

# Using cross-system partnerships to increase access to healthcare for students in foster care

*Tamara Toutant, Seita Scholar*

*LaToya McCants, DHS Liaison, Western Michigan University*

*Genanne Zeller, MSW, Fostering Success Michigan*

# Welcome!

- Please share your name and organization

# Goals & Objectives

- Raise awareness of healthcare challenges faced by young people with experience in foster care
- Explain new benefits made available to young people who aged out of foster care
- Share a student's experience in obtaining health care
- Discuss how cross-system partnerships streamlined access to health care

***“Growth is never by mere chance, it is the result of forces working together.”***

**In order to best serve students from foster care, we need to develop cross-system partnerships.**

# Health Care is important!

- Students with experience in foster care have more negative health outcomes than their non-care peers

# Let's Look at Numbers!

- **The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth – Outcomes at age 26**
  - Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
- **Purpose**
  - To provide first comprehensive view of how former foster youth are faring as they transition to adulthood
- **Sample**
  - Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin youth who were in public child welfare foster care at age 17 and had entered care prior to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday
  - 732 foster youth

Source: Courtney et al, 2011

# Alumni of Foster Care Compared to National Sample

Midwest Study

Alumni of Foster Care

Add Health Study

National Sample

**Alumni of Foster Care**  
**at Age 26**  
**RED**

**National Sample**  
**at Age 26**  
**BLUE**

# Physical Health at Age 26

**Alumni of Foster Care** vs. **National Sample**

Health excellent/very good

**55%**

vs.

**59%**

Health fair/poor

**18%**

vs.

**9%**

Health condition limits daily activities

**15%**

vs.

**8%**

Source: Courtney et al, 2011



# Physical Health at Age 26

**Alumni of Foster Care** vs. **National Sample**

Physical exam within the last year

**64%**

vs.

**63%**

Dental exam within the last year

**45%**

vs.

**54%**

Insurance coverage

**59%**

vs.

**78%**

Source: Courtney et al, 2011

# Mental Health at Age 26

**Alumni of Foster Care** vs. **National Sample**

Utilization of mental health services

**12%**

vs.

**11%**

## **Alumni of Foster Care Only**

- 25% of Midwest Study participants reported feeling depressive symptoms for at least 2 weeks in the last year
- 60% exposed to compounded traumatic events over life course

# Pregnancy by Age 26 (Women)

**Alumni of Foster Care** vs. **National Sample**

Ever been pregnant

**80%**

vs.

**55%**

Definitely or probably wanted pregnancy

**27%**

vs.

**49%**

Source: Courtney et al, 2011

# The Affordable Care Act

- Effective January 1, 2014, a provision of the ACA extended Medicaid to youth from foster care up to age 26.
- To qualify, youth must have been in foster care under the responsibility of the state when they reached the age of 18.



# Communication is Key!

- Current students notified by campus coach, DHS Liaison
- Letters sent to students at last known address
  - Some youth did not receive notice

# Application Process

- Students advised to go to Health Care Marketplace and apply online.
- Students could also use paper application in Seita Office
  - Paper applications mailed to Kentucky

# First challenges

- Online Market Place required account set up.
  - Students were not consistently receiving required link/password
- Some students were successful while others were rejected
  - Students told they were disqualified because of income
  - Students asked to verify employment information



- The only qualifier for students to receive extended Medicaid is that they were a ward of the state at age 18



# Navigating challenges

- In March, the Michigan Bridges website became available and students were instructed to enroll there
- A paper application was now sent to Lansing
- Students who completed the Market Place application were asked to re-apply using the MI Bridges site

# More student Stories

NPR's State of Opportunity, 4/22/14



# Tamara's Story

- Lost Health Care Coverage
- Didn't know how to apply
- Learned about the extended health coverage
- Informed about all the problems associated with application
- Applied through the paper application
- Went without healthcare for a extended period of time
- More successful result than most peers

# Results

- Stress from not being covered
- Unaware of the process
- Apply then re-apply
- Give Up

# Creating Partnerships

- DHS Liaison reached out to FSM for assistance in addressing systemic problems
- FSM reached out to state DHS representatives
- DHS began working with individual cases: created state level contact
  - Leslie Adams AdamsL4@michigan.gov

