



Help Prevent Kids with Mental Health Needs from Falling through the Cracks

Support SB 959

An Act Concerning the Transition of Youth from the Department of Children and Families to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

- This bill prevents transitioning youth and young adults with mental health needs from falling through the cracks by requiring both Departments to agree that all of the elements of the youth's transition plan that directly relate to a safe and therapeutic transition have been successfully completed before DCF can terminate their services.
- From 1998 to 2007, the referrals from DCF to DMHAS rose nearly 4500%.ⁱ DMHAS estimates that young adults account for 35% of their incoming clients with at least 250 referrals from DCF on an annual basis.
- Most youth transitioning from DCF to DMHAS have long histories of abuse and neglect, trauma, complex mental health needs, and multiple placements.
- If they are not engaged in age-appropriate services, they are more likely to drop out of school, become homeless and unemployed, abuse drugs, attempt or contemplate suicide, and engage in criminal activity.
- Youth transferred to DMHAS with successful transition plans are more likely to make positive adjustments, require fewer services, and be stable and productive.
- Furthermore, addressing the needs of these children and youth will avoid the more complex needs of a growing population of young adults who are failed by the DCF system.
- **SB 959 is about preventing harm and the costs associated with it.**
- The bill does not require additional funding in the budget – **it will simply require more focus on the process and avoid disruptions or termination of services at critical points in the transitioning process.**ⁱⁱ
- Better preparing a young adult for transitioning will reduce the frequency of use of other expensive systems, including publicly funded health care, such as inpatient hospitalization.

For further information, please contact Jan Van Tassel at CT Legal Rights Project at 860-262-5042 or Alicia Woodsby at NAMI-CT at 800-215-3021.

ⁱ This does not include the new young adult cases accepted directly by the adult system.

ⁱⁱ Please see the Fiscal Note from the Nonpartisan Office of Fiscal Analysis at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2011/FN/2011SB-00959-R000446-FN.htm>