

**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Office of Workforce Development**

Transcript of Webinar

Serving At-Risk Youth

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Serving At-Risk Youth

[Numbers in brackets indicate the approximate playtime, or time stamp, in the audio version]

[09:42]

PAUL BOUNDS: Good afternoon. Hopefully, you can all hear me. If you can't, please send a text message through the account, to let us know what's going on. But my name is Paul Bounds, and welcome to today's webinar. I am the Acting Section Chief of the OWD Employment Training Unit. And today's webinar will focus on providing information for serving at-risk or high-risk youth. And I'm happy to have the three presenters we have today – three women who have a great wealth of experience who will be able to provide you a lot of great information. I'm very excited to hear their presentations.

Today with us we have Julia Donovan, the Employment Services Director for LEAP, which stands for Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential. LEAP – a non-profit agency with 30 years of serving people with disabilities in the Northeast Ohio area. By the way, LEAP is also a CARF accredited agency that serves about 1,700 people with disabilities each year. Julie is going to focus her presentation today on serving youth with disabilities.

We also have the pleasure of presenting Doris Edelman. Doris is the County Transition Coordinator for the Family and Children's First Council of Montgomery County. Created in 1995, the Family and Children First Council provides support for issues that affect children and families. Today, Doris will focus her presentation of Foster Teens and Aging Out Youth.

Lastly, we have Kim Humphrey, the Reentry Administrator with the Ohio Department of Youth Services, or DYS for short. Kim has over 20 years of corrections experience with adult and youth offenders. Her presentation today will focus on helpful hints for working with kids in the DYS system.

A couple of things about the presentation: Generally, if you have questions or comments, write them in your text box and submit them, and the lovely Angie Martin will pass them on to the presenter. As always, if you did not get a copy of today's presentation in advance of today's webinar, we will be able to provide a copy after today's webinar, possibly tomorrow at the earliest convenience, to you. Right now, we're ready to get started. Our first presenter is Julia.

JULIA DONOVAN: Good afternoon everybody. As Paul said, my name is Julia Donovan, and I am the Employment Services Director at LEAP, which is located in Cleveland, Ohio, and now also, Elyria, Ohio. As Paul also mentioned, we have been working with people with disabilities for just over 30 years and with transition youth for about 20. At LEAP, we serve all people with disabilities. So that means cognitive, physical, emotional, and everything in between and beyond.

That makes us actually unique, and it gives us the ability to work with a multitude of funders. Our mission is to advance in society equal opportunities for all persons regardless of their disability. As I mentioned, we work with all people with a wide variety of disabilities, and our goal is, really, integration and independence. We are striving to get people as independent and as integrated into a community-setting as possible.

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I'm going to quickly explain that a little bit, because community to us means in an integrated setting, not in a sheltered workshop where they are working with other people with disabilities, maybe from their group home, but truly integrated in the community -- sitting next to a typical employee at a typical employer. Unfortunately, we don't see very much of that in our communities today, so we are really striving for that.

We have a variety of programs. We have employment services which include both transition youth and adults. We have attendant training for home health aides, STNAs. We're a staff for independent living, which is a philosophy, not a place. It means we believe all people should be integrated into the community and live where they choose, based on a lot of the principles of the Olmstead Act. We have advocacy, benefits planning and community trainings. Today, I am going to focus on transition youth.

We follow the Guideposts for Success. The Guideposts state that all youth need a following -- which is access to high quality education, as well as information about career options and exposure to the world of work, including structured internships and work experience. This is a really important piece for people transitioning.

Very frequently, people with disabilities aren't afforded the same opportunities as maybe a typical youth would have. They tend to have very limited opportunities to work, and quite frequently, unfortunately in those opportunities that are given to them, the expectations are set pretty low, which makes it extra challenging once they try to integrate into the community.

I always say for the typical population that is going on to college, the government spends four years basically in career exploration through that college experience to learn what you like, what you don't like. And frequently, youth with disabilities come right out of high school and don't have the ability to career explore or even find out what their interests are. This bullet about career options and the world of work is really going to be a big focus of our conversation today.

Opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills. Strong connections to caring adults, access to safe places to interact with their peers, and supportive services to allow them to become independent adults. This information is provided by the National Cooperative on Workforce and Disability. I highly recommend utilizing their site. It has a plethora of great information and also is research-based.

With the Guideposts, you might think to yourself, how am I possibly going to deliver all of these things to youth coming through the system, because it is quite a big responsibility. These responsibilities are then based on the following assumptions. I'm going to highlight the first bullet here:

The highest expectations for all youth, including youth with disabilities. I would say that we have, as a society, pervasively set low expectations for people with disabilities. I would argue that people tend to pity people with disabilities and not treat them as equal as their peers, and this is causing problems as they transition into adulthood because they aren't given clear expectations to reach the high standards of the world of work, especially in what this highly-competitive age requires.

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The Guideposts also assume that there is equal opportunity for everyone, including non-discrimination, individualization, inclusion, and integration. Again, the key here being integration – working along with peers, with and without disabilities. Full participation through self-determination and informed choice and participation in decision-making.

I'm going to spend another minute on this particular bullet. Frequently, when I work with transition youth, they will come into my office and start a career exploration process and I'll ask them about the different types of jobs that they've had in the past and different work experiences.

And frequently, someone at this age has had 3 or 4 jobs if they're lucky, during the summer, so I'll ask them what they did. They'll say, "Well, I cleaned." I'll say, "Did you like it?" And they'll say, "No." And frequently, they've walked out of some of these jobs. And then later in the interview I'll ask, "Well, what do you want to do?" And they'll say, "I want to clean." And that's not because they love to clean, because they've already disclosed that they don't like to clean, but it's because they don't even have the opportunity to see what other options are out there. [17:55]

Many of them don't leave their communities; they don't leave their small niches where they feel secure. And our main goal, here, is to help them understand the choices they are making and support them in those choices regardless of what we perceive as the pros and cons. The other piece that is really important here, too, is that when working with youth in transition, it's important to guide them, but not hinder them.

So they say, in the world of people with disabilities and the world of work with people with disabilities, the largest barrier in that person's life is actually the direct service provider who makes and creates judgments about what that person can and cannot do. And I highly recommend giving young people the opportunity to try things and experiment on their own, because you will probably be very surprised by the skill sets they have rather than thinking about all the limitations they can't do. They can never go into a job thinking they can't do this or they can't do that.

You have to really allow them to experience it. I would say we have to allow the youth, in some aspects, to fail since many of us as young adults or adults have failed. That is a very important lesson that we all need to learn how to recover from, and a lot of students with disabilities aren't given that opportunity, based on the people surrounding them who have made judgments for them. [19:33]

So be very conscientious of your own perceptions if you're working with someone with disabilities to make sure that you're not putting undue judgments upon them and making assumptions for them, which is why we really believe informed choice and self-determination is a huge crux of the work that we do. [19:51]

Independent living, including skill development and long-term supportive services, competitive employment, and economic self-sufficiency, even with support, as everyone's life goal. Some of you might be aware of the Employment First initiative that is currently gaining steam here in

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Ohio. That is an initiative that basically assumes that everyone has the capacity to work. LEAP has assumed this for 30 years. Regardless of sometimes what people in our communities think, I would encourage you to start thinking differently about skill sets and things that people can do, and working with employers on a different level.

