

In Focus



Quarterly Newsletter for Continuous Quality Improvement

JULY 2009 Issue



From the Director's Desk: This quarter's newsletter focuses on the well-being of older foster youth. An interview with former foster youth Zach Sandner provides recommendations for staff interactions with older youth. Information is provided about the extreme recruitment program, the Blue Ribbon Panel, and consumer surveys of older youth. Additionally, highlights of the 2009 Youth and Adult Leadership and Empowerment Conference are featured. Take some time in your CQI meetings to discuss the importance of engaging older youth in case planning and how quality time spent visiting with children in their placement can make all the difference to a child in foster care. Progress has been made in updating the addresses of former foster youth for MoHealthNet coverage. Keep up the good work! - Paula Neese

CQI Activities Calendar

July 2009

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

August 2009

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

September 2009

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29			

1st Level CQI

2nd Level CQI

3rd Level CQI

State Level CQI

Peer Record Reviews

Well-being of Older Foster Youth

The Child and Family Services Review assesses child well-being. Reviewers determine if children are receiving appropriate services to meet their educational, physical and mental health needs. The review also addresses other areas of well-being, including how involved the youth (particularly the older youth) is in permanency planning, if they are connected with a caring adult, if they have strong social connections, regular visits with family, and if there are frequent and meaningful visits from the case manager, among other areas.

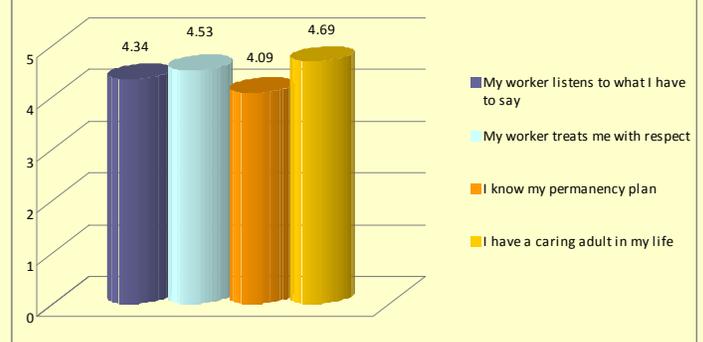
One way the Children's Division monitors this is through consumer surveys administered to foster youth. All foster youth ages 12 and older receive a consumer survey once per year. Responses are received anonymously, although, some youth occasionally volunteer to disclose their identity. Since January 2009, 1,875 surveys have been sent out. Of those, 476 (25 %) have been returned.

Survey results are logged so trends can be monitored. Youth often provide valuable feedback through written comments.

Survey questions include the following:

- I know why I am in foster care
- I received help when I needed it
- I am happy where I am living
- I feel like I belong to a family
- I have friends that I can talk to
- I have a caring adult in my life
- I know my permanency plan
- I am notified of court hearings
- I know how to contact my CD worker
- My CD worker treats me with respect
- I see my CD worker 2 times per month
- My CD worker listens to what I have to say
- I am able to attend meetings to talk about my future
- I have the opportunity to be heard in court hearings
- I am participating in Chaffee or TLP services.

Consumer Survey results of 465 Foster Youth Jan-June 2009
Scale 1-5 (5=strongly agree)



This chart shows high average scores from consumer survey responses received from older foster youth in the areas of worker listening, worker respect, permanency plan involvement and having a caring adult in their life.

"A" is one of the best workers I've had. She fights for me instead of against me. If I need anything, she does whatever she can to get it. She has never lied to me or told me something good was going to happen when it didn't.

- Anonymous Youth, Consumer Survey (May 09)

Youth ages 14 and older are eligible to participate in Chaffee services. Chaffee services help provide life skills training for youth, and help them prepare for independence. Your attentiveness to your older foster youth is crucial for ensuring their overall well-being.



Click on this link, [State Level CQI Minutes](#) to see what was discussed during the 2nd Qtr State Level CQI Team Meeting on June 18th.

What We Should Know: An Interview with Former Foster Youth Zach Sandner by Meliny Staysa

Q: If there is something that case managers need to know to do a better job for their foster youth, what would it be?

Zach: They need to be more understanding of the youth. Show an interest in the youth's interests. The worker should encourage the youth to try something, even if the worker thinks the youth won't succeed. Let the youth make their own choices. Let them learn from their mistakes, but catch them when they fall.

Q: How can a case manager help ensure the safety of their foster youth?

Zach: During visits, the worker should see the foster parent and the youth together, but then the worker should ask the youth to show them their room and then ask them if they have any complaints about the foster home or the foster parent. If the youth raises concerns, the worker should ask the foster parent about it.

Q: What can the worker do during their home visit with the youth to make it a better visit?

Zach: Visits show the youth that you care. Maybe take the youth for ice cream once in awhile. Sit down and talk to them one on one. Workers should make themselves available, maybe give their cell phone number to the youth, or tell them you're there for them to talk to anytime needed. Spend at least 30 – 60 minutes during visits with the youth. Ask the other kids in the house how your youth is doing, and how all the kids are getting along.



