Supporting San Francisco's Disconnected Youth

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SF DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN YOUTH
& THEIR FAMILIES

Contents

Introduction

Background

While most young people are able to successfully transition into an independent and self-sufficient adulthood with the supports available to them, some confront particularly challenging circumstances in making that transition. In particular, individuals who are aging out of foster care, have been involved with the criminal justice system, or have experienced traumatic family backgrounds often do not have access to sufficient supports from families, schools, and the broader community.

San Francisco's Children and Families First Legislation defines "disconnected Transitional Age Youth (TAY)" as young people age 18-24 who:[1]

- are homeless or in danger of homelessness;
- have dropped out of high school;
- have a disability or other special needs, including substance abuse;
- are low-income parents;
- are undocumented;
- are new immigrants and/or English learners;
- are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning ("LGBTQQ"); and/or
- are transitioning from the foster care, juvenile justice, criminal justice or special education system.

These young people are at an elevated risk for unemployment, poverty, involvement with the criminal justice system, and homelessness.[2]

In recent years, state and federal budget cuts have significantly reduced local services for children and youth, including those for high-need disconnected TAY. In 2014, San Francisco residents voted to increase the Children's Fund, a local property tax earmark for children and youth, and to extend it for 25 years. This proposition also renamed the *Children's Fund* to the *Children and Youth Fund* and expanded its use to include services for TAY. Along with that expansion, the City and County of San Francisco designated the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF) to administer funds for TAY services. DCYF's first round of pilot grants to support disconnected youth ages 18-24 began in February 2016 and included a five-month planning period; the second round of grants began in July 2016. Both sets of grants go through June 2018.

These grants employ two distinct strategies to meet TAY's complex needs: **innovation grants** aim to address gaps or barriers in existing TAY services; in **collaborative model grants**, lead agencies coordinate efforts to improve educational and employment outcomes for disconnected TAY by building on existing agency, partner and community resources. Exhibit 1 on the following pages provides more details about the current round of pilot grants and client participation.

Exhibit 1. DCYF TAY Grant Programs and Client Participation* †

Innovation Grant	Org(s)	Program Description	Number of Participants**			Average Program Participation Hours per Participant‡
			Group Activities	Individual Activities	Case Mgmt	
HealthCore	3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic	Innovative health sector workforce development program preparing disconnected TAY in Bayview Hunters Point for skilled healthcare careers	36	0	0	48
Service Corps	Community Housing Partnership	Harness volunteers to respond to community needs and equip participants with skills, peer relationships, work experience, and career pathways	30	32	9	20
Healthy Bayview Environmental Training Program	Hunters Point Family	Educate, train, and employ disconnected TAY in environmental education, gardening, aquaponics, food services, landscaping, environmental remediation, and other "green" jobs	10	0	2	53
College Success Program	Larkin Street Youth Services	Ten-week Bridge Academy and a continuum of supports once a young person is enrolled in school	53	127	0	8
Jovenes	Legal Services for Children Innovation	Legal and social work services for TAY immigrants in need of assistance establishing legal immigration status	0	0	21	8
Flour & Opportunity Baking Program	Mission Language & Vocational School	18-week occupational training in basic culinary arts and baking, with vocational English as a Second Language; includes additional 3-6 month apprenticeship	participant data not available			
Two Generation Transitional-Aged Parent Support Model	San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center	Two-generation interventions that support a family's "protective factors," employment collaboration, youth training, and job placement; in partnership with Jewish Vocational Services	participant data not available			

Innovation Grant	Org(s)	Program Description	Number of Participants**			Average Program Participation Hours per Participant‡
			Group Activities	Individual Activities	Case Mgmt	
Code Ramp	Success Center San Francisco	Four-week "boot camp" training program to get TAY informed and geared up about opportunities in the tech industry and prepare TAY for more advanced courses, in partnership with Hack Reactor	18	0	0	68
Record, Reconnect, and Restore	Sunset Youth Services	Program that uses the power of music, skill building, employment, and community-based relationships to provide incarcerated youth with opportunities to reintegrate into their communities and successfully join the workforce	0	132	0	19

Collaborative Model Grant	Org(s)	Program Description	Number of Participants**			Average Program Participation Hours per Participant‡
			Group Activities	Individual Activities	Case Mgmt	
Early Childhood Education Transition Pathway	Jewish Vocational Services, Community College of San Francisco, Wu Yee Children's Services	Early childhood education career pathway training program with a range of academic supports, supported work experience, support enrolling in education and training and/or immediate employment	0	16	0	20
Homeless and LGBTQ TAY Collaborative	Larkin Street Youth Services, Asian Neighborhood Design, Outward Bound California, San Francisco LBGT Center, UCSF Osher Center for Integrated Medicine (funded partners only)	Strengthen outreach and engagement and stabilization components to build a foundation for education and workforce enrollment, with a focus on referral and utilizing the services that already exist in San Francisco	62	55	0	2

| Collaborative Model Grant | Org(s) | Program Description | Number of Participants** | | | Average Program Participation Hours per Participant‡ |
			Group Activities	Individual Activities	Case Mgmt	
TAY Connect	Success Center San Francisco, BAVC, Huckleberry Youth Program, LYRIC, New Door Ventures, United Way of the Bay Area MatchBridge	Create a linkage of services among six providers to provide full continuum of support: engage and stabilize, provide them with education, job placement, career training, and industry certifications	participant data not available			

* Based on data submitted to CMS 7/1/2016 – 3/31/2017
†The San Francisco LGBT Community Center TAY Services program engaged 210 participants in group activities and 38 participants in case management, an average of 14 hours per participant. The San Francisco LGBT Center did not submit a planning report to DCYF and was not included in the Fall 2016 TAY grantee interviews.
** Not all programs offer all types of activities
‡ Average number of activity hours for participants with 1 hour + of activity data

Grantees have varying levels of experience serving TAY, and provide a range of programming along a continuum of lower- to higher-threshold services.

Among this cohort of grantees, programs address the full spectrum of TAY needs, from those that offer more immediate or short-term services to those that provide support for more complex or longer-term issues. The current TAY grant portfolio includes services such as information and referrals, case management, legal assistance, educational support, and job/career training. With this comprehensive mix of programs, DCYF's goal is for grantees to collectively support TAY to move from "off track" to "on track," increase their readiness to engage in educational and/or employment activities and, ultimately, achieve greater stability and self-sufficiency.