Many of the students are not going to be able to check all the boxes on maybe a job posting. But working individually with some of those employers, there may be a lot of skills they have that the employer might need, so I encourage you to try to think as creatively as possible when working with students with disabilities. [21:03]

Transition planning – that is individualized and person-driven and culturally and linguistically appropriate – is also another really important aspect of the work that we do. I mentioned that the Guideposts are a lot, and it can be very challenging as you're sitting there probably, thinking how I am, as one person, going to be able to do this to help these young people.

And here is how we do it. We are very lucky to have a wide variety of partners in our community; we have staff integrated in the Cleveland Municipal School District. We currently are in five schools. Currently we work very closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers – they are our number one training sites and hiring sites for many of our students – the City of Cleveland, with the Workforce Investment Act Youth Services, they also have a great Youth Resource Center at our One-Stop, which is very inviting and engaging for the young people. Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission, predominantly BVR, but sometimes BSVI.

A huge component to getting additional services and getting more intensive services for people with disabilities, and remember here, too, this is a bit of a misnomer in that RSC won't take people in transition until they're 18, until they've graduated high school. There has been a push especially in the last year or so to really drop that down to 14, which is the actual age in which BVR and BSVI can engage a student with disabilities. And we highly encourage their participation as early as possible in the process. [22:54]

The Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities – I encourage you all to reach out to your own county board for any students who might have developmental disabilities – and we also work very closely with our United Way Services of Greater Cleveland. Think about your communities at large and think about who you can reach out to and create a team around this person. The more efficient and creative you are in doing this, the higher chance of success you'll have for your students.

Is there a question? [23:27]

ANGIE: What is LEAP's definition of disabilities?

JULIA: We would actually say that you are born with a disability or that you will acquire one at some point in your lifetime, whether it's as you age or because of an accident. We truly serve all disabilities. It could be a learning disability, a physical disability, a cognitive disability, an emotional disability, the person could have mental health issues – a very wide gamut. For our

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services – are required to be – students need to be referred through the county board or the Bureau of Vocational Rehab, which means that we serve the most significantly disabled who have three or more functional limitations, such as communications, ability to work – those types of things – and developmental disabilities. More of the cognitive disabilities. So hopefully, that answers the question a little bit.

For us, you can self-disclose or you can be referred from a separate agency. But we really serve all disabilities which, again, is very, very unique. So here is the design of our program. I'm very quickly going to go through this. We try to serve students either individually or in small groups. We focus on the individual, and we really try hard to build relationships with the family and friends. It's very important that, as the student potentially slips away, that you are engaged with their surrounding network to help keep them on a path for what we would determine as success – being in school, getting a job, all those pieces and parts. [25:27]

All of our students do participate in individual goal planning – and trying to identify what they would like for their future. Building relationships with the community is really, hugely important. Our students are participating in Global Youth Services Day this week, and they'll be doing some community service. The more agencies that we can get them engaged with and giving back to their community as well, the more skills they can gain and the more connections they have.

People with disabilities tend to not have very deep networks, and this is the way you can help them develop a network system. Employment issues – getting and keeping a job – is a huge focus. I always say our students have the hard skills to do the job. A lot of the time, we deal with the soft skill issues – how not to get in an argument with your boss, how to get along with your co-workers, how to arrive on time, what is the appropriate hygiene – these are predominantly the issues that we're dealing with.

We've found that once we get a student to a job, it's not the hard skill that is a challenge. I always joke that it's how not to eat all the doughnuts in the staff room in helping students understand a wide variety of those issues. Then, of course, a huge aspect of what we do is having the work experience. [27:08]

Work experience results in the development of preferences, identification of strengths and limitations, issues surrounding work, family, transportation, community safety and social behavior. One of the really challenging things to teach people with disabilities is the contextual learning of different environments. How do you explain to a student that it's okay to joke with your friends on break at school during lunch, but not okay to joke with them when you may be working next to them. Having them understand the different relationships that we each have in our lives. I'm a different daughter than I am wife, than I am an aunt, which is very different from what I am as a supervisor and a program director.

These are all very highly-nuanced relationships and sometimes the students have a really hard time transferring skills from one environment to another and not treating all environments as equal, which is where the soft-skill training really comes into play. [28:26]

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Development of vocational goals. Again, a lot of times the students don't know what they want to do, and they've never had the experience to know. I always talk about the students who want to work with animals – we get that request all the time – and they go to the animal shelter in their community and they get there and realize it's really loud and pretty stinky and they realize they don't really want to do this. Without ever having that opportunity, they would never know what the environment was like, and half of knowing what you want to do is understanding the type of environment you are most comfortable learning in and growing as a worker. [29:10]

Challenges. Work ethic. Again, I'm going to stress that society has not kept the same expectations for people with disabilities as they do for other people in the community, and this makes a huge challenge when you're going to the workforce because the employer does not care. They have a job they want done and it is our job to best prepare those students for those jobs and teaching them the work ethic is a huge piece of that.

Frequently, our students – there'll be ten minutes left in the shift – will try to leave or go home early because they're done, but yes, your employer is paying you so you need to find something else to do. Sometimes that can be a very challenging concept. [29:59]

Lack of family support and no work role models. One hundred percent of our students are not only presenting with some type of disability, but one hundred percent of them are living in poverty. You have two cultures here that we're trying to get them through and provide the support needed to engage in the typical work community which, whether we recognize or acknowledge it, work has its own unique set of culture that sometimes has very unclear and undefined roles. And because of our students' lack of work experience and lack of family members who have work experience, and lack of family member support, can be a huge issue in trying to gain those skills, because there is no role model at home. [31:03]

Family protectiveness is a big deal. Parents with students with disabilities who are in school tend to shelter their children sometimes and not want them to be out and integrated into the community which creates another whole set of barriers. Again, think of yourselves and how most of you probably had jobs during high school and in college. If that's the route you took, and you realize that those experiences help you shape where you are now and where you want to go. And as a young person, if you've never had any experience with that, or never had any peers who have worked, it can be very challenging to make those decisions. [31:57]

Varied levels of limitation and cognitive disability. We find this to be a very big challenge on a job where an employer would like to tell you how to do a task once and provides minimal support to help you learn that task. We find that a lot of our students need task analysis – which means each step broken down individually and lots of repetition – and that can be a challenge for an employer to accommodate, which is why you should always talk to BVR or the County Board in your area about providing job coaches that can help them transition from a supportive environment in school to the work structure.

We find job coaches to be an invaluable part of our success. Not only do they provide the task analysis step-by-step training for the students, but they also help the employer who may have

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trouble understanding the disabilities or how to communicate with the students with disabilities and the job coach is a huge part of that relationship. [33:10]

Economic and social issues may affect adaptive behaviors. And then, of course, another challenge is administrative funding and program expansion. Again I'm going to stress here the need to collaborate, and I'm not naïve enough to know that collaboration isn't a ton of work and can be very challenging and time-consuming, but when done properly, the students truly do excel when more people are involved. [33:44]

In conclusion, please keep high standards. Set very clear expectations. I always tell the students, I can't care about this more than you do. That's an important piece. They have to be participatory members, and no matter how much you desire them to engage with you, it has to be their choice. And giving those students an understanding of what their choices mean. If you choose to go down Path A, these are the pros and cons. If you go down Path B, these are the pros and cons.

