



On June 26, 2014, the Department of Children and Families conducted a Systems Mapping planning session in collaboration with Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) and Child Trends. The purpose of this planning session was to work with a diverse group of stakeholders to help us understand the process and experience of young people who are involved in the child welfare system. The stakeholder involvement was extensive and included youth, DCF staff, community based service providers, state agency partners, advocates, and other critical partners. Throughout the sessions participants were able to generate a robust conversation on the child welfare system. Some topics that were covered at this session included:

1. Defining a systems map that shows how youth move through the child welfare system, specifically looking at three target populations:
  - Youth ages 14-17 who are in care of New Jersey's Department of Children and Families' Division of Child Protection & Permanency.
  - Youth ages 18 to 21 who are aging out of the child welfare system.
  - Youth up to age 21 who have experienced time in foster care and are now homeless.
  
2. Identifying key issues within the current system for youth aging out of foster care.
  - What is working well to reduce risks and increase protective factors for youth generally and to prevent homelessness specifically? Is the service system more effective at reducing risks and increasing protective factors for some subgroups of youth than others, and if so, how? Is the service system more effective at moving the dial on specific risk and/or protective factors than others, and if so, how?
  - Where are there gaps or room for improvement in services or the system overall?
  - Is there duplication of effort? Are there opportunities for greater efficiency, sharing of information, or improved communication?
  - What screening and assessment tools are being used, by whom, and when in the process? How is the information from the tools being used to inform case planning and practice? Are there redundancies in the screenings/assessments used? Is there information needed for case planning and practices that is not collected through any screening or assessment tool, or that is not collected at a point when needed?
  - Is there evidence of needs and strengths being well matched to services and/or community resources? To creating and sustaining permanent relationships and connections? Where is matching working well and where is it not working? Why?



Participants then developed specific system improvements that were then prioritized through a voting system by all participants. The results are below.

### **Results per Category**

#### **Services**

- Housing to age 26 **26 Votes**
- Housing options for expecting/parenting youth **12 Votes**
- Extend life skills and independent living to age 25 **8 Votes**
- Emergency Housing **7 Votes**

#### **Practice**

- CP&P cases stay open until age 25 **22 Votes**
- Staff being more informed about services and adolescent issues **5 Votes**
- Extending case closure age based on needs vs. age **4 Votes**
- Consistent therapy throughout time in care **3 Votes**

#### **Seamless System of Care (DCF & Housing)**

- Smoother transition from child welfare to adult system **25 Votes**
- Long term case management until 25 **16 Votes**
- Statewide access to services no matter location **10 Votes**
- Strengthen process with NJFC scholars and education **6 Votes**

#### **Training**

- Adopted parents and adolescent development **6 Votes**
- PRIDE training (Adjust/add on) **5 Votes**
- Communication **2 Votes**