DCYF also chose to fund organizations that bring different levels of experience working with disconnected TAY as a way to broaden the network of providers and foster cross-agency relationships. While many grantees reported having focused on this population for decades, others noted that they have served TAY as part of their broader adult or youth/teen programming without a specific or intentional focus on TAY (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2.   Number of TAY Grantees by Length of Time Focusing on TAY
             (out of 20 agencies)
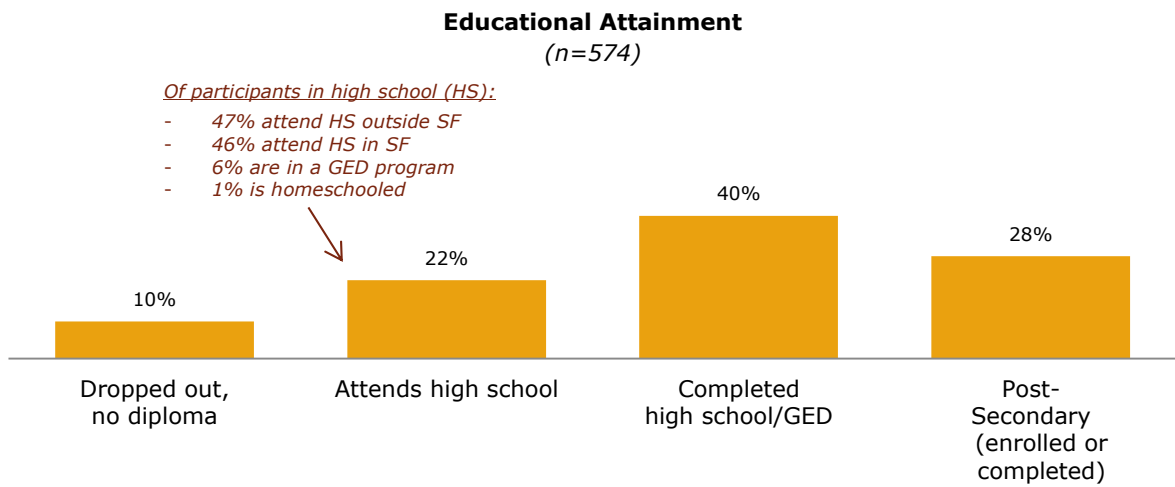
10 years or more
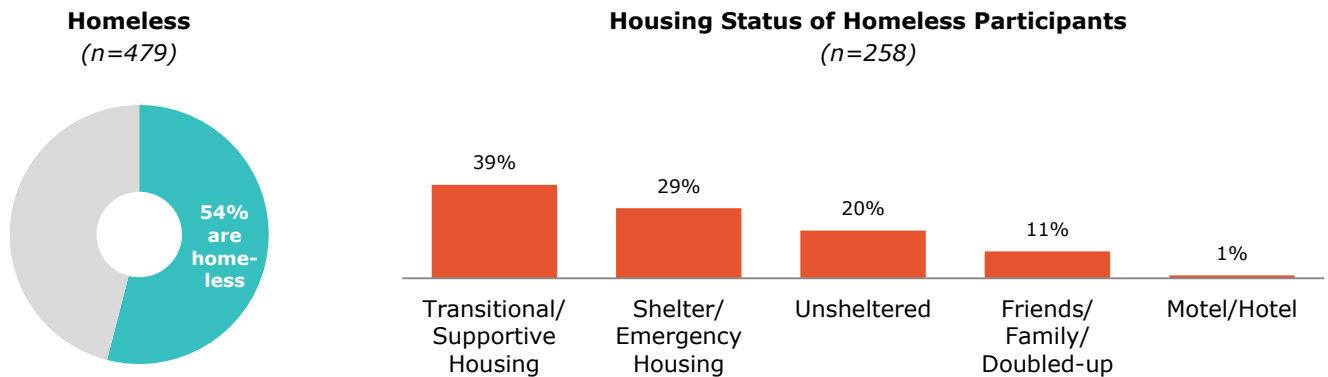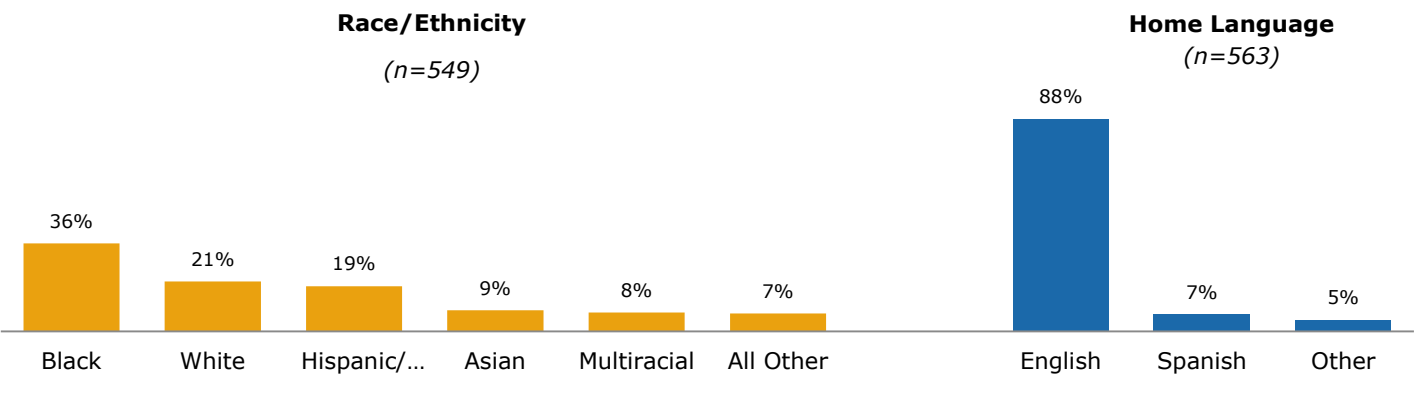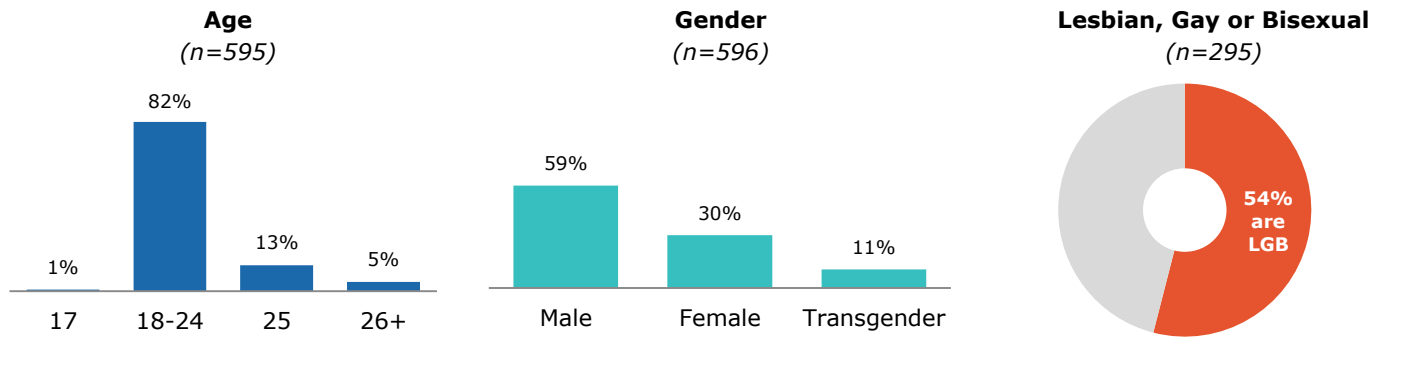(n=14)