But make sure you are setting those high standards and asking them to achieve and maintain them. I would say, in the work we do, this is the most important piece. Collaboration with other vendors – they say it takes a village and in this case it truly does. As much as you can involve the family and keep them engaged, create the same messaging and have them practice skills at home.

I was at a student home recently and I said “What kind of chores do you do?” “Well, I don't do chores.” So my first thing was to talk to Mom and say “Mom, he needs some chores. He's got to start learning some skills here at home.” So make sure you're engaging those families. [35:08]

Utilize community resources – as you all know, there is a plethora, sometimes too many, of resources out there. Engage them, utilize them, talk to them... network yourself and find out where and how you can help these students. And always treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect and help the person maintain their reputation. What I mean about reputation is don't let them embarrass themselves in a public setting, and try to guide them to be successful.

I did say a bit ago that we have to allow our students to fail. Unfortunately, if a student with disabilities fails in a public setting, it can be very damaging to them, and they will be less likely to engage their community again. So try to do as much prep work as you can as they enter the community. For instance, I had a person who was having an interview yesterday, and I saw him on Monday and I said, “You better make sure to clip your fingernails.” It's those small things that when people meet someone for the first time, that they want to see that those students really do have the skills and understanding of what it takes to be integrated in the community and it's our job to help them do that. [36:35]

ANGIE: I think this is a good stopping point for a minute. We have a couple of questions that are going through. One of the questions is: You mentioned soft skills training. Do you have a specific curriculum that you use there at your agency with these kids?

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JULIA: Yes. We do have a specific soft skills training that we use, and it was, unfortunately, created in-house. We have an Education Coordinator, and we're very spoiled to have her and we pull from a wide variety of resources. But this NCWD Youth Info has a lot of soft skills training courses, as does the Department of Labor. And there is, specifically, one I believe in DOL called "Skills to Pay the Bills." It's a very good soft skills curriculum that is free, easily accessible and would be my recommendation as a place to start. [37:32]

ANGIE: Another question we have is: Can we call a juvenile criminal record a disability?

JULIA: That is a very good question. We would not probably qualify that as a disability on our end. I completely understand where you're coming from – 80 percent of the people incarcerated have a disability, so we are also dealing with that with our transition youth and our adult population. But I would say categorically, according to the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) on the federal level would probably not qualify that as a disability, is my guess ... don't quote me. [38:19]

ANGIE: The last question we have is, they're wondering: Who helps the youth identify their strengths and weaknesses while in the workforce?

JULIA: That usually is done by a Transition Coordinator. I really like the question you ask because it helps my resources page. Mynextmove.org is a really easy online that helps students answer questions about what they like and dislike. We always do that prior to starting a job site. And we use an assessment that identifies skills and the task analysis that I was talking about earlier that breaks down step-by-step. Allows us to evaluate those students while on their jobs, and that is generally done by both the job coach and an employment specialist who are the team that surrounds that student as they transition into work. [39:15]

ANGIE: On your challenges page, they want to know if these are listed in the order of importance?

JULIA: Oh, that's really a good question. As I am looking at it, no, I didn't list them in the order of importance. But I would say that work ethic is the biggest challenge. So, I would say that number 1 is really number 1, but the rest I would say are scrambled.

ANGIE: If there are no other questions, I think that's all for Julia.

JULIA: Thank you everybody. Have a great day. [39:54]

PAUL BOUNDS: Okay. We're going to take few minutes break as we transition to our next presenter. Next up we have Doris Edelman. Some housekeeping, remind us if you have not received copy of today's presentation and we'll email a copy to you as soon as possible. And also for those who have attended all of the Special Population Sessions and are seeking the certification, Sarah Ballard, and even Graig Pellman for that matter, and Angie Martin are keeping track of the attendees and they will provide you with the certification.

Okay, we're all set up and we're ready for Doris. [40:34]

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DORIS EDELMAN: Thanks, Paul. Hi everyone. I'm here today to talk about the challenges faced by young people who are currently in, or have aged out of, foster care during their journey into adulthood. And one of the things that we think about is that our young people who are leaving foster care and taking that big leap to adulthood and they are ready to launch. But for many of our youths this process can feel like free fall for them.

So today I want to explore with you the barriers that impede their success and the resources that can improve their long-term outcome goals. Two things I want to point out about this slide: the Ohio Youth Advisory Board and Foster Care Alumni of America Ohio Chapter are two organizations within our state that provide leadership training and public speaking training for youth in the foster care system. They also receive training to be youth advocates who testify regionally, statewide, and nationally on issues that are related to foster care. [41:50]

Today I'd like to give you a little bit of background about the foster care population, barriers that are faced by them, some examples of best practices, some natural overlap that occurs between Workforce and child welfare, some examples of promising programs, and how we at One-Stops can best serve the needs of our population. Let's look at who we're talking about. [42:22]

In terms of our population, in Independent Living which is the program for foster care teens, they break up the age groups into two categories – very similar to WIA. That is, they focus on the 14- to 18-year-olds for independent living services, and 18- to 21-year-olds for what they call after-care services. Ninety-six percent of Ohio foster care youths who are over the age of 12 are in a custody status called Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (PPLA).

What that means is that, starting at about that age, it becomes the responsibility of the agency serving that youth to help them plan for transition. The State then becomes their legal parent until the age of 18. In the State of Ohio, between 1,000 and 1,300 youths transition out of foster care every year. [43:23]

So one of the things that I think is significant to the foster care population that has to be addressed, particularly by those of you who are working with them, is to look at why children enter foster care. Two of the top reasons that children come into the foster care system are because of abuse and neglect. Child welfare agencies are rated by GFSRs, which is a big term that says how well they provide foster care youth with safety, permanency and well-being. And currently, the federal government is thoughtfully considering what exactly does “well-being” look like and how can it be measured? [44:08]

Two examples of long term effect of abuse and neglect are brain injury and malnutrition. So when we talk about barriers to success and the lack of early employment exposure for this population, we need to look at what is important for foster youth to have. The most important thing is connecting youth with the workplace, followed by exploring their skills and interests relating to jobs.

For many kids, because they move from foster home to foster home – in fact, the average number of moves for youth between their freshman and senior years of high school is five. So

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imagine five different communities and five different schools while trying to get ready to transition into the adult world, and what that would look like, as opposed to living in a stable place for at least your high school career. So that's real important. [45:04]

Hands-on work experience. Most of our youth, particularly those that live in group homes, when we talk about hands-on work experience, because of the rules that are relegated to them, most of them have never cooked, or done their own laundry. Other staff has been doing things for them so even doing simple tasks, are like those things that they never have the experience with until they leave the system. [45:27]

And lastly, that other thing that is important to include, is engagement in the local community. We have programs in our local community that we call Give Back Hours. We think it's important for our young people to engage with the community in giving back with Habitat for Humanity or other organizations.

Again, placement restrictions are barriers to connecting youth with these activities, so if you are working with this population, you need to keep that in mind to find out what they can and cannot do. [45:58]

So I'm looking at barriers for success, and I just want to share some important information regarding even the educational status of most of our youth. Seventy-five percent of foster youth express a desire to attend college, but only 15 percent are enrolled in college prep courses in high school. Less than two percent of former foster youth complete a bachelor's degree, compared with 24 percent of the general population.

