

CHECK THESE OUT...



Youth MOVE National
National, a youth led national organization for individuals who have lived experience through involvement in various systems.

<http://www.youthmove national.org/>

APA Public Interest Government Relations Office

Paper discussing the transition needs of youth with mental illness.

<http://www.apa.org/ab out/gr/issues/cyf/transit>

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability

NCWD/Youth is a source for information about employment and youth with disabilities.

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/youth-devel->

Issue 5

focus

● Issue 5 2011

TOPIC WATCH

Each month we will feature a different topic; expanding the knowledge, resources, and peer networking in targeted areas. These target areas will include workforce development, transition, supported education, leadership, organizational development, sustainability, and others as they are identified.



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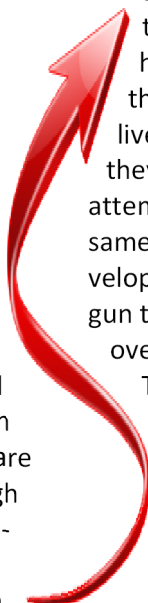
Emerging Adults Need Consumer Involvement and Support

The needs of emerging adults suggest that we have a great deal of work if we plan to help them achieve success and keep pace with their peers, both in terms of becoming independent and also with regard to being mentally healthy. Consumers remain in the best position to guide and assist emerging adults throughout the transition process and into the adult mental health system based upon their experiences, expertise, and ability to understand the system and recognize helping resources.

Emerging adulthood is considered the phase between adolescence and full-fledged adulthood (Jeffrey Arnett, 2000. American Psychologist). It is a precarious period in the lifespan; one is no longer a child, often influenced by peers, and not always capable of presenting one's self as an experienced adult. This can be an especially vulnerable period for young adults with mental health care needs. Recent research confirms that psychiatric disorders are most prevalent from ages 18 through 25. Emerging adults are caught between two service worlds: transitioning out of the pediatric or youth

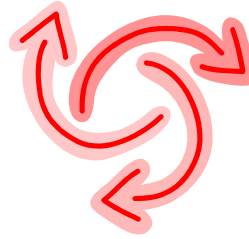
system of care and jumping into the very different adult mental health system. They may also be on their own for the first time in their lives, searching for a place where they feel safe and accepted. Many are attempting college or work, like other same age peers. In step with their developmental levels, they have also begun to push their parents back and take over most of their personal decisions.

These factors predispose emerging adults to require support, guidance, and assistance in navigating new systems, policies, and options in the mental health system.



Meeting the Needs of Emerging Adults

Few programs are designed to meet emerging adults' unique need for integrated services that combine the goals of providing mental health care and developmental support. In fact, there are very few programs that help with either. In terms of mental health services, the age of emerging adults puts them at risk for falling through the cracks. As they turn 18, they "age out" of traditional services designed for children and teens. While they may be expected to "age into" mental health services designed for adults, they don't. Emerging adults use mental health services less and they use different resources (Mental Health in Emerging Adulthood, Jennifer L. Tanner, *Rutgers University, 2010*). Emerging adults see psychiatrists and psychologists less; they turn to friends and family more often and are more likely to seek information from the Internet. Emerging adults use social services to meet their mental health



Recycle Knowledge

needs more often than adults do. This makes sense given that emerging adults are more likely than older adults to be poor, unemployed or underemployed, on public assistance, and without health care. The need for services in emerging adulthood thus requires a focus on both the developmental tasks and the mental health needs of this age group. Facilitating one without helping the other is likely to reduce the effectiveness of efforts to help them.



We have far to go in learning how we can best help emerging adults access the help that they need. However, evidence suggests that there is much potential to help. The adult consumer movement has much to offer the emerging adult:

- Providing realistic information
- Helping them navigate new systems of care
- Helping them understand their changing health care options
- Building their capacity to make informed decisions
- Serving as a support system for them as they emerge into the adult world

Consumer leaders and organizations can assist emerging adults by:

- Attending transition meetings to provide information on adult services and needs
- Providing outreach at activities that attract emerging adults such as college, high schools, sports activities, youth drop in centers, and others
- Providing educational information for youth and their families regarding adult support options and service practices
- Participating in youth movement activities such as Youth Move, Inc.
- Presenting at family and youth conferences on how to work collaboratively with consumer organizations, consumer leaders, and consumer representatives
- Creating a packet of information on consumer resources and organizations for emerging adults

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