Less than 10 years
(n=6)

Grantees' depth of experience working with TAY has implications on how they are implementing services, including the ease of outreach and recruitment, understanding of how to define and serve disconnected TAY, and their ability to network and partner with other organizations.

DCYF also recognizes that its grantees often have their own definitions of disconnected TAY. The providers in this cohort bring a range of experience working with TAY and started off with different understandings of what it means for a young person to be disconnected. TAY Connect, one of the grantee collaboratives, has developed a screening tool to identify disconnected youth, based on being "not in school" and/or "not working." This evaluation will continue to track how grantees are defining and identifying the most vulnerable TAY for services.

The following page, a snapshot of TAY service participants, presents basic demographic information about clients to date.

A Snapshot of TAY Service Participants

Through the end of February 2017, grantees reported providing services to 598 disconnected TAY.[3] This snapshot provides basic participant demographics collected by grantees.

Age
(n=595)

- 17: 1%
- 18-24: 82%
- 25: 13%
- 26+: 5%

Gender
(n=596)

- Male: 59%
- Female: 30%
- Transgender: 11%

Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual
(n=295)

54% are LGB

Race/Ethnicity
(n=549)

- Black: 36%
- White: 21%
- Hispanic/...: 19%
- Asian: 9%
- Multiracial: 8%
- All Other: 7%

Home Language
(n=563)

- English: 88%
- Spanish: 7%
- Other: 5%

Homeless
(n=479)

54% are home-less

Housing Status of Homeless Participants
(n=258)

- Transitional/Supportive Housing: 39%
- Shelter/Emergency Housing: 29%
- Unsheltered: 20%
- Friends/Family/Doubled-up: 11%
- Motel/Hotel: 1%

Educational Attainment
(n=574)

Of participants in high school (HS):
- *47% attend HS outside SF*
- *46% attend HS in SF*
- *6% are in a GED program*
- *1% is homeschooled*

- Dropped out, no diploma: 10%
- Attends high school: 22%
- Completed high school/GED: 40%
- Post-Secondary (enrolled or completed): 28%

This Report

DCYF engaged Harder+Company Community Research to conduct a process and implementation evaluation of its TAY grants. The goal of this evaluation is to help DCYF, service providers, and other stakeholders learn more about what high-quality TAY services look like and to inform DCYF's future support for this population. This preliminary findings report begins to address the following evaluation questions:

- What are the characteristics, qualities, or components of the most effective services for TAY across the continuum of services?

- How do programs support youth to move along a continuum?

- What are collaborative grantees learning about building and strengthening coordinated services to support TAY?

This document presents preliminary findings from the evaluation—which will conclude in December 2017—and draws on the following data sources:

- TAY Request for Proposal released by DCYF in November 2015

- Data submitted to DCYF from 13 TAY grants (10 innovation and 3 collaboratives), including grant applications, planning reports (Summer 2016), mid-year reports (February 2017), and data entered in the Contract Management System (CMS)

- Twenty interviews conducted with representatives from TAY grantee organizations in Fall 2016 (see the Appendix for detail)

- External documents and literature about TAY (in San Francisco and more broadly); innovation and collaboration; and instruments and reports for other DCYF-supported initiatives.

The remainder of the report is organized as follows:

- **Providing Effective TAY Services** explores the characteristics of quality programming for disconnected young people, with a focus on trauma-informed care and building and sustaining relationships with TAY participants.

- **Strengthening Coordinated TAY Services** discusses how information sharing, referrals, and network building across providers can help ensure that young people are plugged into a mix of services that best meets their unique needs.

- **Building TAY Collaboratives** takes a deeper dive into the three collaborative model grants, and shares preliminary findings about relationship building, leadership structures, and data sharing within collaboratives.

- The **Appendices** include more information about this evaluation and a list of Fall 2016 interview participants.

Providing Effective TAY Services

More than half of the TAY grantees identified trauma exposure as a significant characteristic among many of the young people they serve. This lens appears to inform many of the successful practices that grantees are using and offers promising approaches to working with this population moving forward. In particular, many grantees discussed the importance of building and maintaining relationships with service participants and offering flexible wraparound supports. This section includes an in-depth discussion of how grantees are applying those approaches and highlights the impact of staffing, capacity building, and planning on grantees' ability to create and deliver quality services.

Building and maintaining trusting relationships is key to supporting disconnected TAY through outreach, engagement, and beyond.

Exposure to trauma is a common experience among disconnected TAY, and carries with it the potential for long-term mental and physical health consequences such as increased anxiety, intense feelings of guilt and shame, difficulty regulating emotions, and emotional numbing, among others.[4] Trauma can also impede young people's ability to trust adults and institutions and affect their willingness to participate in services.

For service providers, using a trauma-informed approach means recognizing and responding to the signs and symptoms of trauma and seeking to prevent additional trauma from being inflicted on participants (see sidebar). It also means ensuring that young people are "respected, informed, connected, and hopeful."[5] By building off of evidence-based and promising practices, TAY-serving organizations can increase their ability to successfully reach and serve this population. At the local level, TAYSF, a collaborative network of city departments, service providers, and young people who are committed to improving outcomes for TAY in San Francisco, set forth the following principles for serving disconnected young people:[6]

- Promote supportive, long-term, trusting relationships

- Offer flexible and individualized services

- Utilize a strengths-based, positive youth development approach

- Incorporate youth voice in program design and decision-making

- Provide culturally-responsive services for young people of color, youth with disabilities, and LGBTQQ youth

At this stage in the evaluation, grantees shared the most information about two of these principles: building trusting relationships and providing flexible and individualized services, including wraparound supports.