You're probably thinking to yourself: Why does this matter? A bachelor's degree today is the equivalent of a high school degree in the 1960s. Two-thirds of all new jobs that will be created in the next 10 years will require post-secondary education. Adults who have only a high school degree are twice as likely to be unemployed as those with a bachelor's degree. And, a typical high school graduate with no additional education will earn over his or her lifetime half as much as a college graduate. So improving these outcomes, and this measure, is critical for our young people. [47:05]

Again, when we look at barriers to success, think about what happens with the natural transition for our young people from systems that they are in from one to the next. There's a disconnect when kids who are in the foster care system enter the adult system. So if they're involved in the Child Mental Health System, there's no transition to Adult Mental Health. Many of the young people who are in the foster care system are on medication. There is lapsed time doing the transition into the adult system because there's no gateway to the Adult Mental Health System for many of our youth.

So for Child Welfare, there is no equivalent in the adult system. Special education, similarly. The one thing that is a natural transition for our youth is the Juvenile Justice System into the Adult Criminal System. There is a gateway for that.

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So it's very important to look at where there are barriers and the disconnect so when you are working with these youth, you can figure out how best to serve them. Certainly, vocational training and lack of housing are critical for this population. [48:29]

So when we look at barriers to success, the first challenge to aging out is lack of what we call "family privilege." Half of the adults in the U.S. aged 18-24 live at home with their parents, according to Children's Rights. Most young adults in the general population rely on their families for assistance, a place to live, financial support, and other guidance as they transition to adulthood.

Meanwhile the 25,000 young people nationwide aging out of foster care each year don't have a parent's basement to live in. They don't have anyone to co-sign for them to rent an apartment, and when they do go to college, they can't call mom and dad if they blow their budget and need help, and they don't have a place to spend college breaks unless the college has taken this need into consideration. Certainly, definitely, if you are working with this population, that has an impact. [49:28]

I included this slide just because I love it. When we look at life's transitions that don't happen overnight, it's a critical part of human development. The current foster care system is designed with the expectation that the transition from adolescence into adulthood can occur overnight. Autonomy plays a critical role in adolescent development. However, the strict rules and regulations placed on foster youth by the State, foster parents, and group home staff, limits the amount of independence a youth actually can experience. [49:59]

We do invest in our children because we want them to grow up to be productive and contributing adults. We see in them the unique things they have to offer the world and we want to prepare them and empower them. Ultimately, if the challenges facing foster youth aren't addressed, it's a cost to society – which is why I included this slide. Without adequate preparation and support, emancipating foster youth are at higher risk for poverty, unemployment, chronic homelessness and incarceration.

Research by the Children's Advocacy Institute demonstrates that early investment leads to foster care youth being three times more likely to be enrolled in college, 65 percent less likely to be arrested, and a 33 percent reduction in unwed pregnancy. [50:57]

This chart breaks down the issue looking at dollars and cents. If you look at it just from that perspective, it makes better economic sense to intervene during their late teens and early 20s at a time when young people have an open mind, a high level of energy and are actively engaged in the process of directing their future lives. According to Mark Courtney of the Chapin Hall Center for Children, every dollar invested in youth in continued foster care support and services results in a return of \$2.40. Unfortunately, some people just don't get that like we do.

Next, I'd like to take you through what is the natural overlap between WIA, Workforce and Child Welfare. When it comes to making connections with workforce and foster care, there are certain risks associated with age, ethnicity and history. Our kids do not have traditional family support. So on this chart, and I did get these through the Department of Labor Statistics, the

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Department of Labor's Youth Employment data was obtained from the Current Population Survey, which is a monthly survey of households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

These numbers provide what they consider to be the most accurate data available for national employment rate of youth. Young adults between ages 16 and 19 have the highest unemployment rate and are identified as being the population that was hit the hardest by the recession and its aftermath. According to the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office has released in an economic update, the percentage of people over age 16 who are working or actively seeking work has slipped fairly steadily for the past few years. After the recession, the national youth employment rate reached its lowest level in 60 years. The recession and lack of job opportunities have left many young people, ages 16-19, disconnected from the workforce. [53:10]

I have included this slide about risk factors associated with ethnicity. You may ask yourself, why is this relevant for foster care? Minority groups are over-represented in foster care systems and under-represented in adoptions. In our state, that continues to be a trend and it's significant. So in meeting the needs of youth in foster care, this has to be a consideration.

Between 20 and 30 percent of former foster youth are not connected to the job market, depending on the state you're in. But here's what we do know in terms of trends which are reflected in this table. [54:03]

So there are two areas that we look at when looking at overlap between Workforce and Child Welfare. Most of you are probably familiar with the Workforce Investment Act, so I won't belabor that. But, for those who are not familiar with John H. Chafee, it is the program that funds independent living and aftercare services for foster youth, and in 2008 began a database measurement outcome system similar to what WIA Youth Services used, called the Youth In Transition Database, or YTD.

WIA Services actually overlap those categories required by NYDA, so I wanted to share with you what the NYDA categories are. The NYDA categories for independent living services include room and board, financial assistance, independent living needs assessment, mentoring, educational financial assistance and other financial assistance. And that's on an as-needed basis, depending on a youth's situation, employment programs and vocational education, supervised independent living, if they are still in the custody of the agency, budget and financial management, housing education and management training, family support and marriage education, health and [INAUDIBLE] [55:31]

[56:01]

ANGIE: The question that we have is: Do you know of any college scholarships available to children who were in foster care or maybe adopted?

DORIS: Actually, that is two slides away, if you can wait on that question. But it's a good question.

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So when we talk about how WIA One-Stops can best serve our population, you can see where the WIA categories overlap, can possibly be. Foster Care Alumni of America every year has an annual program they call “Postcards From the Soul,” and this was done by one of our foster care youth, so I included it because I thought it was relevant. Now, what she’s thinking is that I need to learn more information about lawyers, what to study, thinking about what I’m going to do before I graduate and then, later, have everything I need to be successful. This is truly how our kids think. They want to have the opportunity so that they can be self-sufficient later on. [57:10]

One of the promising practices that we have in our state, which was recently launched by ODJFS, is the Connecting the Dots demonstration project that is going to be held in five pilot locations. The county I live in, Montgomery, is one of those. We’re a multi-county site. Both immediate and long-term funding, as part of the project, will be awarded to those locations and a partner in this effort is Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Central Ohio for mentoring. [57:52]

One of the promising practices that I would like to point out that really helps our foster care population is Cincinnati Works, their Next Step Program. They have a comprehensive program that really targets the foster care population. Youth have to be 18 years of age, out of high school, they have to have been in foster care at any point. Kinship care and adoption are also recognized as allowable, and the juvenile justice system, if they are exiting from that. They provide job mentors as part of this program and hands-on training at the worksite. Our youth really rave about this program, so I wanted to highlight what they’re doing. [58:50]

Back to the person who asked about higher education. One of the resources that I think is important for WIA folks to know about is the Foster Care to Success Program. It is a special pot of money that is administered out of Virginia through the Foster Care to Success program. Every youth who emancipates from the foster care system, or is adopted after age sixteen, is eligible for these funds. It’s a federally-funded program that offers a full-time student up to \$5,000 a year for higher education. It can be a two-year college, a voc-tech program, tech school or a four-year college.

