



## **Youth At-Risk of Homelessness Federal Planning Grant-Overview**

The Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) Federal Planning Grant is being used to fund the development of strategies to reduce and prevent youth in foster care from becoming homeless. These strategies aim to make system and practice level improvements in four areas: stable housing, permanent connections, education/employment, and social-emotional well-being. YARH grantees will build upon a preliminary framework for intervening with youth who are in foster care or have experienced some time in care, including youth age 14 and older, and are most likely to have a challenging transition to adulthood, including homelessness and unstable housing experiences.

In October 2013, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) was one of 18 jurisdictions to receive a YARH Federal Planning Grant award. This project is led by DCF's Office of Adolescent Services (OAS), working in partnership with three national organizations: Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), Child Trends, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). DCF proposed that the purpose of the planning grant for New Jersey is to assess, plan, and implement holistic and comprehensive strategies and solutions to end youth homelessness and promote education/employment, permanency, and well-being outcomes specifically for young people who have experience in the child welfare system. In the Spring of 2015, DCF will apply for 3 year implementation funding in order to carry out these strategies and solutions to end homelessness for youth in foster care.

In New Jersey, this YARH planning grant has been named Connecting YOUTH. Connecting YOUTH aligns with the goals outlined in the 2011 Adolescent Services Strategic plan and recommendations published by the Task Force on Helping Youth Thrive in Placement (HYTIP)<sup>1</sup>. Along with a significant data analysis, the Connecting YOUTH Team has been reviewing policies, practices, and resources, reports, and various events to collect information from stakeholders (e.g. systems mapping/gap analysis, focus groups, surveys).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nj.gov/dcf/about/divisions/oas/index.html>