# Persevering!

- Some young female students were still being denied Medicaid because they were dual enrolled in PlanFirst (a women's health plan)
- DHS Liaison was able to compare denials with information in MI Bridges site to identify this problem

# Partnering with Students

- Work to establish an interdependent relationship
  - “At least try it”
- Provide support and encouragement
  - Create safe environment for using a computer
  - Address fear of doing something wrong and having it result in denial
- Teach Self Advocacy

# Partnering with Students

- Students need to be accountable for follow up/providing additional information as needed
- Tell students what to expect; be clear about deadlines and expectation
- Communicate information about timelines to address anxiety about not having coverage. Some students experienced delays as long as 45 days



# Skills for Independent Living at Age 26: Social Support and Future Outlook

## Alumni of Foster Care Only

- 1/2 to 2/3 of respondents felt they had someone to turn to for social support
- 57% stated they either had too few people or no one to loan them money if needed
- 66% report feeling satisfied or very satisfied with their lives as a whole
- 89% report a level of optimism about their future

Source: Courtney et al, 2011

# What are Cross-System Partnerships?

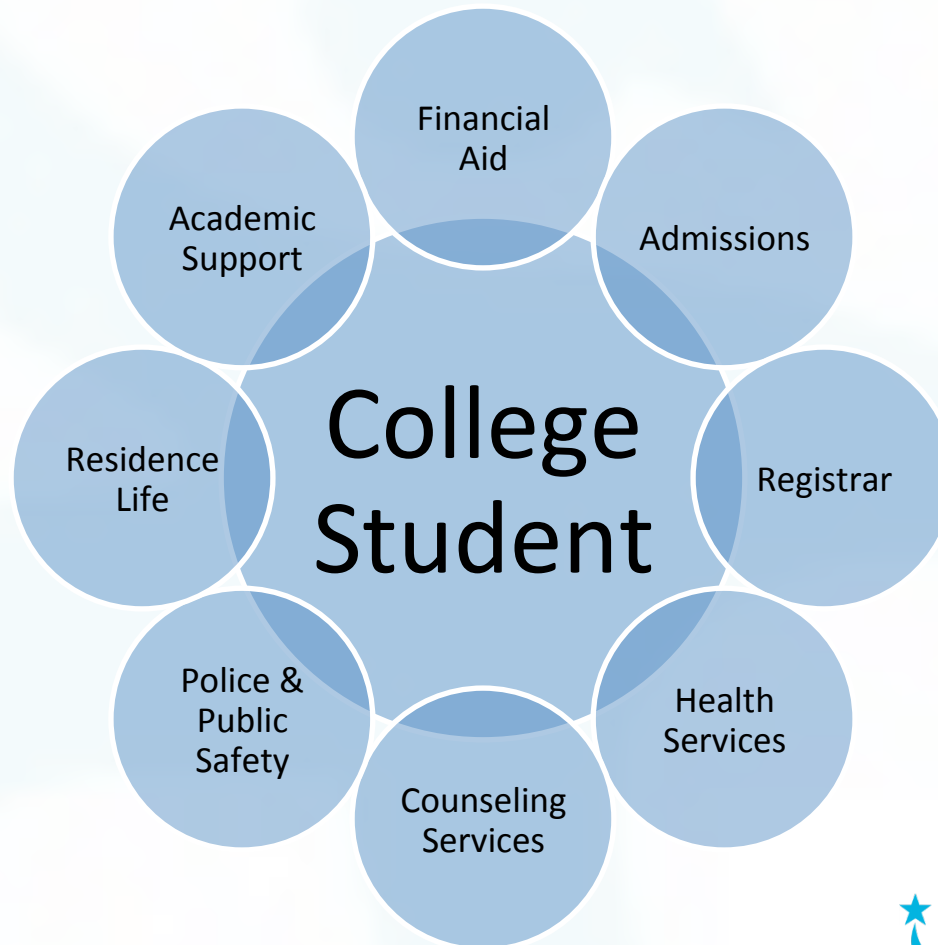
- For a student in foster care there can be a large number of professionals who are involved in a student's life
- When those people operate in silos, students have difficulty reaping the rewards of comprehensive support
- First step: understanding who was involved and what expertise/information they could provide

