

Building Hallways for Transitioning Youth in Hennepin County

Capstone Paper

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Executive Summary

Youth accessing Hennepin County services face many challenges when transitioning from child to adult services in the county. While law recognizes adulthood beginning at age 18, research shows that “the developing brain does not reach full maturity until a person is approximately 26 years of age” (Arnett, 2007, p. 69). During this tumultuous time, many youth accessing services within Hennepin County are required to take responsibility for navigating the complex systems between youth and adulthood. Many gaps in service appear, including those related to and caused by legislative cliffs.

If the system is so complicated that we can't understand it, how do we expect youth, and young adults to figure it out?"

(State Interviewee)

The capstone team's research was focused on answering three key question for three service disciplines in Hennepin County, Minnesota – foster care, juvenile justice, and youth with disabilities:

What are the legislative cliffs for youth transitioning to adulthood in Hennepin County?

What are some successful examples of programs that smooth out the cliffs?

What are other possible approaches to help youth in transition?

The team gathered evidence through a literature review, policy scan within Minnesota state statutes, comparison of promising programs across the country, and 19 interviews with subject matter experts within Hennepin County and the state of Minnesota. Once research was complete, the data collected were analyzed and key findings and recommendations were prepared.

Several key findings were identified as opportunities for coordinated improvement and recommendations were presented to address each finding:

- Finding 1: Lack of single entry process

Recommendation 1: Create a single front door entry model to ease the burden of youth navigating multiple systems within Hennepin County

- Finding 2: Conflicting understanding of the definition of transitioning youth

Recommendation 2: Adopt common “emerging adult” language and definition for youth in transition across the state of Minnesota

- Finding 3: Existence of artificial cliffs

Recommendation 3: Eliminate artificial cliffs which create gaps in service that are due to implementation of legislation, not the legislation itself

- Finding 4: Lack of “one-stop-shop” website

Recommendation 4: Build a web-based platform for youth in transition that aggregates resources and information to aid in their access of services in Hennepin County

- Finding 5: Absence of data system integration

Recommendation 5: Within Hennepin County, create one system that communicates throughout service disciplines to ensure service providers can access all pertinent information about a young person to give them a holistic view of service opportunities

Additionally, the capstone team assessed the feasibility of a potential pilot, which will be dependent on the upcoming November 2018 election. There is reason for optimism given the legislators on the relevant committees and previous work by the legislature on smoothing legislative cliffs for transitioning youth.

Legislative Cliffs Impacting Transitioning Youth

The transition from childhood to adulthood is recognized in law as being a single event that occurs on an individual's 18th birthday. Hennepin County programs generally serve transitioning youth as two separate populations, under 18 and over 18. As such, programs for these two populations have different funding levels, eligibility requirements, and service offerings. In 2016, there were 180,000 youth from ages 14 to 26 in Hennepin County (Hennepin County, 2016). Of the 180,000, 53,000 were receiving healthcare assistance, 17,000 were in the child protection system, and 514 had been convicted of a crime (Hennepin County, 2016). Research has shown there is a fiscal cost to dealing with this problem. A national study found that the taxpayer costs per youth out of work or school is \$13,890 each year for every year they are out of work or school between the ages of 16 and 24 (Belfield & Levin, 2012).

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(Hennepin County, 2016).

Youth transitioning to adulthood within government custodianship face specific challenges. While experiencing this transition, they can find themselves in situations in which they do not have dependable adults to provide guidance. Without direction, they are left to navigate systems designed to support minors and complex systems designed for adults (Cosner

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Berzin, Singer, & Hokanson, 2014). Even if they navigate the adult systems successfully, they will be faced with a steep drop in support levels either for legislative reasons or for lack of knowledge of available support. These drop-offs in the availability of resources are “cliffs” and will be used to describe these obstacles in this review.

The capstone team was comprised of four graduate students in the final stages of completing their Masters of Public Affairs program at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. This team of Ashley Lawson, Patrick McQuillan, Andrew Nordin, and Mark Otto brought varying backgrounds and concentrations to the project while providing their contributions to the effort.

