

# **Connecting the Dots from Foster Care to Employment & Independent Living**

Alice Worrell, Office of Workforce Development, and  
Panel of Connecting the Dots Pilot Program Counties

# Meet the Panelists



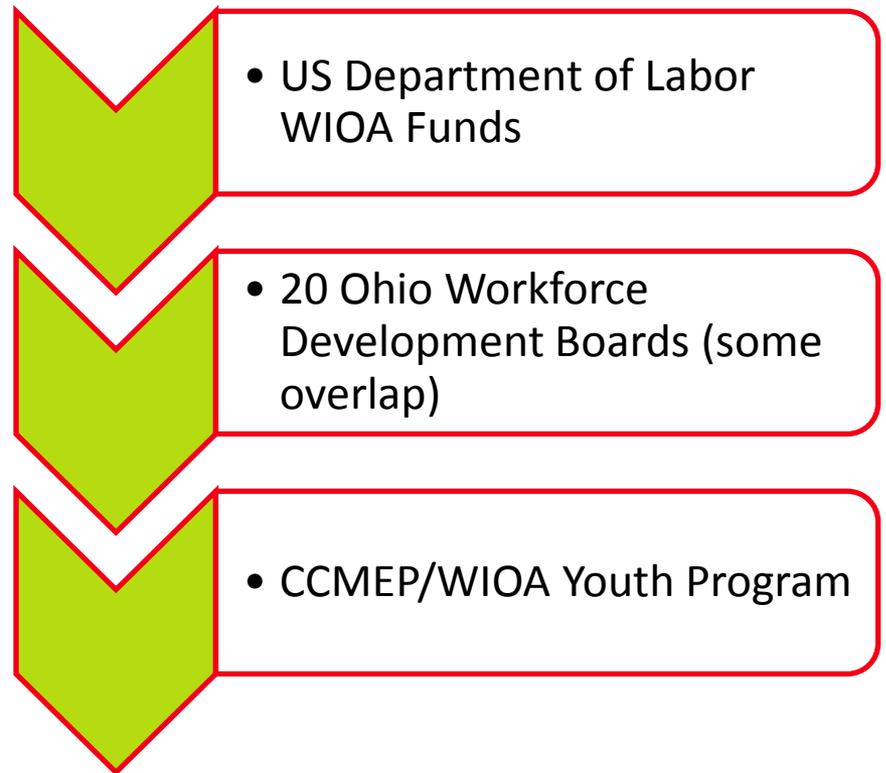
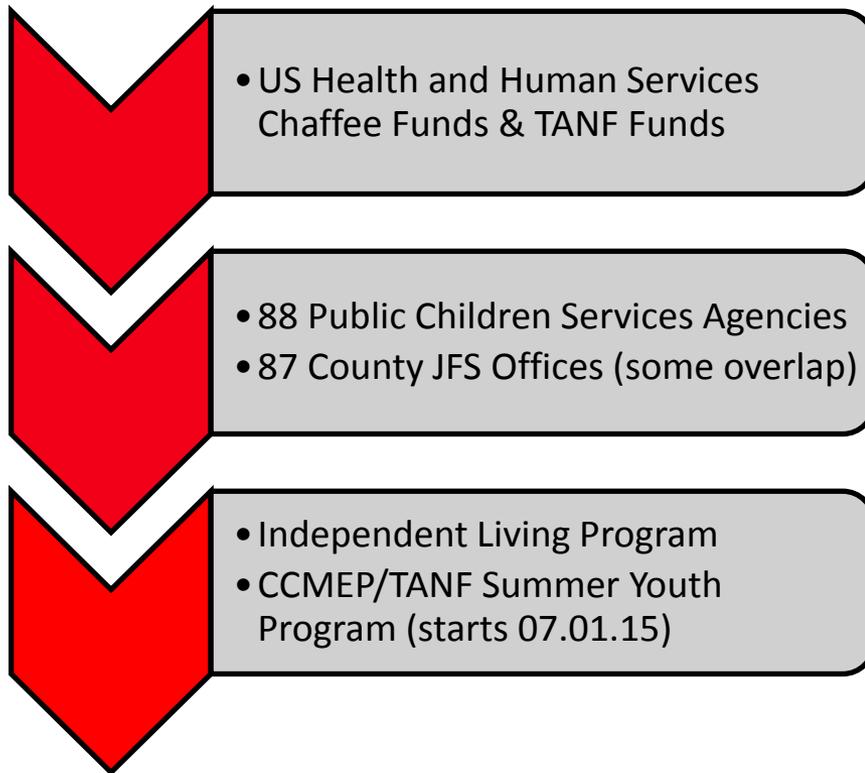
Tim Dingler, Hamilton County Dept. of Job and Family Services