# Network Partners: Who are they?

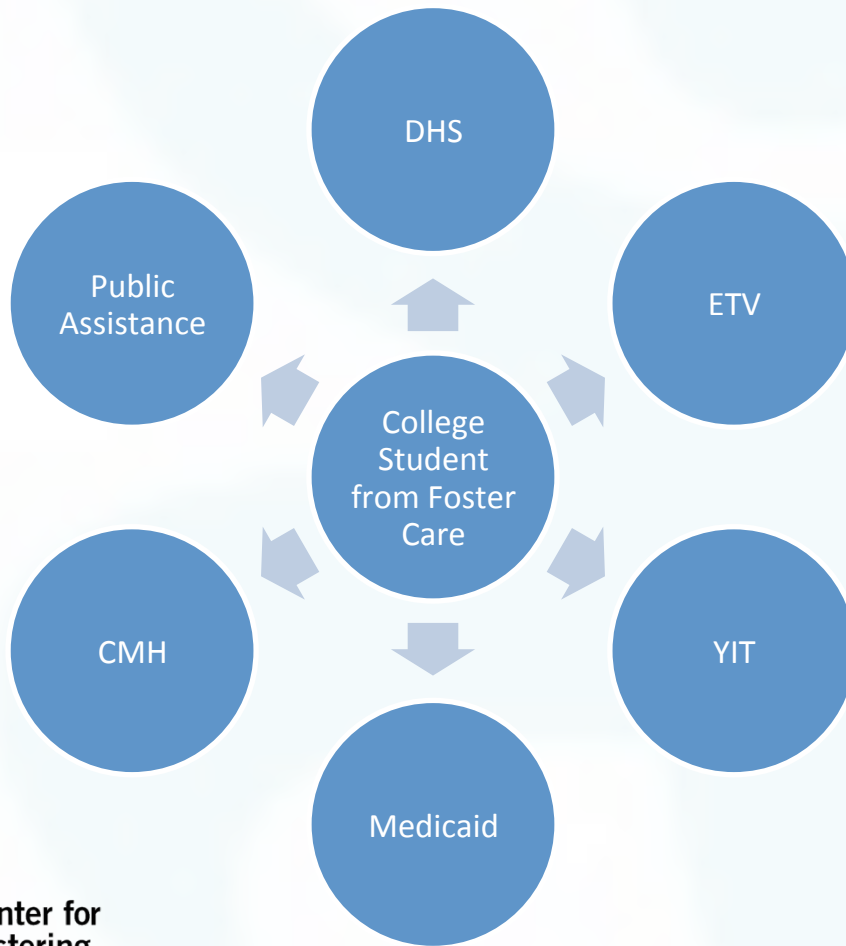
- Postsecondary Education Institutions' staff and campus champions
- Youth and Alumni of Foster Care
- Middle and High School Educators and Staff
- Community Organizations and Other Service Providers
- Caregivers and Mentors
- The Department of Human Services
- Local College Access Networks,
- The Department of Education
- Courts, Law Enforcement and Juvenile Justice System
- Career and Work Forces Services
- Housing champions