> **A Trauma-Informed Approach:**
>
> - Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery
>
> - Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system
>
> - Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
>
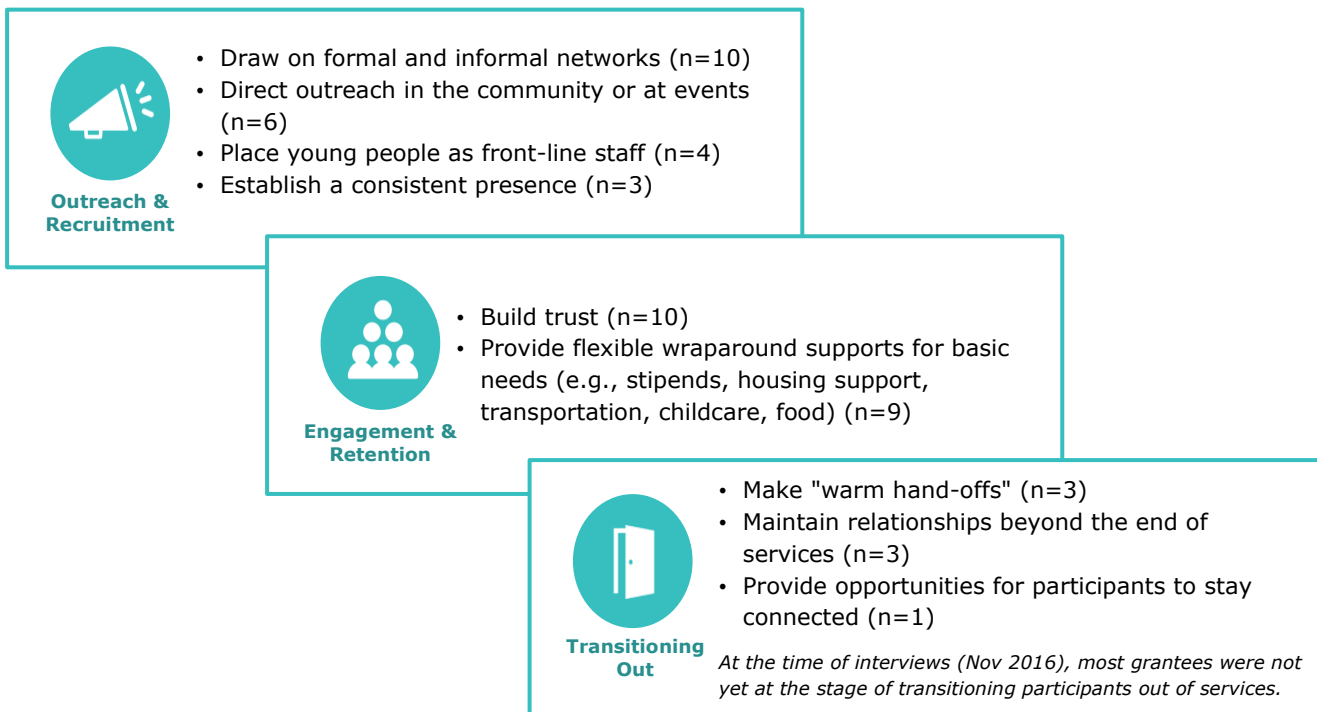> - Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization
>
> Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

Sustained relationships can have a transformational effect on disconnected TAY. Working with youth over a sustained period of time strengthens the success of their engagement and encourages retention, allowing disconnected TAY to maximize the available benefits of available programming.[7] One grantee with decades of experience providing a range of services to TAY explained,

> *"Trauma-informed services require a base level understanding of how trauma affects young people…Many have been victims of violence, and their brain is stuck in fight or flight mode. They've learned that other people can't meet their needs. It's hard to turn off that switch, since these behaviors have helped them out in the streets. The problem is teaching young people to connect and that other people can meet their needs. The primary work is to build long-term sustained relationships. There is a profound shift when that happens."*

In the discussion that follows, we describe how grantees are building relationships at all stages of service provision (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Number of Grantees Using Specific Relationship-Building Strategies at Different Stages (out of 20 agencies)

Outreach & Recruitment
- Draw on formal and informal networks (n=10)
- Direct outreach in the community or at events (n=6)
- Place young people as front-line staff (n=4)
- Establish a consistent presence (n=3)

Engagement & Retention
- Build trust (n=10)
- Provide flexible wraparound supports for basic needs (e.g., stipends, housing support, transportation, childcare, food) (n=9)

Transitioning Out
- Make "warm hand-offs" (n=3)
- Maintain relationships beyond the end of services (n=3)
- Provide opportunities for participants to stay connected (n=1)

At the time of interviews (Nov 2016), most grantees were not yet at the stage of transitioning participants out of services.

Outreach and recruitment. Grantees have reported varying levels of success with outreach and recruitment. Some of this variation appears to be tied to the amount of time that they have been serving TAY, with more established TAY-serving organizations reporting an easier time reaching and recruiting participants for their grant-funded programs and stronger referral processes. These approaches align with promising practices for youth homelessness outreach and recruitment, which include assertive outreach (i.e., going to places where youth "keep themselves hidden" and drawing on informal community contacts), building trust, and meeting basic needs.[8] Overall, grantees reported that the most effective outreach and recruitment practices to date include drawing on a mix of existing formal and informal networks. Formal networks tend to rely on relationships between providers. For example, one grantee with a strong reputation and credibility in its local community via deep, long-term connections, has been publicizing its TAY programs through presentations to schools and community-based organizations. Another longstanding TAY-serving organization is using existing relationships to coordinate among case managers and connect youth to programs that best meet their needs. Several grantees with significant experience with this population also described using more informal networks for outreach, including word of mouth promotion by current and former participants within their social networks.

According to several grantees with more extensive experience serving disconnected youth, another promising approach to outreach and recruitment is connecting with young people at the places they frequent. This includes spaces such as TAY housing residences and drop-in centers, as well as at events like youth meal nights and other TAY-focused social events. One established TAY-serving organization that offers stabilization services regularly conducts street outreach, while another grantee—also with a substantial history serving this population—was interested in doing more street outreach but only in collaboration with other providers. Reflecting on different outreach mechanisms used to date, one grantee commented, "Really it was the one-on-one conversations that recruited the TAY."

Some grantees also noted that placing young people in a front line staff or volunteer capacity (e.g., answering phones and working as greeters) can help ensure that participants enter welcoming and accessible youth-friendly spaces and have experienced peers to guide them, model appropriate behaviors, and showcase what success can look like.

