

SUMMARY OF EMERGING ADULT INVOLVEMENT AND PANEL

In order to infuse the youth voice and perspective throughout the Transitions RTC State of the Science Conference, young adults with lived experience of a serious mental health condition employed at the Transitions RTC were involved in the planning and implementation of all aspects of the State of the Science Conference. In addition, all three topic papers (employment, education and policy) featured a young adult co-author with lived experience, and each response panel had at least one young adult member.

The State of the Science conference also featured a panel of young adults from the Washington DC Metro area. The young adult panelists candidly shared their personal experiences with seeking services in the child and adult mental health systems, as well as their struggles in successfully completing their education, and maintaining employment while living with a mental health condition. The young adult panel was moderated by Lacy Kendrick-Burk, Executive Director of Youth MOVE National, and panel participants were recruited by Lauren Grimes, Trainer and Youth Coordinator for On Our Own Maryland.

Young Adult Panel Biosketches

Jennifer is 22 years old. She graduated from Montgomery College in Rockville, MD in May of this year with an Associate's degree. She currently attends the University of Maryland in College Park, where she is majoring in Family Science with a certificate in African American Studies. She is also a 2009 Horatio Alger National Scholar and a member of the youth mental health advocacy group, Montgomery County All Stars. Jennifer was diagnosed in October 2011 with a mood disorder after experiencing mental health challenges for five years. She has recently experienced a series of successes after struggling to maintain enrollment in college and facing many obstacles in her academic progress that is so important to her. Her struggles have motivated her to speak openly about the positive and negative experiences she has had with numerous services and supports while trying to pursue a post-secondary education while simultaneously dealing with mental health issues.

Chris is a 24 year old young adult mental health consumer. Chris currently works part-time for the Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, where he helps with office work and organizing the activities of the youth peer group, The Montgomery County All Stars. Chris has been attending All Stars groups and Youth MOVE groups since 2008 and has continued to support the groups and their members as a peer, volunteer, and now a paid organizer and advocate. Chris has struggled with the symptoms and diagnosis of bipolar disorder for many years. He has received substance abuse and mental health services from programs in both the child and adult behavioral health systems. In order to help

himself and others move towards recovery, he has contributed to the fight against stigma and helped organize youth leaders to create advocacy opportunities for others.

Lucy first entered into the foster care system when she was 12, and had numerous placements in foster homes and independent living programs over the next 7 years. She struggled to find a sense of belonging as she moved through these placements and through multiple systems receiving services. Lucy now lives in her own apartment in Hagerstown, MD, and is involved in the Healthy Transitions Initiative Program and the Community Employment Program at Turning Point. She recently participated in her first Young Adult panel which presented at the National Pathways to Adulthood 2013 Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. She is excited to have another opportunity to practice her public speaking, and would love to become an Advocate for children and young adults in the foster care system in the future.