# Campus Support Services

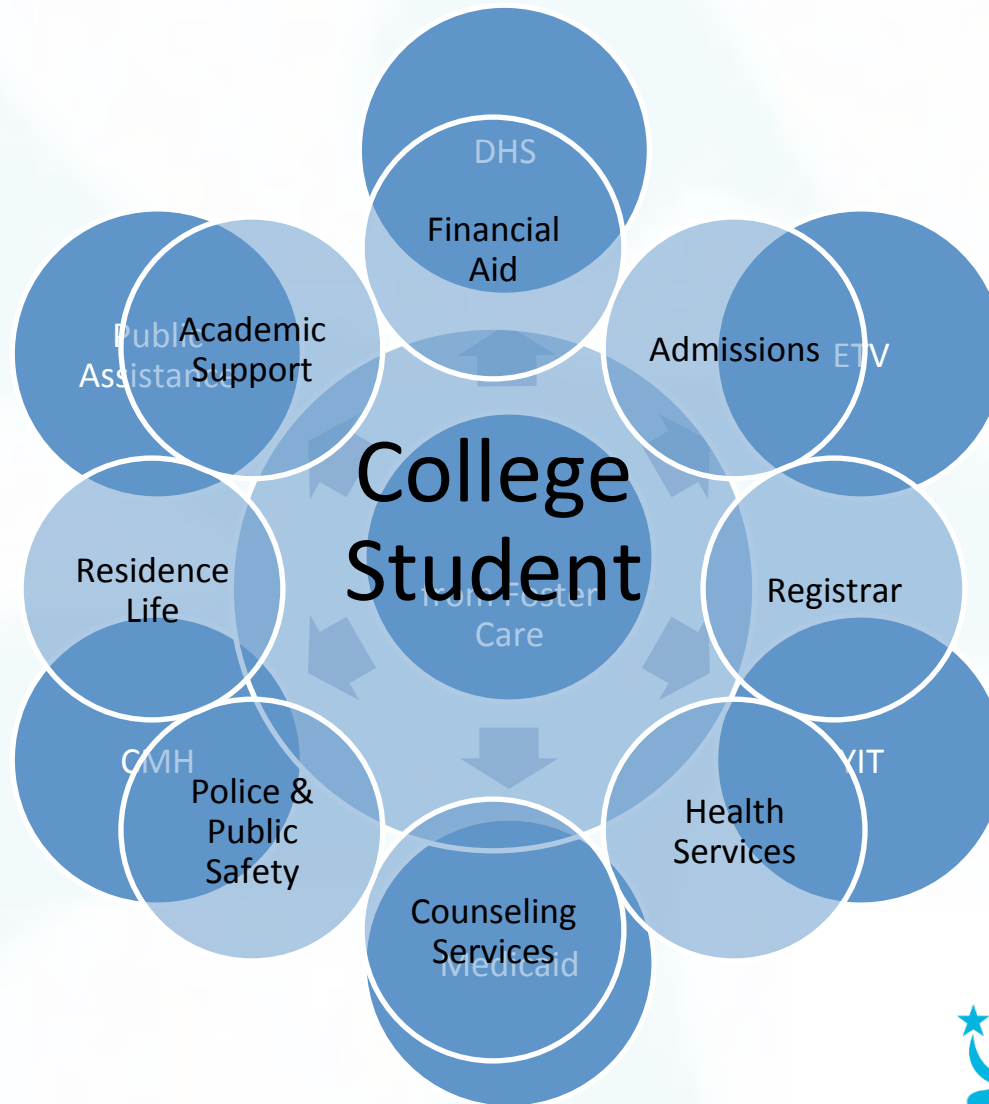


# Foster Care Support Services



- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Educational Training Voucher (ETV)
- Youth in Transition (YIT)
- Community Mental Health (CMH)

# Navigating Multiple Systems



# Weaving Partnerships

- When you receive the yarn...
- State your name and role in your work
- Name one thing you can offer in terms of assisting students with experience in foster care



# Weaving Partnerships

- What is the importance of having cross-system partnerships?
- What new supports have you realized you can offer?
- How would you develop cross-system partnerships?



# Continuous Communication

To bridge the information gaps, FSM began communicating via several platforms with all network partners. After reaching out to several different

- The FSM Google Group listserv
- FSM Monthly E-Newsletter
- FSM Regional Network Meetings
- The FSM statewide resource website
- Produced “Getting to Know...The Affordable Care Act” Guide
- Seita Scholars newsletter

# What are your strategies?

- Handouts
  - Getting to Know the Affordable Care Act
  - Getting to Know...Students from foster care
- Review FSM Website for network partners
  - [www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com](http://www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com)

# Where are we now?

- Any youth currently in foster care are automatically given Medicaid coverage until age 26
- For youth who are not US citizens and over the age of 18, they have to have been in the US for 5 years to receive Medicaid and other benefits
- If less than 5 years, youth will be given “Emergency Only” services
- Medicaid determines, on a case by case basis what qualifies as “emergency”

# Where are we now

- Substantial coverage on public radio about the challenges of youth in foster care signing up for extended Medicaid
- DHS created a dedicated staff position to specifically address challenges experienced by youth in foster care
- Despite all of this, there are still glitches that exist in the process

# Lessons Learned

- Patience!
- Be Proactive
- Persevere
- Ask for help (students and professionals alike)
- Build your network – create cross-system partnerships

# Thank you for your time!

## Questions?

# For More Information:

*Fostering Success Michigan*

**(269) 387-8386**

**[www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com](http://www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com)**

**<http://groups.google.com/group/fostering-success-michigan>**

***Seita Scholars, Western Michigan University***

**269-387-8362**

**<http://wmich.edu/fosteringsuccess/seita>**