

# TNOYS

## TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES

TNOYS TODAY: A Quarterly Newsletter



### SUMMER 2018 ISSUE

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**THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.**



## NEW GRANTS TO ADDRESS POST-HARVEY HOMELESSNESS

A year after Hurricane Harvey hitting the Texas Gulf Coast, many youth and their families in the area are continuing to feel the effects of the storm, particularly those who remain without permanent housing. We know that schools are one of the best places to identify young people experiencing homelessness and connect them with the support they need, and TNOYS is grateful for new grants from the Rebuild Texas Fund that will allow us to help make that happen in schools that were impacted by the storm.

The funding comes in the form of two grants that together total \$1 million. The first grant, for \$400,000, will fund a collaborative effort between TNOYS, Texas Homeless Network (THN) and partners in the education field to support school personnel who are tasked with identifying and assisting homeless students across all five regions impacted by the storm.

The second grant is meant to strengthen the capacity of the providers that educators will refer homeless youth and their families to for services. This grant, for \$600,000, will be distributed by TNOYS and partners as pass-through funding to build the capacity of organizations in the Gulf Coast area who will receive referrals of homeless youth and families from educators.

"We are very grateful to the Rebuild Texas Fund for helping us to address this serious problem of youth and family homelessness that continues to persist in the Gulf Coast area and is seriously impacting the lives of young residents there," said Christine Gendron, TNOYS executive director. "The funding comes at a good time, just as the new school year is kicking off and students are heading back to school where our partners in schools and communities can help identify them and meet their needs."



# 2018 TNOYS ANNUAL CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

TNOYS' 35th Annual Conference took place in Houston June 5-8, 2018. This year, we strove to elevate youth involvement in the event as never before, based on research and practice-based evidence that suggests youth-adult partnerships and the opportunity to have a voice strengthen outcomes for young people and make services more effective. This focus at the conference resulted in opportunities for both youth and adult participants to learn about how to elevate youth voice in their own lives and work.

At the same time, we strove to offer the the same high-level training youth service providers have come to expect from the conference, and that they need to effectively serve their clients and lead their organizations.

Looking back on the event, we're pleased to report that youth were integrated as never before and it only served to enhance the learning experience for everyone in attendance.



**468** conference attendees



**61** youth attendees



**116** presenters



**45** workshops



## ANNUAL AWARDS RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING SERVICE



For TNOYS' staff, a highlight of our Annual Conference is presenting annual member awards to deserving youth services professionals and organizations. This year, we had an amazing group of awardees to recognize for all their hard work to secure a bright future for Texas' youth and families.

Several awardees, including DFPS, Hope's Path, and Salvation Army's Rafael Sarango, stood out for their exceptional work over the past year to keep youth safe amid the devastation of Hurricane Harvey. We were also excited this year to add a new award, Outstanding Youth Partner, that recognizes the role youth partners play in guiding our work.

We are pleased to recognize the individuals and organizations from within TNOYS membership who received this year's awards:

**Texas Department of Family and Protective Services** – Distinguished Leadership Award

**Rafael Sarango, Salvation Army Young Adult Resource Center** – June Bucy Award for Excellence

**Hope's Path** – Steve Wick Innovative Program Award

**Fennell Seilenga, ACH Child and Family Services** – Professional Youth Worker Award

**Craig Cormier, Harris County Youth on B.O.A.R.D.** – Outstanding Youth Partner Award

**Bob Daemrich and Susan Jensen, Upbring** – Volunteers of the Year

Thanks to the awardees for their hard work!





## POLICY DIRECTOR INVOLVES MEMBERS IN LEGISLATION



Dr. Katherine Byers joined TNOYS in February as the new Director of Child Welfare Policy, bringing with her over seven years of experience advocating for youth at the Texas Capitol. Since she has joined TNOYS, her focus has been on involving members and the youth they serve in the legislative process, and helping them understand how it impacts their work and lives.

One of Katherine's recent contributions to the TNOYS network has been a series of free webinars to help providers understand how they can adapt to recent policy changes that affect their work. She has hosted several webinars focused on aspects of the new federal Family First Prevention Services Act, including how providers can help meet new requirements of the law. She has also hosted webinars on state legislation, such as SB 1758, which was passed during the last Texas Legislative Session and is one of the most comprehensive efforts to date to improve how youth are prepared to transition out of foster care. In addition to these webinars, she has authored blog posts on these issues and sends out regular member bulletins with related news to TNOYS members.

But Katherine is not just focused on helping youth services providers understand policy changes — she also wants to make sure providers and the youth they serve have a voice in shaping them. "It is impossible to create good policy without partnerships with those who are on the front lines," she said. "The more closely we work with providers and consumers like those in TNOYS' network, the better picture we have of what the reality is and how we can strengthen the system."

One of the main ways she has been doing this is through co-leading a work group on SB 1758 to ensure that the voices of youth, foster parents, providers and others are taken into account when making recommendations on how to move implement the legislation. She has also been leading a Houston-area work group on housing models for current and former foster youth, to help inform policymaking in the next Texas Legislative Session that kicks off in 2019.

We look forward to seeing Katherine share the input of youth and providers with policymakers during the upcoming Legislative Session, and having her on staff to help our members and other stakeholders understand the policy changes that end up being made next year.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**CONNECTIONS**  
INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SERVICES

EMPOWERING YOUTH.  
CONNECTING FAMILIES.  
BUILDING FUTURES.

Connections Individual and Family Services first started operating in Comal County in 1981 and has since expanded to provide a continuum of services across nearly 20 Texas counties. Connections CEO Kellie Stallings estimates the organization now reaches over 20,000 people a year through its various programs that include counseling, substance abuse prevention education, emergency shelter and other critical needs of youth and families. Each life it touches helps fulfill its mission of "strengthening communities, one youth and one family at a time."

Connections has been a member of TNOYS since its early years, first joining in 1984, and Stallings has served on the TNOYS board since 2010. She says that while Connections first became aware of TNOYS through the Annual Conference, they have since gotten many more benefits out of their membership, including in the area of training and technical assistance.

"We have gotten TNOYS to formulate trainings specific to the unique needs of our community," Stallings said. "We also really like how TNOYS advocates for and encourages youth voice and recently, has even had youth help train providers on how to meet that need."

A recent customized training TNOYS held for Connections took place in January and featured experts from TNOYS, HHSC, and three youth co-presenters training approximately 70 Connections staff members in various roles, from direct service workers to administrators. The interactive training covered issues including cultural competency and diversity, as well as youth advocacy. For an organization with a strong focus on touching individual lives, being able to have a customized training prepared specifically for their staff is helpful in meeting the unique needs of their clients.

If you are interested in training or technical assistance from TNOYS, we encourage you to contact us at [training@tnoys.org](mailto:training@tnoys.org).



# UPCOMING EVENT: EMERGENCY SHELTER TASK FORCE



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For decades, TNOYS has been convening our Emergency Shelter Task Force to provide representation, networking, and support for emergency shelter providers who work to address the homelessness and foster care capacity crises.

The next task force meeting is coming up on September 19 in Fort Worth, where ACH Child and Family Services will offer a tour of its shelter facility, an overview of the evidence-based models the agency is using in its shelter, and an update on Community Based Care.

There will also be discussion of the recent federal Family First and Prevention Services Act and its potential impact on shelters, findings from TNOYS' recent survey of Texas' emergency shelters, and Superior Health Plan's Turning Point Psychiatric Hospital Diversion Program. Visit [tnoys.org/events](http://tnoys.org/events) to learn more and register.



## 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/become-a-member](http://www.tnoys.org/become-a-member) to join today.

## STAFF LIST

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