And they can use it for things that a parent would help youth with. Besides tuition, they can use it for help with books, a computer, living expenses or rent. A lot of our students that are in feeder colleges that don’t have dorms; they’re eligible to use that for rent. Another thing I want to say while we’re talking about rent, in the State of Ohio we had special legislation as a result of some of the work done by the youth I talked about earlier who did the advocacy work, the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) fund can be used for rent when kids attend two-year community colleges, but only for emancipated foster youth. It is targeted money to help them be able to survive while they are attending a community college. [1:00:22]

ANGIE: We have a question: Is there any specific amount of time that someone would have to have been in foster care to qualify for the Ohio College Opportunity Grant or the additional resources grant?

DORIS: Yes. For ETV, they have to have emancipated from the foster care system or have been adopted at age 15 to qualify. But Foster Care To Success also has, if you go to their website, they have funds for youth who may have been in foster care and then with the kinship care or

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may have been adopted. Actually, they have better scholarships on their website for that population, up to \$10,000 per year. So there are other sites that you can look to for that.

The Dave Thomas Foundation also has a website that lists scholarships available for youth who have been adopted or who may have blown out of adoption. We have a lot of youth who come back for assistance, were adopted, but return to the foster care system. But they are still eligible for some of those funds. The \$5,000 is if they are going full-time. If they're going part-time to college, they're still eligible for up to \$2,500 per year.

ANGIE: Can you also qualify for other sources of funding like grants along with these scholarships? [1:01:58]

DORIS: Yes. That's a good question. All foster youth are considered independent students so the great thing is that when they fill out the FAFSA form, they can skip about 20 pages in the middle of that form because they are independent students. There's a box that you check about page 12 of the FAFSA application that asks if you were in foster care. And when they do that, it skips all of those pages because they have no financial support, they do not have family support, they were a ward of the State, so they are considered independent students.

Another new thing that changed in the law regarding FAFSA is if a youth was in foster care from age 12 to say, age 14, but then went back home, they still can qualify as an independent student. So if they had been in foster care at age 12 and went home, or to a relative, or were adopted as a teen, they can still qualify as an independent student according to FAFSA. They're still eligible for PELL Grants, or OCOG, or for any other college specific grants to help them pursue higher education. I hope that addressed the question.

VOICE: Yeah, I think so.

ANGIE: So the kids that were adopted before the age of 15, they would not be eligible for ETV?

DORIS: They would not be eligible for this particular grant, but if you go to their website, they do have other things those youths would be eligible for.

ANGIE: Okay. And someone also commented that normally the grants are focused toward tuition and books and not rent. [1:03:55]

DORIS: That's correct. But, on the inventory that the youth fills out on the application, if they want part of their money to go towards rent, there is a place on the form where they are asked to list their address, and the landlord and the landlord's address, and what the cost is for rent. If that is the biggest need for the youth – there's a section where they fill out their bio at the very end of the application – they can say that their biggest expense is going to be how do they live and this is where I really need the help. They have a person that works at Foster Care to Success that they can interface with and speak with if that's their biggest need for the funds to go to. [1:04:49]

ANGIE: And that can all be found on this website?

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DORIS: Yes. And when you pull up that website, it will show a map of the United States. You click on the State of Ohio, and then that will give you a direct link for the State of Ohio.

ANGIE: Thank you.

PAUL: We're going to take a brief break while we switch presenters and thank Doris for a wonderful job. Thank you for all that great information. We're getting ready for Kim Humphrey, who has some wonderful things to talk about for at-risk youth.

KIM HUMPHREY: Good afternoon everyone. I'm going to just jump right in and skip the intro since Paul already did that. Thank you Paul.

“At-risk” implies that youth are living an unhealthy or dangerous lifestyle that can lead them down the path to self-destruction. This can occur in many different facets and phases of a kid's life: whether it's home life, school life, sexual relationships, alcohol or drug abuse, gang involvement, violence, whatever.

Today I'm going to talk about those kids who are not necessarily at-risk but who are already in risk. Yes, they're at-risk to reoffend, but these kids have already chosen that path, they're already going down that road. So our youth are really trying, or need, to decide which path to choose next. So hopefully you'll take away some helpful hints on how to serve DYS youth from a reentry perspective. Let me start with the definition of “reentry.” The National Reentry Resource Center defines “reentry” – which, by the way, is a philosophy and not a program – as the process of transitioning from placement or incarceration in a juvenile or criminal justice facility to the community.

Successful reentry begins at the point of commitment with the goal of helping these individuals to become law abiding, productive citizens. So the sooner that the youth's community can involve them in local resources, the better. We just cannot be afraid to invest in our kids. The initial premise under which the juvenile justice system was established in the late 1800s – in Chicago by the way – was the belief that our youth can be rehabilitated and that they should not be punished for bad behavior and should not be banished for life. [1:07:21]

The premise for second chances is avoiding the stigma of being branded criminal, because it inhibits rehabilitation. When people hear youth services, they immediately think that we're talking about very young people, like ages 10-16. But although the agency has the authority to incarcerate youth as young as 10, we can keep them up to their 21st birthday. So with the work that you do, you can help our youth in many ways. So today I'm going to share with you some of those helpful hints on how to serve DYS youth pre- and post-release and in preparation for their successful return home.

So first, I'm going to discuss a brief understanding of the type of youth we're dealing with, the ways we assess their needs and what we are doing to address those needs. These are the service needs areas, and much like adult offenders or any persons for that matter, our youths have needs that, without proper nourishment, could lead them down the road to destruction, which could be

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very traumatic to them. Coming into the juvenile justice system, a risk needs assessment helps identify both high risks and needs areas that must be addressed if a youth is to make a successful return home. The following service needs areas are typical for our multi-need review. [1:08:37]

We'll start with education. Believe it or not, some of the home schools will not accept youth back into their programs, and some of the youth age out of traditional schools and pursue alternative school options. And yes, we have a lot of youth who refuse to settle for a GED, and more importantly, contrary to popular belief, our kids really do desire a college degree.

When it comes to employment, while a career tech is a viable option for some of our youth, having a job that pays "real money" – which is how they put it – is much more important and necessary than simply training for a job. Apprenticeships are very nice, but they take a long time to complete. Our youth are very picky and impatient – very similar to the attitudes of younger people who are not in our system. They don't really want to work at McDonald's, despite seeing the bigger picture of owning their own franchise one day. We'll see later what the Youth Reentry Survey reveals regarding their education and career interests. [1:09:35]

Regarding family engagement, although some of our youth express discontentment with the thought of their family seeing them locked up, when they do visit they are so overjoyed. You'd be surprised at how many youth will straighten up under the threat of calling their mothers or even their grandmothers.

In terms of mentoring, research shows that a mentor who is meaningfully engaged in a youth's life for at least 12 months can impact positive change so much that re-involvement in the system is less likely.

Substance abuse. The preferred drug is, you probably guessed it, marijuana. Some admit they function better with it. Do we actually think we'll ever get them to stop smoking it? Some say yes; others are doubtful.

You look at mental health. There are many mental health diagnoses, from mild to severe. Something as simple as low level emotional behavioral conduct disorder can significantly affect the way a youth responds. [1:10:27]

In terms of housing, do we want a youth, who is on the road to recovery, to go right back to the environment where he got into trouble in the first time? Our young adults want their own places – they want to live independently.