Lastly, a few grantees also reported that having a consistent presence in the spaces that young people frequent—without necessarily engaging in direct outreach—can be one of the most effective ways to begin establishing positive and trusting relationships. One grantee noted that their drop-in space for LGBTQ youth allows participants to meet peers who may already be engaged in services, allowing new youth to build community and gradually explore engagement with programs and services in a safe and youth-centered way. This type of peer-to-peer relationship-building can be especially helpful for organizations that are newer to serving TAY and not as well-known among this population.

Recommended strategies for outreach and recruitment:

- Provide current, accurate information on all programs serving TAY
- Facilitate information dissemination through targeted outreach
- Develop a strong network of public/private TAY service providers
- Develop and support comprehensive transition planning and supports for TAY as they exit or transition into "next step" services
- Support the building of caring support networks for TAY

Source: "Policy Priorities for Transitional Age Youth Vision & Goals 2014-2016," TAYSF, 2014.

Engagement and retention. The most commonly-reported mechanisms for engaging and retaining young people in services were by establishing trusting relationships and providing flexible wraparound supports.

Grantees reported different approaches for building effective and supportive relationships with young people once they engage with services. At some agencies, staff maintain firm boundaries and engage with youth only during business hours; other providers choose to make themselves accessible to participants in more informal ways, including after hours and on weekends. Examples of the latter, which is most common among agencies with more experience serving TAY, include inviting participants to contact staff via text or cell phone and reaching out to participants when they are absent from class to signal that staff genuinely care about them as individuals. While it is too soon to identify the most effective strategies for negotiating relationships and boundaries, it is important that any approach be tailored to the needs and comfort levels of both staff and participants.

In addition to strong personal relationships, connecting youth with a comprehensive system of supports is emerging as one of the most effective retention strategies. For many disconnected TAY, external factors such as poverty and lack of housing are barriers to continued engagement in services. The cost of living in San Francisco makes it hard for youth to financially sustain themselves through unpaid internships or modest stipends, often forcing them to prioritize day-to-day survival over longer-term career building opportunities. Several grantees noted that their services often compete with the informal street economy. One explained, "The pool of street money is a barrier, and has been for years. We are competing with the economics of drug sales and pimping." Such day-to-day survival activities can provide youth with more money faster than job training and education programs, which may discourage program participation.

The lack of safe and stable housing also rose to the top as a common barrier to continued service engagement. Many grantees emphasized the lack of sufficient, shelter or housing that is accessible to disconnected youth (e.g., using a "housing first" approach), and separate from the adult system and appropriate for TAY, especially for LGBTQ youth. Other barriers that reportedly often limit young people's ability to successfully engage in services include lack of access to transportation, food, and child care.

To address these challenges, some agencies provide flexible wraparound services that allow youth to prioritize program engagement. These include stipends, housing support, and the provision of transportation, food and childcare. Grantees stressed the importance of addressing basic needs for all TAY, including in higher-threshold services.

"What keeps youth engaged is deep authentic relationships with folks they know that care about them."

–TAY grantee

Transitioning out. While many grantees are not yet at the point of transitioning participants out of services, they acknowledged that ongoing support during and after these transitions are critical to sustained success. Promising practices include warm handoffs to other providers and maintaining longer-term relationships with youth. One grantee with over 30 years of experience working with disconnected TAY expressed a desire for relationships that encourage former participants to "stay tethered to us for life." Several agencies reported providing youth with at least one year of transition time after service completion and offering opportunities for them to remain connected through ongoing activities and events. One grantee that has served TAY for over 25 years described its function as an "attachment community," in which the agency serves as a surrogate parent or trusted figure in the lives of former participants to promote long lasting and sustainable relationships, strengthen the likelihood of post-transition success, and prevent subsequent disengagement.

Building relationships and providing wraparound services requires sufficient hiring, retention, and relevant staff training.

Effective hiring and retention practices are essential to grantees' success. Adequate staffing is essential for outreach, providing effective supports to TAY participants, and building meaningful connections with other organizations. Several agencies reported having staff who worked extensively on outreach and engagement, while others mentioned a desire to increase dedicated staff time for this work. In terms of service delivery, appropriate staff-to-youth ratios and low rates of turnover help ensure that TAY receive high-quality services.

However, reaching and maintaining appropriate staffing levels and adequate training has proven to be a challenge among many grantees. In particular, some cited a need for additional staff to conduct effective outreach and build meaningful relationships with participants. Further—especially given the varying levels of experience with TAY among grantees—professional development and peer learning opportunities focused on serving this population and providing trauma-informed care more broadly are critically important.

Dedicated time and resources for planning and capacity building help lay the foundation for providing quality services to disconnected youth.

Overall, agencies appreciated the knowledge and experience that DCYF brings, and highlighted Program Specialists' engagement, accessibility, openness, and flexibility. In addition to ongoing communications with Program Specialists, DCYF regularly convenes its TAY grantees at Peer Learning Cohort meetings and offers technical assistance on an ad-hoc basis. Providing the infrastructure and opportunity for partners to exchange knowledge and experience has been shown to encourage the use and spread of innovative, evidence-based practices.[9] Such peer learning and professional development may also help reduce staff turnover.

Thoughtful and intentional planning is critical for expanding the reach and increasing the success of TAY services. Such planning ensures that programs for disconnected TAY are able to hit the ground running when implementation begins, and avoid potential pitfalls. According to planning reports, grantees are in consensus that the planning and coordination time built into DCYF's TAY grants is essential to providing effective services.

They noted that this planning time enabled staff to think critically about approaches to recruitment, program models, and hiring needs. For example, after spending several weeks during the planning period to identify and better understand its target population, one agency identified a need to engage a participant from that

"This learning period will improve the services we provide to current and future project clients."

–TAY grantee

population to lead recruitment efforts. Another organization whose TAY grant supports employment-related programming reported uncovering key barriers to participation that it had initially overlooked, such as legal work authorization, lack of a high school diploma, language barriers, and prospective participants' commitment to other education or work goals.

Grantees also highlighted the importance of up-front planning time for building strategic relationships among staff and collaborative partners. One collaborative reported using the planning phase to "create a strengths-based system of ongoing communication" that includes both formal and informal communication via frequent email updates, bi-weekly partner phone meetings, and monthly in-person meetings. Also during the planning period, partners from another collaborative came to recognize opportunities to leverage youth leadership to build cross-organizational relationships. ✛

Strengthening Coordinated TAY Services

In order to contextualize the range of services its TAY grants support, DCYF developed definitions of what it means for a disconnected young person to be "off track" or "on track." "Off track" signals that a young person is behind in credits and/or dropped out of school; does not have a diploma or GED; is unstably housed; has had multiple contacts with Juvenile or Adult Probation; or has little or no positive connections to their community. "On track" describes young people who have the necessary supports and positive connections to one's community to make a successful transition to adulthood and are on a sound path to educational attainment or employment.

