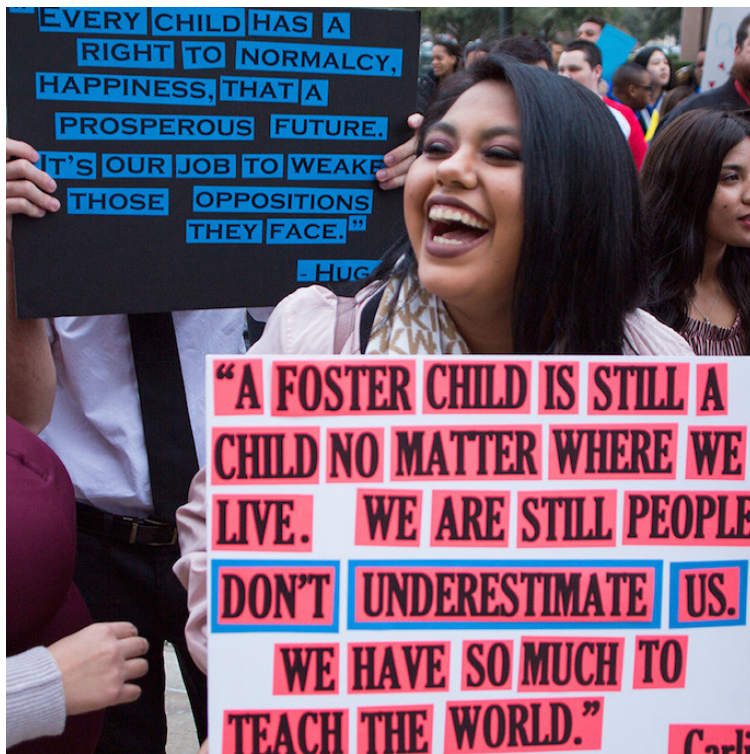


TNOYS

TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES

TNOYS TODAY: A Quarterly Newsletter



SPRING 2017 ISSUE

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The Value of TNOYS Membership

THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.



TNOYS Brings Youth and Provider Voices to Capitol

The 85th Texas Legislative Session has been an important one for the state's child welfare system, with the governor kicking off the session in January with CPS reform flagged as an emergency item.

TNOYS has been busy ensuring that the voices of youth and youth services providers are heard in these policy debates that so closely impact them. We established a legislative agenda with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention, support for youth experiencing homelessness, and foster care funding and careful rollout of redesign, and have been advocating directly with key policymakers who can make a difference on these issues.

In addition to our own staff visits at the Capitol, we've also ensured elected officials hear directly from those working and living with Texas' child welfare system. We hosted

a Member Advocacy Day in February, where TNOYS members from across the state met with representatives and voiced their concerns. In January, we also hosted an event in Austin where leading youth services organizations from across the state shared best practices that could potentially be incorporated into policymaking.

Perhaps most exciting was the return of our biennial Youth in Action Capitol Day, where youth in foster care and otherwise vulnerable situations traveled from across the state to speak directly with legislators about the issues that matter to them. The youth participated in a rally on the Capitol steps and got to see the lawmaking process in action. TNOYS has been hard at work this legislative session as the only organization that represents hardworking youth-service professionals and the young people they serve.

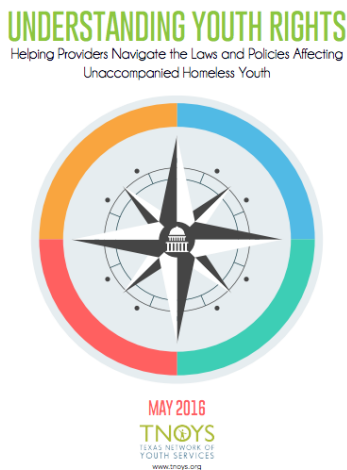


Getting to Know TNOYS: Recent Reports

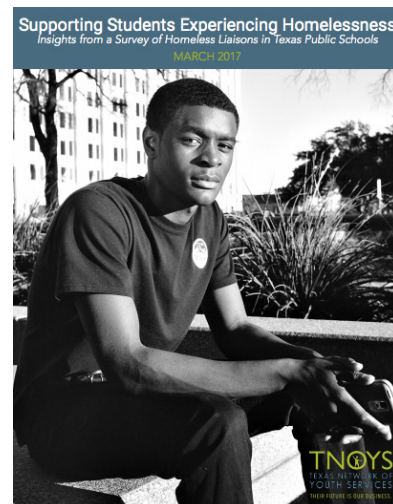
TNOYS works at the intersection of policy and practice -- we work directly with youth services providers to learn and encourage best practices, and we share those practices with policymakers to inform relevant legislation. Our recent reports are good examples of how these two elements of our work connect.



The **Youth Count Texas! Process Evaluation Report** allowed TNOYS to share with legislators some of the key findings of our work conducting the first-ever statewide count of youth experiencing homelessness in our state. It also shared valuable insights for youth services practitioners about how to identify and support homeless youth.



Because of our advocacy work on youth services issues, TNOYS often has intimate knowledge of the laws that govern the work of youth service providers. In **Understanding Youth Rights**, we helped to clarify for providers the legal issues around homeless and unaccompanied youth, which can often seem vague or confusing.



In 2016, TNOYS conducted a survey of homeless liaisons in Texas schools, who are tasked with supporting homeless students. We reported the findings in **Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness**, which provided insight for both legislators and providers about the situations of these professionals and the youth they serve.

