Threads for Teens
- ★ Professional Youth Worker Award
Yannin Marquez,
Texas Panhandle Centers



WHY YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

You've seen the headlines -- the systems that serve our state's most vulnerable young people are struggling. At-risk children and youth are going without foster care placements for days and being left to sleep overnight in state offices. The upcoming legislative session offers an opportunity to increase funding and help solve these problems, but only if we ensure legislators get the information they need to make the right decisions.

TNOYS is the only organization representing the voices of youth services providers at the state capitol, ensuring decision-makers at the highest levels hear from those working daily with our state's young people. We made great progress during the last session, lobbying for \$117 million in increases to services for youth who are homeless or in foster care, but there is still more to be done. As we head into the next session, it is a critical time to ensure hard-working youth services professionals get the resources they need to best serve Texas' youth.

Help us with this important work. Visit www.tnoys.org/donate to donate today.

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