DCYF also identified a comprehensive continuum of services to best meet the diverse needs of San Francisco's disconnected youth (see Exhibit 4). After initial outreach, engagement, and assessment, services along the continuum include stabilization, education or workforce enrollment, and education or workforce engagement. As TAY approach being "on track," providers give transition support out of education and employment programs.

Exhibit 4.   DCYF's TAY Service Continuum
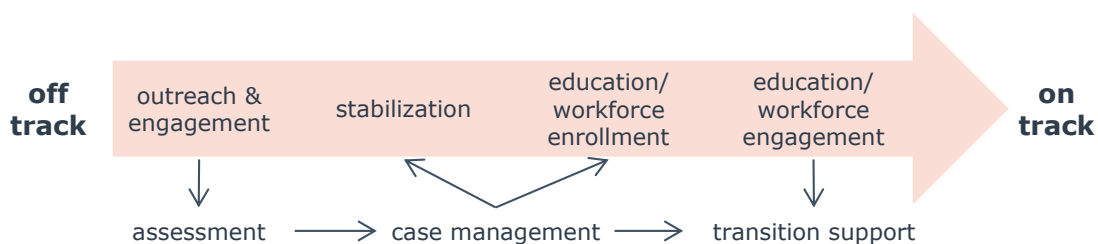
This section explores how increased coordination among providers can strengthen this continuum, with a focus on assessment, information and referral sharing processes, and partnerships with non-TAY service specific agencies.

Effective assessment processes can ensure that young people engage with the services that best meet their needs.

The assessment process is an early opportunity for providers to begin establishing trust and providing space for young people to engage in a self-determined process. Grantees' approaches to intake and assessment vary from identifying and addressing participants' most immediate needs to more formal placement processes. As participants move towards being "on track," intake and assessment process appear to become more rigorous. In other words, education and employment programs tend to have more comprehensive eligibility criteria and intake processes than lower-touch (e.g., drop-in or information and referral) services. A number of organizations across the service continuum use their intake and assessment process to gain a sense of participants' strengths and needs rather than strictly to determine eligibility for services. "We can't exclude young people—

that's what we're teaching through our program," explained one grantee, adding, "Our assessment helps us determine what they need, not whether they're eligible." Another person described their program's approach as a "graduated assessment process" that uses a series of assessments to discuss goals in order to offer appropriate information and resources.

Low barriers to entry can make programs more accessible to young people who need a lower-stakes or scaffolded entry into services. Grantees that provide services closer to the "off-track" end of the continuum reported the importance of addressing participants' most immediate needs as a precursor to conducting any type of assessment. Several agencies that provide services along the continuum discussed ways that they were able to "meet youth where they are" instead of requiring them to change their situations or behavior in order or access services; one agency mentioned using an "any door is the right door" approach to facilitate program participation. Low barriers to entry that enable disconnected TAY to engage with services include not requiring documentation (e.g., driver's license, ID, birth certificate, social security card), providing support completing paperwork for young people with literacy needs, and placing participants in activities in which they are most likely to succeed. One agency noted the use of motivational interviewing techniques as part of a multi-step intake and assessment process so that youth are able to establish trust and comfort with staff over time.

Several agencies that provide employment-related services use proficiency exams to determine appropriate program placement and screening tools such as the Job Search Attitude Inventory. One job training program also administers an evidence-based screening to identify risks for abuse as part of its trauma-informed approach. These types of screenings inform grantees how to meet their clients' unique needs as they participate in programming. Along a similar vein, one collaborative grantee cited a need to assess clients' English language skills ensure that providers are aware of any potential language needs. One job training program described its process as follows: "We have a lengthy referral form and make sure they're age-qualified…then an orientation that talks them through the program and expectations," adding, "During that time nobody has been rejected…One participant has self-selected out, but that's it."

Stronger information-sharing and referral processes can create a more cohesive and complementary system of services for TAY.

Disconnected youth often participate in a range of services to meet different needs. However, these services can often be fragmented.[10] Many grantees mentioned that while San Francisco has a notable amount of TAY services, they need additional supports (e.g., searchable database, resource directory, contact lists) to help enable them identify TAY services along the continuum, learn about eligibility criteria, and streamline referral processes. Several grantees explained that having more knowledge about other providers would allow them to refer clients to programs that are a good fit and ensure that they meet eligibility requirements. These types of resources can also help mitigate some of the disruption in cross-organizational relationships caused by staff turnover. For example, one agency that provides a range of services for TAY reported significant staff turnover due to the high cost of living and lack of competitive salaries in the nonprofit sector.

Agencies are already deepening their knowledge about one another in several ways. Those that are newer to serving TAY placed an emphasis on quickly building relationships with other TAY providers to learn about their programs and increase their ability to make effective referrals. Many noted that DCYF's Peer Learning Cohort meetings are helping them strengthen their connections to other agencies, facilitate referrals, and discuss service coordination. One agency that focuses on

> **"We don't have a rigorous evaluation [of readiness]. It's just very simple—'are you ready to show up?'"**
>
> **–TAY grantee**

> **"San Francisco is resource-rich but it's very dysfunctional and fragmented when it comes to people coordinating care…Many times you don't know that one agency is doing something already."**
>
> **–TAY grantee**

serving LGBTQ TAY is proactively reaching out to other grantees to ensure they are able to provide culturally competent services for this population. Moving forward, many grantees expressed a desire for a database or resource list containing detailed eligibility and service information about TAY providers Citywide.

Looking beyond organizations with TAY-specific programming can help expand the network of services for this population.

Some grantees are looking to organizations that serve a broader population, such as those that focus on younger people (i.e., 16- to 17-year-olds) and those in the adult system of care, to expand outreach and referrals. There are also opportunities for grantees to partner with organizations that do not specialize in serving TAY but offer complementary services. One innovation grantee that works with young families specifically mentioned collaboration with the Nurse Family Partnership. Other well-developed network partners include community-based organizations, mental health providers, schools, educators, medical providers, public housing, and city agencies. These partners enable TAY-serving organizations to make more successful referrals and secure comprehensive supports for participants.