The capstone team's client, the Transition Age Youth Coordinator for Hennepin County, sought out the Humphrey School students to further understand where there are legislative gaps, or "cliffs", in how youth transition to adulthood which negatively impact transitioning youth's well-being. Additionally, Hennepin County also sought to identify successful examples and new ideas that might be presented to funders as a pilot project to fix the identified gaps.

Methodology

The capstone team looked to answer three research questions jointly identified with their client in Hennepin County. The primary research question was to identify the legislative cliffs for youth transitioning within Minnesota and Hennepin County for foster care, juvenile justice, and youth with disabilities. The second research question was to identify some successful efforts that are currently being made in systems of similar scale to smooth out the cliffs. The final question was to find some other possible approaches to helping youth transition to adulthood.

The team completed a series of research activities to answer the research questions. First, the team conducted an extensive review of the literature to understand the depth of the issues surrounding youth transitioning to adulthood within social services and the juvenile justice systems. In addition, the team conducted a policy scan of Minnesota statutes searching for legislative cliffs. These are places in the law where eligibility for services are described and restricted due to arbitrary requirements (i.e., age, disability, level of offense, etc.). Results were

added to a matrix and were used to inform challenges and recommendations. A total of 648 Minnesota statutes were reviewed in addition to related laws and rules.

The team conducted interviews of 19 subject matter experts who represented the three topic areas and worked for either the state of Minnesota or a county. Interviewees were identified by the client, members of the capstone team, or other interviewees as contacts with subject matter expertise. The team's lack of prior subject matter expertise also led us to prioritize deep listening during the interviews and helped us empathize with the transitioning youth that are trying to navigate the cliffs identified in this report.

In addition to the interviewees connected by the client, the capstone team reached out separately to legislative staff at the Minnesota Departments of Human Services and the State House and State Senate. The goal was to learn more about the legislative cliffs, but also to do a deeper dive into the potential political feasibility of the legislature funding a pilot project and any pertinent programs that were funded in the past. In the team's previous experience working at the federal and state levels, they found that there was a disconnect between the program staff, who implement the policy, and the legislative staff, who help craft or shape the bill with the legislative branch. The team's data collection sought to include both perspectives.

The team used both the interviews and literature search to identify examples of programs from across the state and country that provided new approaches to youth transitioning to adulthood.

The data collected in the literature review, policy scan, and interviews were coded by topic and theme, and serve as the basis of findings presented in this report. The focus of the study was to identify cross-cutting themes across the three disciplines in developing high-level findings and recommendations.

Major Federal Legislation

In assessing the three topics, the capstone team looked at the federal level to see if there was a common approach to working with transitioning youth. Unfortunately, neither Congress nor the federal government had adopted “a single overarching federal policy or legislative vehicle that addresses the challenges vulnerable youth experience in adolescence or while making the transition to adulthood. Rather, federal youth policy today has evolved from multiple programs established in the early 20th century and expanded in the years following the 1964 announcement of the War on Poverty” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018, p. 1). Thus, the capstone team examined three disciplines (foster care, juvenile justice, and youth with disabilities) individually for the federal enacting legislation that would provide the framework and, in most cases, funding for the state and county programs for transitioning youth.

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(Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018)

Foster Care

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act is the formative enacting piece of legislation for foster care. A 2014 Congressional Research Study (CRS) reported noted, “The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act (P.L. 106-169), enacted in 1999, specified that state child welfare agencies provide additional supports to youth transitioning from foster care under the newly created Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP)” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2014 p. ii). Additionally, the Act provided federal funding to help transitioning youth aging out of foster care “make a successful transition to adulthood” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018, p. 20-21).

