Youth Diversion Programs Day 2

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Intros

Share out:
- Name
- Pronoun
- Organization
- Your role in YHDP

Icebreaker Question:
- What was your first job? (Put it in the chat!)
Agenda

- Goals of Diversion
- Local Process
- Diversion Techniques
- How to have a Diversion Conversation
- Hiring the Right Staff
- Next Steps
- Q&A
DIVERTS youth from homeless system by immediately addressing their needs
Helps youth problem solve their situation BEFORE they spend the night at a shelter, motel or on the street.
Typically happens at the "front door" of homeless services system (e.g., Coordinated Entry access point, shelter, street outreach, school, etc.)
Staff use problem-solving techniques to identify an immediate housing arrangement that is a safe alternative to shelter or sleeping outside.

GOAL: find the youth a short or long-term safe housing option.
Local Diversion Process
1. Explain the Housing System and the Diversion Process
2. Listen to their story
3. Ask questions and create a “support map”
4. Walk through creative solutions
What might that look like?
Staff should immediately engage youth in a diversion intervention/conversation and examine the youth’s pre-existing relationships (or “natural supports”) to identify a potential place to sleep.

- A negotiated return to their previous housing
- Short-term, non-shelter accommodation
- Apartments or homes (including shared housing)
- Returns to family
When?
Should be the FIRST strategy used to prevent youth from entering the emergency shelter or continuing to sleep on the street.

DIVERSION SHOULD NOT BE BARRIER TO SHELTER.

Where?
- Diversion techniques can be used anywhere! Often used at the front door of the homeless services system: Emergency Shelter, 2-1-1, churches, hospitals, drop-in centers, encampments, etc.
After natural supports are identified.....

1. Assess youth preferences
2. Reach out to preferred natural supports
3. Screen for safety concerns
4. Help to negotiate the terms under which the individual might provide the youth with a place to stay.
Diversion Techniques

Problem-Solving

Motivational Interviewing

OARS

Harm Reduction

AND MORE!
Skill of having a conversation with the youth to explore creative, flexible, safe and cost-effective solutions to quickly resolving their homeless crisis, even just temporarily with limited or no financial support.

After identifying the housing, staff then works with the youth to take the necessary steps to make this housing option a reality.

Technique should be integrated throughout the homeless services system

Problem-solving can potentially work for ANYONE and may require more than one conversation.

Motivational Interviewing

**R**esist telling them what to do:
Avoid telling, directing, or convincing your friend about the right path to good health.

**U**nderstand their motivation:
Seek to understand their values, needs, abilities, motivations and potential barriers to changing behaviors.

**L**isten with empathy:
Seek to understand their values, needs, abilities, motivations and potential barriers to changing behaviors.

**E**mpower them:
Work with your friends to set achievable goals and to identify techniques to overcome barriers.
OARS

O: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
» Establish a safe environment, explore/clarify and gain an understanding of the youth’s world.
» Learn about the youth’s experience, thoughts, beliefs and hopes for the future
» What brings you in today? Where do you get the support, you need? Do you have someone to talk to that you trust?

A: AFFIRMING
» Build rapport, demonstrate empathy and affirm the youth’s strengths and abilities
» "It’s great that you are here today. It’s not always easy”
» "You’re really trying hard to…”
» “It seems that you are really good at…”
R: REFLECTIVE LISTENING
» Listen to the youth to gain a deeper understanding of their life
» Reflect on the words that they use - You say that you don’t like sleeping in the tent.
» Reflect on behavior and feelings – You have tears in your eyes, and you sound sad.
» “You seem [to be feeling]"

S: SUMMARIZING
» Help move the conversation from the beginning, through the middle, to closing
» Check that you understand the youth’s goals and preferences
» ”So, let’s go over what we talked about so far”
» ”A minute ago, you said you wanted to talk to your mom…..would you like to talk more about how you might try?”
Harm Reduction

The goal of harm reduction is to minimize harm **not** stop the behavior. When something comes up that is interfering with someone’s success, use DARN and CAT to further the conversation to focus on harm reduction.

**D.A.R.N.** – Red flags the person is thinking about change

» Desire to change “I want… I wish”
» Ability to change “I can… I could”
» Reasons to change “If that… then this”
» Need for change “I have to… I need this”

**C.A.T.** – Red flags the person is taking action to change

» Commitment “I will… I promised myself”
» Activation “I’m willing to… I’m ready to”
» Taking Steps “I did”
What are some examples of environments that made you feel comfortable connecting with people?

What are qualities about a person that help you connect with them?

What should you NOT do as a staff person?
Diversion Techniques – More tips

• Youth are not scores and yes/no questions!
• Should be a natural conversation, REALLY informal
• Be patient!

REMEMBER: this is not just another system! Avoid placing youth in silos, want it to flow from access point to housing.
What does a diversion conversation look like?
Let’s PRACTICE!
**Scenario:** You are an outreach worker who has received a phone call from a local church that said they have a youth who showed up at their meals program who said they have been sleeping in their car. They asked for you to come by to talk to the youth who would be back the following day. The next day, you head over to meet the youth, with the goal to:

- Determine natural supports
- Assess youth preferences
- Screen for safety
- Help to negotiate when they could return to housing
Hiring the Right Staff: What skills and characteristics are needed?

- Curious
- Hiring staff that look like our youth
- Broad understanding of what resources are available
- Warm, caring personality
What staff needs to provide diversion

- Staff should have the training in skills like mediation, problem solving, OARS, conflict resolution, motivational interviewing, harm reduction
- Access to flexible financial resources – rent arrears, transportation, utilities, deposits
- Strong understanding of community resources available
- Ability to refer youth to services, as needed
- Staffing models: case management ratio (25:1); flexible
Q&A