For health and other benefits – having a Medicaid card, accessing medical services, having their prescriptions filled, getting transportation and having a personal identification card, getting food, clothing, etc. – are all just as important as any other of these needs areas. So the more these service needs areas a program can address without making the youth feel overwhelmed, the better off that youth can be. So do any of these service areas interest you is what I'd really like you to think about. [1:11:13]

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So let's look at the numbers. Many believe that our only major concerns are the adult offenders so our community efforts should be focused on that population, especially since the number of adult offenders is much higher. Albeit true that there are more adult offenders than juvenile offenders, it does not, and should not, diminish the importance of spending resources like time, money and energy on our young men and women.

Just to put things into perspective, let's take a look at what the numbers tell us about adjudicated youth in Ohio. So here the numbers on the left are for FY 2012, which began July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012: 5,074 youths were adjudicated in Ohio and 524 of those youth were committed to DYS. We have a ten percent commitment rate. So that means that ninety percent of the youth who were diverted from DYS are served in the community. These youth who have just committed crimes are still in their communities, and that's okay because low risk offenders should not come to DYS. But neither should they be ignored at home. [1:12:17]

Ninety-nine youth were returned on revocation. Revocations mean that the youth are out on parole and for whatever reason, they can not cut it on the outside, so they continue to exhibit the same or similar violating behaviors that warrant a brief return to the institution. We need our communities to step up more if you're going to impact their lives.

So you look at 800 youth released from DYS facilities and most of the youth coming to DYS were ages 17 and 16. Look at, as of March 26 of this year, we have 522 youth in DYS and in our private facilities. We have four DYS facilities and two private facilities across the state and there were 494 youth on parole. Our average age in the facilities is almost 18 and when they're on parole, they're over 18 by a few months. [1:13:07]

When we think about the length of stay in the facility or on parole, it's almost a year – 11.8 months. And 62 percent of the youth on parole are over age 18. Look at the per diem: \$466.50 per day. So basically this tells us that we're looking at kids who are in an institution for about a year. Not many kids in our institutions, because, mind you, four or five years ago, our population was upward of 2,000.

So, they're there for a year and then they're going to come out and stay in the communities under supervision for a year, and they're not kids. These are not babies. These are young adults that are all in this gap from transitioning from youth to adult services. And, quite honestly, I'm sure we can actually function in the communities with some proper programs at a much lower per diem than what DYS has today. So the real question is, are our communities ready to serve these youth when they are released?

So let's take a look at the Youth Needs Profile. To get an idea of the In Risk Youth in DYS, the community providers need to prepare for. Here is a snapshot of the typical youth profile. Now again, this is according to our March Statistic Report. [1:14:26]

Since reentry starts at intake, community providers would reach the youth better if they begin services pre-release. So, let's look at the first two bullets: Most of our kids are African American; and most of them are young men. Also, they come from Cuyahoga and Franklin counties – probably not a surprise to you – and 42 percent of them have a family member

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incarcerated. You look at those stats and you see that 85 percent have substance abuse issues. Substance abuse is looked at from an education, abuse, and dependency perspective.

We use an instrument that some of you may have heard about, and the 69 percent in that report says that our youth have a severe problem with drugs. Eighty-one percent of our youth say that they have experimented with drugs, they're addicted to drugs and anywhere in between. And 29 percent have had a substance-abuse related arrest. Fifty-eight percent have not been in alcohol or drug treatment, though over half of these youth have been referred to intensive outpatient treatment. Our community providers will need to understand the dynamics of the kids' needs, but not let that discourage them from helping our youth.

Fifty-four percent of our youth are on mental health caseloads – that's huge because there is no state institution in Ohio for mentally ill youth. Guess where they're coming? DYS, so that makes their risk go much higher. And I know this is not a surprise to some of you, but 92 percent of our female population is on the mental health caseload. [1:16:02]

Our average reading level is sixth grade, and 53 percent of our kids are in special ed. Let's look at the Post-Release Bullets:

Almost all of our youth are returning to their home communities. Paid placements outside the home are made for roughly 15 percent of the youth released. A significant proportion of them are having a difficult time getting into their home school, and youth are also returning to the rural areas where there are limited resources. When thinking about re-entry, I know a lot of folks want to hit the urban area, but they tend to get more services and more programs than the youth who are returning to the rural communities.

Let me touch real quick on education, too, and then I wanted to share this with you guys. When we look at FY 2012, education-wise, we have 102 GEDs awarded, and we also have 56 high school diplomas and 173 career tech certificates. Our kids are really learning. They want to learn and want to make positive changes in their lives. [1:17:16]

Because research says that brain development, impulsivity, and judgment are immature until one reaches their early 20s, these factors must be taken into consideration when working with our at-risk or in-risk population. Although chronologically they are young adults when they return to the streets, developmentally they are not. This is true for any youth, but if you add to that the traumatic experience derived from any one of the multi-needs areas and their criminal choices, you are now working with those very needy, high-risk youth. [1:17:47]

So, going back to some of the placements of the post-release. DYS pays for placements for treatment, independent living, and for group homes because the youth either need treatment for substance abuse or mental health or sexual offender behavior, or the youth has the victim in their home and they can't go back there. If he is a sex offender, he cannot live in a home that is near a school.

Looking at another bullet, number 5, in cultural leads, 57 percent obtained a job, either full- or part-time at some point during the year and a 48 percent recidivism rate over a three-year period

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– half of these are going back to the adult system. Although half of our paroled population found a job during the calendar year last year, the issues are not only finding jobs for our youth, but helping our youth retain employment. So please, if you're interested in doing job skills training for these kids, don't just stop there.

These kids are getting so much treatment inside our facilities and when they come out, they feel they are being treatment-placed to death. Can I get a job? Can you place me into some type of employment? And even if you start to pursue grant-funded programs, you'll find in the solicitation, and while job skills training is great and is much needed, you need to have a job placement component, so please keep that in mind.

Having heard the youth profile and the type of needs our youth have, I'm sure by now you can guess what communities can do to help reduce the recidivism rate of our juvenile delinquents. [1:19:21]

These next two slides will show you two ways we assess the needs of our youth to ensure we are targeting the right needs with the most appropriate services for intervention. I'm not an expert on the Ohio Youth Assessment System, but I do look at the trends periodically. It was developed by UC and this criminogenic risks and needs based assessment, which is a combination of factors that can and cannot change.

For youth in the juvenile justice system, there are five tools and we use them at different levels. The reentry instrument is a reassessment tool used after a youth has progressed in a program after usually about six months in a residential program. And what it will do, it will take a look at the overall risk level. So these scores in the level help our parole officers create community plans for the youth. So this graph illustrates the risk score for DYS youth for the past four years using the reentry instrument.

There are seven domains and the graph shows the percentage of youth scores within that domain for each risk level. So, making a very broad and simplistic analysis, one would assume that the offenders with the lower risk to reoffend have the highest domain issue than the high risk youth we are expected to see in our system. When we look at the highest score for each domain, the risk levels vary.

For example, the results reveals that in the education and employment domain, most of the DYS youth scored in the low risk level when compared to the other risk levels in the same domain. The same is true with the values, beliefs and attitudes, which is that light purple color and substance abuse, mental health and personality, which is the orange color, and the peer and social support, which is that dark purple. [1:21:10]

In the moderate risk level is the family and living arrangement in red, and the juvenile justice history in green – they scored the highest in any other risk level. And in the high risk level, the pro-social skills domain, the lighter blue, was higher than any other risk level. This tells us a lot of what our youth need. When you look at the high risk level, about 41 percent of the youth scored as a high risk in the pro-social skills.