Zach Sandner, pictured here speaking at the Older Youth Conference on June 22nd.

Q: Is there anything else you want workers to know or think about?

Zach: Yes, this is a big thing. When a worker brings a kid to a new foster home, the worker should sit down with the youth and the new foster parents together. Have the foster parents explain the rules in the home and the consequences to the youth while the worker is present. Give the youth a few days or a week to get adjusted. Have the foster parent ask the youth what their preferences are, like do they take showers in the morning instead of at night, and ask the foster parent to try to accommodate the youth.

Zach, now 22 years old, is a former foster youth. He is the newly appointed chairperson for the Older Youth Advisory Board. Zach advocates for allowing foster youth to review the foster home file before they are placed in a home. He has also been known to say workers should not take a youth's anger personally - the youth has nowhere else to go with their anger. They want you (the worker) to keep coming back.

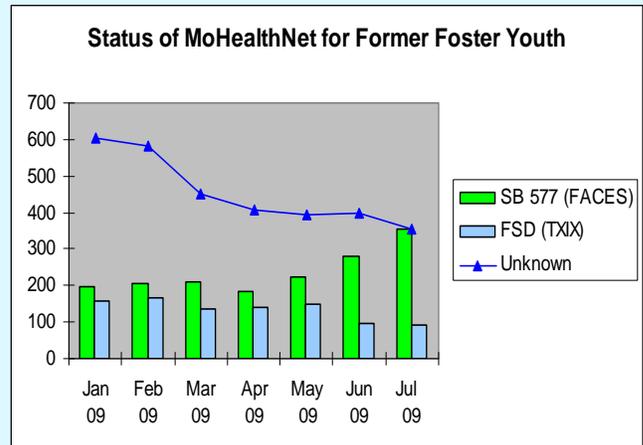
“Thank you for helping me to know who I am and for helping me succeed.”
-anonymous youth, consumer survey (Mar 09)



“I miss home. I feel as if I made progress in treatment, but I miss friends and family. Please send some money from my Social Security money to my mom please. Tell Nixon he rocks!”
-anonymous youth, consumer survey (Jun 09)

SENATE BILL 577

This act extends Medicaid coverage for former foster care youth from the ages of 18 to 21 without regard to income or assets, provided they were in foster care on their eighteenth birthday. Eligible youth exiting care have been tracked through the MOBIUS system since the inception of this law. In January 2009, Central Office initiated a monthly managed reporting system which has been shared with regional and field administration to share with field personnel in an effort to improve statewide outcomes. It is of the utmost importance for field staff to complete exit packets with all youth exiting care, and discuss SB 577 eligibility with all youth preparing to leave care on, or after, their 18th birthday. The chart details the progress the Division has made during the past six months to increase the number of youth enrolled in SB 577 MOHealthNet coverage, reduce the number of SB 577 eligible youth enrolling in FSD coverage, and reduce the overall number of SB 577 eligible youth who have exited care without being enrolled in either medical coverage plan.



This chart shows an improvement over the past six months in the number of former foster youth correctly enrolled in MoHealthNet and fewer youth having unknown addresses.

Blue Ribbon Panel

In August, 2008, the Governor appointed a 17 member panel of public and private partners to assess current resources within Missouri to support youth in or exiting from foster care. The Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care included six youth who are currently in or have been released from the foster care system. The Panel focused on six main areas: Permanency and Lifelong Connections; Transition Supports; Physical and Mental Health; Employment; Education; and Cross System Collaboration. The Panel has developed recommendations to improve services and supports for youth in foster care. The recommendations will be sent to Governor Nixon in late July.



KUDOS! Frequency of worker visits statewide have improved, with a statewide average of 86% in May! Congrats to the Southern Region for having the high average of 91%!

CQI Successes

SOUTH

- A cell phone for treatment workers is now available to check out in Oregon and Howell Counties.

JACKSON COUNTY

- A case transfer flow chart was developed and sent to all staff.
- All current forms in the Lotus Notes database are being updated to reflect the current Governor and DSS Director. Out-dated forms are being removed.
- Changes to the order of Child Welfare Practice Training were agreed upon and will be implemented in July, 2009.
- A proposal for lead worker positions was submitted and reviewed by Administration. There are not additional positions at this time, but individual supervisory units have the flexibility to identify a lead worker if they choose.
- A local policy memo was distributed to inform staff of the process for identifying those resource providers who have a contract with the Children's Division.

State Level

- Memo CD08-103 was issued 12/1/08 adding clarification on the foster parent application. Policy states that action must be taken within 30 days of receipt of an application.
- Memo CD08-108 dated 12/5/08 created a training and admin section for resource providers.
- The CS-51 has recently been revised. The form is now HIPAA compliant.
- Fair Hearings Memo has been completed. The memo explains the fair hearing process.
- A workgroup is planning to post information on the Intranet for parenting info. This link would be able to provide parenting info for infant care, toddlers, ages 3-5 etc, up to 18 years old and their needs.