Additionally, some of the job training programs have started or are planning to broker relationships with potential employers. In one program, that includes field trips and "bringing in volunteers who are in [this area of] work and can mentor young people and help [them] navigate a system that is a way different arena that they can only get to through us." By connecting with stakeholders outside of the TAY-specific sector, agencies can increase awareness about the needs of disconnected youth and leverage additional services. ▥

Building TAY Collaboratives

As part of its current TAY funding, DCYF invested in three collaborative model grants (see Exhibit 1 in the Introduction for additional detail).

- the Early Childhood Education Transition Pathway collaborative provides career pathway training program with academic supports;

- the Homeless & LGBTQ TAY Collaborative strives to strengthen outreach, engagement, and stabilization components to build a foundation for education and workforce enrollment; and

- TAY Connect seeks to build and strengthen services linkages among six agencies to provide full continuum of support.

In these programs, lead agencies coordinate efforts to improve educational and employment outcomes for disconnected TAY by building on existing agency, partner and community resources. Grantees in each group engage in joint planning, coordination of services and referrals, enhancement of existing services, and capacity building and shared learning.

This section contains preliminary findings about these collaborative model grants. We begin by looking at the core competencies for successful collaboration. We then take a deeper dive into three areas related to those competencies: relationship building, leadership structures, and data sharing.

Effective collaboration enables organizations to increase their reach and impact, and requires a targeted investment of time and resources.

Broadly speaking, collaboration is "a mutually beneficial and well defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals"[11] When designed strategically and implemented effectively, collaborative approaches can achieve short- and long-term goals that partner agencies would not be able to attain independently.[12] Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, a diverse community of over 5,000 grantmakers, set forth four core capacities that nonprofits need in order to collaborate effectively (see Exhibit 5 on next page):

Exhibit 5.   Core Competencies for Nonprofit Collaboration[13]

Strong leadership and an open mindset
Leaders need to study the ecosystems that their organizations are a part of, understand how they fit in, and build internal cultures that reward outreach and relationship building.

Ability to share power and responsibility
This means looking beyond organization-specific objectives to larger mission-driven goals, and requires humility, compromise, sharing credit and control, and openness to criticism and change.

Strong connectivity and relationship building
Staff need the time and freedom to be externally focused and build productive partnerships with others.

Adaptability and flexibility
Partners may need to modify the nature and/or focus of the work as priorities shift.

TAY collaboratives have been focusing their efforts on establishing leadership structures and building relationships.

These two core competencies are a natural starting place for partners who are coming together for the first time and/or in a new way. As they move from planning and piloting to implementation and refinement, TAY collaboratives are also beginning to focus more on the third core competency: sharing power and responsibility. At this stage, it is too early to assess the fourth core competency: how nimble and adaptable these collaboratives are capable of being in the longer term. Here we explore TAY collaboratives' work in the first two areas, leadership structures and relationship building, more deeply.

Leadership structures. Successful collaboratives require an agreed-upon approach to leadership and decision-making that advances their goals. DCYF's requirements for lead agencies in collaborative grants focus on administrative functions and allow flexibility when it comes to leadership structure and style (see right).

While each collaborative is tailoring its leadership approach to programmatic goals and partners' capacity, all three regularly convene leaders from every partner organization in order to share information and coordinate activities, as follows:

- The Early Childhood Transition Education Pathway's *Administrative Leadership Team* meets quarterly, and works to better serve TAY and ensure smooth service coordination.

- The Homeless LGBTQ TAY Collaborative's *Advisory Group* meets monthly to share training resources, agency updates, community-wide challenges, and how they are responding to them.

- TAY Connect's *Steering Committee* meets twice a month and has been focusing on creating tools to support learning about each other's programs.

Leadership structures and processes have an important influence on collaboratives' success. Other factors that influence their success include environment, membership, communication, purpose, and resources.[14] In Phase Two of this evaluation, we will explore these aspects more deeply and ask lead and partner organizations to reflect on how they contributed to successes and challenges.

TAY Collaborative Model Requirements for Lead Agencies, per RFP

- Coordinate and manage the collaborative

- Manage programmatic and fiscal relationships with subcontractors

- Complete and submit required grant reports

- File monthly invoices to DCYF

Relationship building. In addition to strong and clear leadership structures, successful collaborations also depend on positive personal relations among partners.[15] Healthy interpersonal relationships are a crucial foundation for any collaborative effort, and trust can only be developed by dedicating sufficient time, effort, and energy into systems of communication.[16] Both lead and partner agencies agreed that strong and trusting relationships are a requisite for successful partnerships and productive communication in the long run.

To this end, all collaborative grantees reported participating in weekly, biweekly, and/or monthly meetings, allowing for relationship building, information sharing, program planning, and training. Some collaboratives have also convened separate meetings at the leadership, direct service, and/or administrative staff levels. One grantee articulated the value of these meetings, explaining, "When you can sit across [the table] and ask questions in real time, it makes a huge difference in partnerships. You feel like colleagues and not just folks trying to work together." In addition to regular meetings, collaboratives are employing a variety of communication strategies tailored to their programs and partnerships, including newsletters, a shared calendar, and co-location of staff—the latter of which allows partners to reach a broader swath of clients, partners, and other stakeholders.

Building authentic relationships and engaging in meaningful communication takes time and is not without its challenges. In Fall 2016, some grantees noted that, while valuable, the amount of meetings—particularly additional meetings for staff at different levels—can strain smaller agencies' budgets. An early hurdle for one of the collaboratives was reconciling and harnessing the diverse backgrounds that partners bring to the table, such as varying experience (e.g., with specific populations, evaluation, program development), different organizational cultures, and other networks to which they belong. Another collaborative grantee mentioned initial challenges with working out important logistics such as meeting times and the frequency and mechanisms for communications.

Collaborative grantees recognize the importance of sharing participant information and are exploring practical approaches to doing so.

An essential component to providing comprehensive and streamlined services is providers' ability to share information about service participants with each other on a regular basis. This exchange of information among providers helps them ensure that participants' needs are being met and that they are up to date on any relevant life changes that could impact those needs.

As of Fall 2016, all three collaboratives reported having functioning data sharing systems and agreements. Similar to their approaches to leadership structures, collaboratives are tailoring data sharing to their unique goals and partners' capacities. One group generated an unduplicated count of client enrollment within all partner agencies' programs, highlighting the potential for what data sharing can produce.

When they first came together, collaborative partners did not necessarily share similar positions on what data sharing should look like. One grantee recounted their collaborative's process for building a data sharing system that would work for partner agencies with various backgrounds and levels of capacity: "We are having to figure out shared data collection, joint confidentiality, and referral structures. And…we are very thoughtful about our process being one that can be replicable by other folks who may not have as deep of experience working with this population."