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Research tells us that low risk youth learn anti-social behaviors from high-risk youth. When problem solving skills, and learning to make better decisions and avoiding high risk situations is big. Keeping them busy with positive things like college, work, and friends and supportive services can help this. But as you see, other youths have greater needs in other areas. So, simply targeting pro-social skills should not be the primary focus for all youth. [1:22:01]

Let's take another: the moderate risks. One may deduce that those youths have more issues with home life. There is a need to improve familial relationships, like learning to follow rules, how to apply consequences, or to improve the perceived importance of the family. Mentors, independent living, family intervention training, or even parenting programs can help in this area. And, of course, a job with sustainable income will always help. Education and employment domain focuses more on education factors.

Notice how low the domain score is within the high risk level. This is not as much of a problem here as it is with those youth in low risk. It would be interesting to compare these scores with the other (inaudible 1:22:39) tools such as the ones completed at the time of entry. Because DYS youth are getting education and career tech inside the facility, they are prime for employment placement in the community. We have to be careful isolating these domains.

The best way to impact change in recidivism is to focus on treatment effects. Correctional research by Dalvin and Andrews says that if we target 50 percent or more of the criminogenic needs, we will likely reduce recidivism at a higher rate than if we target less than 50 percent of the criminogenic needs, which will increase recidivism. You can help our youth by ensuring there is an appropriate amount of services in our local areas to meet these needs. [1:23:28]

Another way that we assess the reentry needs is simply by asking the kids what they need and what they want. We surveyed one hundred kids last year, and most of the respondents were African American males who have been in DYS for over a year. And they came to DYS because, as they report, they were hanging with the wrong people or they didn't have a job or money.

So while DYS does offer some good certification programs like Administrative Office Technology and Microsoft, or vocation programs like automotive and horticulture, most of the respondents reported that they had yet to complete a certification program. We have found that many certification programs are too long and the youth are either out of DYS before completion or have transferred to another facility -- usually due to behavior or treatment reasons -- where that program is not offered. So our response has been to break programs up into attainable modules. For example, like a ten-week specific skill development in a specific field. [1:24:25]

Nearly all of them want to return to school of some kind, and 41 percent of them want to go to college. The survey confirms that youth like to work with their hands in the service industry like construction or automotive, so long as they could "make a lot of money." Realistically, a lot of them expect to make about \$15 per hour in their first job. It may not happen, but that's how they think.

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The percentages are close where the youth indicate that they prefer a professional career such as becoming a lawyer or an engineer or even owning their own business. They have very realistic views of what it will cost them to live in an apartment and want to get their own place so that they recognize that having a job is essential. A majority of our youth report a meaningful relationship with their families, and guess who the closest family member is? You probably guessed it: Mom.

But half report that they have family members incarcerated, so family engagement activities with Mom involved are critical to reentry. Very few of them have a mentor, but most believe that having one is important. Over 80 percent of them want a mentor. The respondents report things they can do with a mentor but most of the responses are just to have someone to talk to or someone to help them with their career goals like finding a job. [1:25:44]

While most of the youth want to live with their parents upon release, a good portion of them want their own place. To release a youth to his own apartment is possible from DYS, but it must be approved by the parole officer. And while many report they have used drugs in the past, mostly marijuana, as I mentioned before, half admit to not using at the time of the offense and that it is unlikely that they have a drug problem. So, when asked what other support services they think they will need, most reply job skills training, placement into a job, and independent living skills. This even applies to those who have been told that they have a mental health issue. [1:26:23]

So what has DYS done to respond to these needs? Here are some of the things we are doing: targeted reclaimed dollars funds evidence-based intervention in communities where juvenile courts have committed the most youth to the department; participating courts commit to maintain or reduce DYS admissions. So this initiative has increased from six to fourteen counties. Along with behavioral health and juvenile justice efforts, targeted reclaim has contributed to a reduction in admissions by participating counties of 27.5 percent in the last fiscal year.

So, by placing the right youth in the right environment, and not mixing lower-level offenders with high-end offenders who are better served in one of the DYS facilities, the youth remain close to families and receive a good chance of turning their lives around. We welcome volunteers from all walks of life, including those who were once incarcerated themselves.

We have a very strong presence in the faith-based communities, who find many different ways to give back to our youth. Our passionate volunteers have clocked over 37,000 volunteer hours to DYS, and we still welcome more volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering with DYS, we would love to entertain that thought.

Research shows that family engagement with incarcerated youth helps to reduce incidents inside, it eases transition to the community, and it helps reduce recidivism. DYS offers a three-prong approach to family engagement: We have a family finding model that utilizes steps to locate extended family members and engages them in the reentry planning process. The model also uses an online search engine, case record reviews and interviews. We offer family intervention to teach the family how to interact with the youth, who were already used to seeing similar

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practices when working with their parole officer. Family transportation, a project called “Close to Home,” and it offers free bus transportation services for our families (inaudible 1:28:24).

We also have a really cool project (inaudible 1:28:38) to patch into the facilities at any location so that families can connect with their youth during their stay. In 2012, 850 video communication sessions took place. DYS launched an official mentoring program as well, too, so we’re trying to serve about 200 (inaudible 1:29:13) and we use three local partners to recruit, train, match, and monitor the mentors. [1:29:24]

In the first year we had about 105 kids served, and we currently have about 101 that are active. A quarter of those are employed, and we have a 97 percent success rate as none of those 97 percent have recidivated. So, we are really happy about the mentoring program that is going on in five counties. We’re serving those in Hamilton, Montgomery, Franklin, Summit and Cuyahoga, and we’re planning to expand to more rural counties.

In an effort to do that, we have what we call the “POPO Program.” In that, we are actually pursuing the help of law enforcement officials to become mentors to our kids. I know that sounds really different, but when you think about it, who’s the first contact these kids have when they come into our system? The police, so what better way to improve community relationships with our police officers? [1:30:30]

Here are some other programs in play. Of course we do drug counseling, drug education and mental health services for those kids who need. Those are offered by licensed clinicians, but if you know of anyone interested in volunteering regarding substance abuse and mental health, we’d love to have them. The State of Ohio also has a multi-state agency initiative charged with reducing homelessness in Ohio, and there are three active committees that are out there.

One is on data sharing, the other is the investor’s collaboration, and we have a discharge planning subcommittee. So we still face housing challenges for offenders with severe mental illness, sex offending behavior, and arson. No one wants to give them a place to live, but the reality is they need a place to live, and we can’t continue to turn our backs on these kids. So we need to find a way to increase the resources for those particular needs. (Inaudible 1:31:11).

We have assisted youths in obtaining state IDs – we have a Youthful Offender Release Identification Card that they can take to the BMV and they will exchange it for a State ID. Parole officers are benefit (inaudible 1:31:32) officers, so they can assist the youth in enrolling for welfare benefits. And we also work hard to get their Medicaid reinstated shortly after they’re released.

Lastly, we do discharge planning, so we have an agreement between the youth, the youth’s family, and his significant other with a plan that can be implemented by the youth once we cut the ties. This document serves as a final checklist to ensure that they have been connected to long-term services. And it also includes a resource list of significant support for the youth once they’re off of parole.