PEAKS Camp Holds Lessons for Youth and Adults



In March, 150 DFPS foster care youth and adult partners from across Texas traveled to Wimberley over Spring Break to participate in PEAKS Adventure Camp, one of TNOYS'

oldest and most successful youth engagement programs. PEAKS Camp aims to develop youth leadership skills while also helping adult partners value youth contributions.

At this year's camp, TNOYS' Program Coordinator Elizabeth Flint planned activities that allowed teen participants to learn leadership and life skills. These activities included "rhythm power," a drumming circle that taught lessons about collaboration; the "Game of Life," which involved role play handling adult responsibilities; and a talent show to build self-esteem.

But the youth aren't the only ones who benefit from the camp – 25 adults, most of whom are employed full-time as CPS caseworkers, volunteered to participate as equals in the camp alongside the youth.

"Youth and adult campers participate in the same activities and work on an even playing field, not just to help build their relationships but also to help train the adult sponsors that youth are important and are capable of making their own decisions," said Elizabeth.



TNOYS Kicks Off Recovery Through Participation



Professionals from Central Texas youth services organizations participated in a panel discussion about youth engagement and trauma-informed care for the kickoff of the new Recovery Through Participation project.

Together with a team of partner organizations in Central Texas, TNOYS is launching a new project to bring together two important principles of youth services work: youth engagement and trauma-informed care. In April, we officially kicked off the project – called Recovery Through Participation – at a training and networking event where dozens of organizations committed to building a network of providers to support the effort.

The kickoff event began by sharing with the audience the key concepts we are aiming to better integrate into Central Texas youth services through the Recovery through Participation project: positive youth development, youth engagement, trauma-informed care, peer support, and recovery.

Many providers in Central Texas are already incorporating these concepts into their everyday work, but we believe that by better connecting providers and spurring discussions about their challenges and successes, Recovery Through Participation can create a stronger network of services for the region's youth.

We began that work at the kickoff event by hosting panel discussions among Central Texas youth service providers and peer support specialists, who shared key learnings from their work and discussed the importance of involving youth in developing and carrying out services designed to serve them.

TNOYS is grateful to the St. David's Foundation for the grant that made Recovery Through Participation possible and to the many organizations that have signed on to be part of the effort. To see all of the organizations that are involved as well as the many upcoming training and networking events that are planned, visit our website at tnoys.org/recovery-through-participation.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



When trying to explain the work of Boys Town Texas, the organization's Executive Director Janie Cook refers to a description she once heard from a colleague: "She said that we teach adults how to raise children," Cook recalls. "We're about children but most of the work we do is with adults because children don't grow up in a vacuum."

The goal is ultimately to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect, and the organization does that in various ways, including classroom-based parenting courses, in-home mentoring, foster care and adoption services, and a statewide 24-hour hotline available to both children and adults. Boys Town Texas, which is headquartered in San Antonio and is a branch of the larger national organization, touch the lives of 81,000 children and families in Texas each year through these programs and services.

Cook, who is on TNOYS' Board of Directors, says Boys Town Texas has been a member of TNOYS since she joined the organization eight years ago and finds the membership benefits valuable to their work, particularly the supportive peer network TNOYS provides.

"As youth-serving agencies, we have so many of the same challenges," Cook says. "When you're doing the work, it's easy to think you're the only one and not realize it's a systemic issue. It's very important for member organizations to make that connection and realize that it's not just your problem and collectively your voice is stronger."

She points to TNOYS' annual conference as a great place to see this peer support network in action, along with the training opportunities that are offered. "Sometimes it's hard to go to conferences and feel like you come away with something new. But last year, I came away from TNOYS' conference inspired," Cook says. "They do a good job of balancing knowledge with inspiration, because the longer you're in the youth services field, sometimes that's what you need most."



Upcoming Event Highlight

34th Annual TNOYS Conference on Services to Youth & Family

MANY VOICES, ONE SONG.

When in Harmony, We Are Strong.



Providers. Youth. Families. Community.

JUNE 27-30. HOUSTON, TEXAS

TNOYS' annual conference features training, networking, and inspiration for providers, administrators, academics, community members, and others in the youth services field.

Join us this year for the chance to:

- Earn 16+ hours of professional CEUs
- Learn alongside youth and families
- Network with 300+ professionals and stakeholders
- Participate in over 30 workshops on topics such as trauma-informed care, youth engagement, organizational capacity, legislative updates, and more
- Attend 5 inspirational keynote sessions

Register at: tnoys.org/2017-annual-conference



Why You Should Become a TNOYS Member

Working to secure a successful future for young people can be inspiring, rewarding, fun – and also challenging. In a state as vast as Texas, it's not always easy for youth services professionals to feel connected to colleagues in other communities, or to the legislators who are making important policy decisions that impact their work.

Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) was founded over 30 years ago to meet that need, creating a network for youth services providers to learn from and support each other. The stronger our network, the better able we are to serve our members, and that's why it's so critical for organizations across the state to join us. Aside from strengthening your network, TNOYS membership has direct benefits for your organization, including:

- Free and discounted trainings and events featuring the latest research- and evidence-based practices (many including CEUs),
- Discounts on services and subscriptions, such as KaleidaCare software and Praesidium consulting services
- Opportunities to share thoughts and concerns on issues like funding shortfalls and regulatory challenges – and have them represented to leaders who can create change, and
- Access to TNOYS experts that can share guidance on program development, change management, fundraising, and other challenges organizations can face.

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

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