Latoya W. Harris, Summit County Dept. of Job and Family Services

Mindy Hughes, Lake County Dept. of Job and Family Services

Candace James, OhioMeansJobs | Cleveland-Cuyahoga County

# Programs Previously Operated in Silos



# What Happens Without Support?

National statistics, after emancipation:

- Only 46% graduate from H.S. within 4 years of emancipating (half general graduation rate)
  - Median earnings for H.S. dropouts = \$23,452/yr.
  - Only about 2% earn a bachelors degree
- Poverty rate is 3X national rate
- 22% experience homelessness
  - 40% of adult homeless population spend time in foster care

# What Happens Without Support?

National statistics, after emancipation:

- 81% of males arrested by age 24
- 54% report at least one mental health problem, including post-traumatic stress
- Less than 50% are employed full time
- 48% of females become pregnant by 19

# High Cost of Poor Outcomes

- More than 24,000 teens leave foster care (emancipate) without being adopted each year in the U.S.
- Personal trauma, hardship, lost potential
- Research shows that providing better support to these young adults would save more than **\$5.7 billion** over their lifetime
- In Ohio, 900 – 1,300 teens emancipate each year



# Pay Now or Pay Later?

---

- Is your local area investing in these young people?
- What prevents your local area from doing more?
- What are your plans for Program Year 2016?

# Connecting the Dots Goals

- Prevent and reduce the incidence of early pregnancy and parenthood
- Improve educational, employment, and earnings outcomes
- Better support foster youths' transition to adulthood
- Break down program and funding silos so cross-program strategies are effective



# Important Service Components



Youth voice and  
engagement

Healthy relationships  
and choices

Educational supports  
(tutoring, dropout  
prevention, test prep,  
etc.)

Career exploration,  
work readiness, and  
work experience  
(before HS graduation)

Vocational  
mentoring

Coordinated delivery  
of services

# Engage Youth and Young Adults

- Hire a former foster youth
- Make youth voice part of all planning and service delivery
- Include youth in decisions that are about them
- Create a welcoming environment where they feel they belong
- Support youth to actively participate in and lead meetings about their lives
- Encourage youth to invite friends
- Interpret lack of follow-through as a need for more support



# Reduce Program Silos & Coordinate Services

---

## **Six critical elements (according to Jim Casey, founder, Annie E. Casey Foundation)**

- Integrated system design
- Blended funding streams
- Synchronized policies
- Meaningful youth involvement (voice)
- Strategic case practice
- Collaborative planning



# Develop Successful Partner Relationships



- Start with buy-in from agency Directors
- Disseminate information from Directors to front-line staff
- Deliver on what you promise
- Document the service delivery flow upfront
- Assign a key contact from child welfare, WIOA, and contracted service providers
- Other



# Is Your Local Area Ready?

---

- How would you characterize relationships between WIOA youth program and children services in your area?
- What are your plans for Program Year 2016?

# Develop Processes and Procedures

- Outreach and recruitment
- Assessment
- Individual opportunity plan (CCMEP)
- Referrals among partners
- Information sharing
- Regular case conferences

# Address Potential Obstacles

- Performance standards
  - WIOA excludes from denominator youth in custody who move
- Policy issues
- Transitions in Medicaid, SNAP & mental health
- Homelessness & resulting crises – county examples
- Trauma-informed care

# Other Keys to Success

- Develop champions among staff, employers, the media
- Participate in & prioritize attainment of independent living & work skills for youth (especially in residential centers)
- Intensify pre-employment skills training
- Provide on-the-job training and/or work experience
- Provide education on healthy relationships and responsible parenting

# Other Keys to Success

- Build the capacity of service providers
- Provide comprehensive case management
- Help youth develop resilience in spite of circumstances
- Find and support mentors
- Make child welfare staff aware of youths' academic progress & high school credit recovery needs



# Lessons Learned from Each County

---

- What I'm proudest about
- Most important advice
- If I had to do it over again, I would \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

# Next Steps



- What actions does your local area need to take by 12.31.15?
- Who will be responsible for these actions?
- What technical assistance would be helpful?

# Questions and Answers

??????



# Contact Information

---

Tim Dinger, Hamilton, [dinglt@jfs.hamilton-co.org](mailto:dinglt@jfs.hamilton-co.org)

Latoya W. Harris, Summit, [Latoya.Harris@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Latoya.Harris@jfs.ohio.gov)

Mindy Hughes, Lake, [hughem@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:hughem@odjfs.state.oh.us)

Candace James, Cuyahoga, [jamesc@ecjobs.us](mailto:jamesc@ecjobs.us)

Alice Worrell, ODJFS, [Alice.Worrell@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Alice.Worrell@jfs.ohio.gov)