An **Extreme Opportunity** for Older Youth in the St. Louis Region and Beyond

In October 2008, the Children's Division was awarded a five year grant in the amount of 2 million dollars to provide *Extreme Recruitment*, an innovative diligent recruitment program intended to improve permanency outcomes for older youth who have been in the care and custody of the Division for over 15 months, are over age 10, having a goal of adoption and no adoptive resource. These youth are under the case management of the Division as well as private contracting partners in St. Louis city and county, Jefferson and St. Charles counties. However, we expect the project to be further reaching as siblings throughout the state feel the effect of the project. *Extreme Recruitment* is an intensive, 12-20 week, individualized recruitment effort with strategies which include preparing the child for permanency; conducting diligent searches to reconnect youth with relatives or kin; and achieving permanency through general, targeted and/or child-specific recruitment and wraparound services. The program will serve 150 youth through a randomized sample during the grant period, with the goal of ensuring a system of supportive adults for at least 90% of youth, and achieving permanency through adoption or guardianship for at least 70% of youth.

Extreme Recruitment will be a model demonstration program because it will be applicable and replicable throughout the remainder of the state. The project utilizes innovative methods (Internet searches, the use of a private investigator) to locate up to 40 possible adult resources (kinship, foster, concurrent and adoptive families) for every child in care. The project also offers tailored pre-service training materials for recruited resources to help them better understand and prepare for the specific child/youth groups (teens, siblings, behavioral issues) for which they are pursuing adoption or guardianship. Additionally, the *Extreme Recruitment* project will provide stronger wraparound retention supports for the families to help assure continued permanency and electronic supports for the community and the families in ways that have not been available before.

To ensure that youth are eligible to be chosen in the randomized sampling for this project their goals must be correct in the system, indicating that the youth have a goal of adoption and no identified resource available. Now is the time to review your APPLA caseload to ensure that youth are correctly coded.

Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee (SAC)

The SAC met on May 14th in Jefferson City. Topics of discussion included plans for the transitional meeting in August; budget challenges faced by the state and its impact on a step increase for supervisors; FACES issues; a CFSR update and a review of the supervision strategic plan.

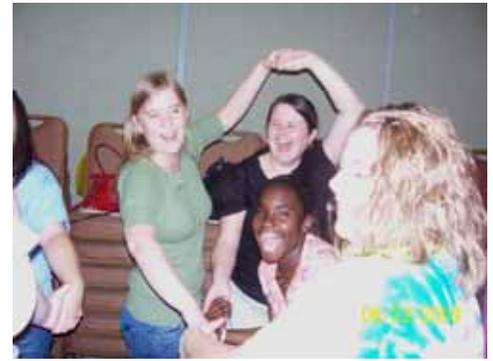
The [SAC](#) has a designated spot on the homepage of the CD Intranet. The committee's Charter, Strategic Plan, meeting minutes and historical information are available now for your review.

Be sure to check out the updated committee member listing on the Intranet in August! Some members are being replaced due to expiring term limits. Will you have a new regional representative?



Pictured above are Older Youth Transition Specialists Karen Candie (standing) Jackson County, and Mary Mogg (sitting, right), St. Louis City with Terri Fox from Epworth.

'09 Older Youth Conference



Older Youth Specialist Carla Gilzow, NW Region, having fun!



Youth from throughout the state had the opportunity to mix work and play recently at the 2009 Youth and Adult Leadership and Empowerment Conference "Back In Action, Still We Stand." The conference was held June 22-24th at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City with over 200 youth and adults in attendance. The event was planned and hosted by members of the State Youth Advisory Board. Six workshops were presented which were designed to empower and educate youth on subjects relating to their independence. The topic areas included: Self Advocacy, Coping Skills, Permanency Options, Leadership, Resources, and Resiliency. Each of these workshops was exemplary but they weren't the only thing on the agenda. The SYAB managed to bring all the youth together in fun and laughter by pulling off a talent show, movie night, Wacky Olympics, and a dance. Each youth received a door prize, photos of the conference and goody bags. They shared laughs, stories, common characteristics; proving that the foster care system is no excuse to not be the best you can be. The SYAB feels that it was a great chance to bring together youth and adults to share what they had in common and to empower them on leadership and self advocacy. The SYAB would like to thank all the youth, chaperones, directors, and everyone else who attended, as well as those who donated prizes and supplies, for all of their support and for making the conference a huge success



Above Older Youth Specialist Mary Mogg from St. Louis City sits with SSS1 Sarah Ballard of St. Louis County.



- State Youth Advisory Board



CSWII's Shannon Murphy (Center), St. Louis City & Angie Dewert (Right), Franklin County. Say Cheese!



CHILDREN'S DIVISION MISSION STATEMENT

To partner with families, communities and government to protect children from abuse and neglect and assure safety, permanency and well being for Missouri's children.