How Collaboratives are Supporting Communication and Coordination

- Monthly direct service staff meetings to discuss service coordination

- Quarterly administrative leadership team meetings to improve service coordination

- Shared calendar with application deadlines, orientation and program start dates, drop-in hours, events, etc.

- Charts that detail partner services and eligibility requirements

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At this stage in the grant, limited capacity and concerns about client confidentiality continue to be the leading barriers to increased data sharing. One collaborative's mid-year report explained that it initially planned to develop a shared *Release of Information* so all partner agencies could access client data, but realized that agencies had varying standards of confidentiality. The report went on to explain:

> *"The agencies also vary in the extent of transparency with youth on how data and information is shared. It became apparent that a shared information system would need to adhere to the strictest standard that any of the partners was subject to – an agency can chose a stronger, but not a weaker standard than is its legal obligation. The collaboration was unable to come to a consensus on a standard, and opted instead for individual agency release of information forms, maintaining each agency's current practices."*

At this stage in the evaluation, the extent to which the other two collaboratives are formalizing information-sharing process vis-à-vis confidentiality concerns is unclear. In Phase Two, this evaluation will continue to explore the applications, best practices, and challenges associated with sharing participant data across agencies in the TAY collaborative grants. ✛

"Data sharing agreements help us understand what our footprint is in the City, who we are reaching, and areas of complementary services moving along the continuum."

–Collaborative grantee

Next Steps for the Evaluation

In summer 2017, Harder+Company will collect and analyze the results of a survey distributed to TAY service participants and report findings about participants' backgrounds, needs, experiences with funded services, and goals for the future.

The evaluation team will conduct a second round of interviews with grantees in Fall 2017 and is working closely with DCYF to identify lines of inquiry for this study moving forward.

Appendix: Fall 2016 Interview Participants

Harder+Company conducted interviews with the following representatives from TAY grantee organizations in October and November 2016 (note that some interviews fall into more than one grant category):

Innovation Grants

1. 3rd Street Youth Center and Clinic: Joi Jackson-Morgan, Executive Director
2. Community Housing Partnership: Sheila Goodman, Supervisor, Community Volunteer Team
3. Hunters Point Family: Kenneth Hill, Deputy Director of Environmental Programs
4. Jewish Vocational Services (partner, with SF Child Abuse Prevention Center): Lisa Countryman, Vice President, Grants and Program Development JVS - Work Transforms Lives
5. Larkin Street Youth Services: Ilsa Lund, Director of Operations; Martha Mar, Chief of Programs; Craig Lahti, Associate Director of Larkin Street Academy; Tiffany Shirley, Director of Larkin Street Academy; Mary Kate Bacalao, Director of Public Funding
6. Legal Services for Children: Ron Gutierrez, Clinical Director
7. Mission Language and Vocational School: Natalie Hopner, Interim Executive Director
8. SF Child Abuse Prevention Center: Barry Feinberg, Director of Children and Family Services
9. SF LGBT Community Center: Vanessa Teran, Youth Program Manager
10. Success Center: Liz Jackson-Simpson, Executive Director; Genny Price, Director of Development & Evaluation; Reymon LaChaux, Business Relations Coordinator
11. Sunset Youth Services: Joel Tarman, Digital Arts Program Coordinator

Collaborative Grant: TAY Connect

1. Success Center (lead): Liz Jackson-Simpson, Executive Director; Genny Price, Director of Development & Evaluation; Reymon LaChaux, Business Relations Coordinator
2. BAVC (partner): Lauren Taylor, Senior Education Manager
3. Huckleberry Youth Services (partner): Mollie Brown, Director of Programs
4. LYRIC (partner): Jodi Schwartz, Executive Director; Denny David, Deputy Director
5. New Door Ventures (partner): Tess Reynolds, Executive Director; Ciara Wade, Program Director
6. United Way (partner): Steve Nelson, Employment Specialist

Collaborative Grant: Homeless and LGBTQ TAY Collaborative

1. Larkin Street Youth Services (lead): Patrick Barresi, TAY Navigator Program Manager; Angie Miot-Nudel, Director of Quality Care ; Martha Mar, Chief of Programs

2. Asian Neighborhood Design (partner): Jamie Fountain, Program Director, Employment Training Center

3. Community Housing Partnership (partner): Sheila Goodman, Supervisor, Community Volunteer Team

4. SF LGBT Community Center (partner): Vanessa Teran, Youth Program Manager

Collaborative Grant: Early Childhood Education Transition Pathway

1. Jewish Vocational Services (lead): Danielle Scheper, School Partner Programs Manager; Christine Sarigianis, Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator

2. Wu Yee Children's Services (partner): Lisa Hufgard, Family Community Partnership Manager; Kimberly Jones, Associate Program Director

[1] Charter Section 16.108 of the Children and Families First Legislation

[2] Mayor's Transitional Youth Task Force, "Disconnected Transitional Youth In San Francisco," 2007, http://www.taysf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/TYTF-final-report.pdf

[3] This number includes 196 individuals served by the San Francisco LGBT Center, which did not submit a planning report to DCYF and was not included in the Fall 2016 TAY grantee interviews.

[4] Frounfelker, Rochelle, Vanessa Vorhies Klodnick, Kim T. Mueser, and Sara Todd. "Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Transition-Age Youth With Serious Mental Health Conditions." Journal of traumatic stress 26, no. 3 (2013): 409-412.

[5] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

[6] ibid

[7] Pierce, B.A. (2009) "Roca's High Risk Youth Intervention Model: Initial Implementation Evaluation Report," *Crime and Justice Institute at Community Resources for Justice,* December 2009*.*

[8] "Ending Youth Homelessness Guidebook Series: Promising Program Models," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Promising-Program-Models.pdf

[9] Jenkins, Davis et al, "Progress in the First Five Years: An Evaluation of Achieving the Dream Colleges in Washington State," December 2012.

[10] Treskon, Louisa, "What Works for Disconnected Young People A Scan of the Evidence," MDRC, February 2016.

[11] Mattessich, Paul W., et al, "Collaboration: What Makes It Work," 2001.

[12] Gajda, Rebecca, "Utilizing Collaboration Theory to Evaluation Strategic Alliances," March 1 2004.

[13] "Working Together Better: Building Nonprofit Collaborative Capacity," Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2013. https://www.michiganfoundations.org/sites/default/files/resources/Working-Better-Together-GEO-2013.pdf

[14] Mattessich, Paul W., et al, "Collaboration: What Makes It Work," 2001.

[15] Gajda, Rebecca, "Utilizing Collaboration Theory to Evaluation Strategic Alliances," March 1 2004.

[16] ibid

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