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I guess most of the listeners out there are from the workforce development sector of Ohio, either by way of profession or by personal interest. Here is some interesting information for you. DYS received a Federal Second Chance Act Grant last year for Franklin County. And this is where youth were offered college courses through Ashland University, and jobs skills development through **Hinkles and McCoy** in Career Technology.

We also have vocational programs through our Buckeye United School District, which is the school system at DYS. We have several youth who participated in the You The Build program, which is designed to assist low income youth in obtaining a GED or in the job skills field by building affordable housing in the community.

If you haven't heard, Gov. Kasich signed the Collateral Sanctions Law, which basically helps youths and adults receive a fresh start upon reentry to the community. It promotes and ensures confidentiality of the juvenile records, it allows judges discretion to seal juvenile records when appropriate, and it develops the juvenile portion of the Civil Impact of Criminal Convictions Database, which distinguishes adult convictions and juvenile adjudications. They're still working on the juvenile adjudication (inaudible 1:33:28).

So while they're nearing the completion of the Juvenile Adjudication Portion, you can access the database as you assist our youth in employment seeking and placement, and you can also help educate employers about this law. And there are two benefits to hiring ex-offenders: Through JFS they've got the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Range, which you probably already know about, and they also have the Fidelity Bonding, which is a business insurance for loss of money or property, which is administered by the Adult Corrections System. [1:34:01]

So what is still needed? If you look at pre-release and post-release sides, just to look at a couple of these bullets: consistency of our community providers; engagement. If you want to help, help early, and stay involved. Work with our families to help prepare them for their return. Help us match their skills to the job vacancies, and also help with job interviewing. Support the local schools, because, as I said earlier, it's difficult to get them back into their local schools. So the more the school officials see these kids have support systems wrapped around them, they're more likely to receive them back into the school system. And, of course, we always need more mentors.

Post-Release, again continue. If you start with them, continue with them. If you can place them into jobs and provide them with a job coach, that's even better. If you can help enroll them in higher education or vocational programs with paid stipends – love it. If you become a mentor, stay a mentor. Mentor retention is really difficult. It's already hard to find mentors, but to keep them engaged with this population is even harder. Kids need transportation and they need affordable, permanent housing. [1:35:15]

Just to give you a list of data sources of my information: it's a website, www.dys.ohio.gov. You can find most of these reports, and here is my contact information. Do we have any questions from the field?

ANGIE: Yes. The first one is: Instilling a work ethic in these children, is that difficult?

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KIM: You know, I think it is difficult for our youth period. I mean, as a mom, this generation is just so different. I like to think that now it really isn't, surprisingly, because in our system, you'll hear kids talk about, I want to make money, I want to do something, as opposed to just hanging out and not doing anything. We know that idle time is the devil's workshop, so we keep them really, really busy and we do try to focus on work ethic. The numbers support that in the field because we have a lot of kids who are working part-time, so they get it; they just don't get how to keep it.

They realize they need to get a job, and they can get jobs, they just don't know how to keep them. They don't know yet that you don't cuss out your boss, or you don't come to work 20, 40, 60 minutes late. We do focus on work ethic, but I do think that overall these kids do get it for the most part. I just think they may be a little lazy.

ANGIE: The next question is: Are there any careers that are just completely off limits to children or kids who have been in the juvenile justice system?

KIM: Completely off limits, I will say that kids with drug-related charges have a more difficult time, but it's not impossible. Because, with the premise of forgiving our kids and giving them a second chance, we're really not seeing that that's going to stop them from becoming productive members of the community. I will say, though, and I'm glad for the new law that, when employers run background checks, it's very difficult because they'll see that these kids have had a charge and they'll think they've been convicted of it or have been adjudicated, but some employers are like, I don't care, you still did the act.

That part is a bit difficult, but with the new law, we're hoping to change a lot of that, we're hoping to see that employers are open to hiring our kids. So I'm really hoping that they're in the forgiveness mode, but I can't think of any particular field of employment that is absolutely off limits to our kids, other than if they are trying to become a doctor or nurse who works with drugs, with a drug-related offense, that may be a little difficult. [1:38:09]

ANGIE: Is there a list that shows volunteer programs that are available in the different counties throughout the state?

KIM: I don't know of a list of volunteer opportunities, I can only speak for what's available in DYS. I can't give you a list of everything that's available at DYS, but if you call me, I can share with you what the volunteer opportunities are inside. Outside, my suggestion is to go through the Local Reentry Task Force. I have yet to see a list from those task forces, but connecting you with those individuals who can share with you what you can do if you want to work with kids when they come back into the community. Volunteers, call me. I can run off a list of things we do, I just don't have something in a hard document.

ANGIE: Does each county have a task force and is there something listed on your website where they can get connected with that person?

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KIM: Not each county. We do have some multi-county jurisdictions. Right now there are eight task forces across the State, some are single county, and some are multi-counties. You can find them on the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry website. Even though there is not a reentry task force in every county, and we're trying to change that, our goal is to make sure that every kid in a county has access. We at least want to make reentry access available to kids in every county. I'm sorry we don't have one in every single county. [1:39:58]

ANGIE: What is the recidivism rate for youth who complete a vocational program? I don't think that's really a recidivism rate...

KIM: We don't break it out by a kid's success. Like I said, we're at a 47 or 48 percent recidivism rate after 3 years, but I can't divide that by programming. I can't say kids who were involved in vocational rehabilitation program had this recidivism rate vs. kids who successfully completed (inaudible 1:40:26). It's not broken down like that, and I don't think we even keep that statistically. I'm not saying we couldn't do it, I just don't know if we actually track it like that, so I'm not sure what the recidivism rate would be for that. I'd like to think it would be extremely low.

ANGIE: The last question we have is: Would a sex-related offense prevent those kids from getting jobs around children?

KIM: Yes. Unfortunately, but it is really up to the employer. It's not our rule. We don't say, you're a sex offender, so we're not going to find you a job. No. It's just that society puts those types of barriers on kids, or any offender for that matter, and from a protection perspective, we want to make sure that our sexual offenders don't have access to kids. Our law says you can't even live near a school, so our goal is to make sure we keep the public safe, so we are not allowing those kids to live in a home where there is a victim. But in terms of work, it really is the employer's decision.

With the new law, though, they're not going to know – they're going to know about the murders and axe murderers – but they're not getting a lot of detail, and unless the employer asks for a criminal background check, they're not going to know. So, it really depends how thorough the employer is and how much they're willing to work with it.

But the bottom line is, regardless of the charge, they're coming back to your community, they're playing with your kids, they're eventually going to date your kids, they're not going to be on parole forever. They're going to be living in your neighborhoods, so if we can help them now, maybe we can reduce the likelihood of them reoffending. We do try our best to protect the victims from any additional sexual offending behavior. [1:42:25]

ANGIE: I think that's it.

KIM: Okay. You guys, come on. We need volunteers, we need jobs and we need help with our kids. Thank you very much.

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SARAH: Thank you Kim Humphrey for your presentation. This is the fourth out of five Special Population Webinars. The final webinar will probably be the last week in May. As a lot of you know, if you attend all five webinars, we give you a Certificate of Completion. We do have links to old webinars available, if you would like those so you can still view those and you can e-mail me at WIAQNA to find out about that. So, thanks for attending this webinar. Good Bye.