In 2008, the federal government passed legislation to attempt to help youth in foster care beyond their 18th birthday. According to the National Conference of State Legislators (2017), “The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (H.R. 6893/P.L. 110-351) was signed on Oct. 7, 2008. One important optional provision of the law allows states to receive federal Title IV-E reimbursement for costs associated with supports for young people to remain in foster care up to age 21.” As of 2017, 25 states were participating in foster care extension programs through this act, including Minnesota. To qualify for this program, youth in transition must meet the eligibility criteria below:

- “completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- enrolled in an institution which provides post-secondary or vocational education;
- participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment;
- working for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any [of the above] due to a medical condition” (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

Juvenile Justice

The guiding law at the federal level for the juvenile justice system is the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), originally passed in 1974, and reauthorized in 2002 (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2018). The law was founded upon the idea of balancing the care and custody of youth with the “interests of community safety and prevention of victimization” (Arthur & Waugh, 2008). The law provides federal funding through annual formula grants to states that comply with four core protections or requirements that include: deinstitutionalization of status offenders (youth whose offense is related to being

too young, e.g., underage drinking), adult jail and lockup removal (limitations on incarcerating youth with adults), sight and sound separation (limitations on incarcerating youth next to or within sight and sound of adult offenders), and disproportionate minority contact (addresses disparities in arrests, diversion, detention, etc. of minority youth). (OJJDP, 2018)

Youth with Disabilities

The youth with disabilities population includes a broader set of key enacting federal legislation. The main pieces of legislation guiding youth with disabilities are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act 2014 (WIOA), and the Social Security Act (“The 2020 Federal Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy,” 2015). These acts provides the framework and funding for the federal government’s multitude of programs that have arisen to assist transitioning youth with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides federal funding for youth with disabilities through the federal Department of Education. It also serves as a framework that requires states to “provide ‘free appropriate public education’ to youth as old as 21 (age may vary depending on state law)” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018, p. 18).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, amended by the WIOA of 2014 provides workforce training grants to states through the federal Department of Labor to state agencies such as Minnesota’s Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) (“WIOA, Employment & Training Administration (ETA) - U.S. Department of Labor,” n.d.).

The Social Security Act provides funding through the Social Security Administration for the Social Security Income and Medicaid (which is called Medical Assistance in Minnesota) as

well as the Social Security Administration definitions for what a disability is for both a child (under 18) and an adult (18 and over) is (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2017).

Legislative Cliffs

Legislative cliffs for transitioning youth have been documented as a particular issue in Minnesota. A 2012 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report singled out Minnesota and found that staff from a parent training and information center in Minnesota noted serious

Foster Care – cliffs exist at ages 18 and 21. Extended Foster Care begins at age 18 and is based on federal legislation.

Juvenile Justice – cliffs exist at ages 18 and 21. Extended Jurisdiction Juvenile probation begins at 18 and extends to age 21, participation is determined by law and the court.

Youth with Disabilities – cliffs are based on disability, age, high school graduation, and income

challenges for parents attempting to navigate the support services system and a lack of coordination across programs. Additionally, the report found that “none of the program officials coordinate with those from other programs to share information on clients” (GAO, 2012, p. 11). Each of the three disciplines (foster care, juvenile justice, and youth with disabilities) have their own legislative cliffs,

which will be described in further detail in the sections below. Further detail on the legislative cliffs and the specific statutes can be found in Appendix E.

In addition, there are legislative cliffs for Medical Assistance (MA) and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)/health insurance coverage cliffs that would be applicable to all three disciplines (foster care, juvenile justice, youth with disabilities). Given the overlap of these populations, transitioning youth could be utilizing two or all three disciplines

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Standard Medical Assistance

In Minnesota, there are both age and income-based cliffs for Medical Assistance for those who are and are not disabled. This population could include all three populations, foster care, juvenile justice and youth with disabilities. The DHS-funded website, Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) noted that a youth 18 or under (disabled or not), “is eligible for Medical Assistance if your family’s income is at or below 280% of the federal poverty guidelines” (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). At age 19, there is another income-based cliff as the transitioning youth with disabilities family’s income “must be at or below 138% the federal poverty level (\$16,753 if single)” (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA Eligibility for Young People,” 2018).

ACA: Health Insurance Coverage

The federal ACA and the subsequent state law in Minnesota “requires health insurance companies to provide coverage to the children of parents who are enrolled in their health care plans up to their 26th birthday” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018, p. 3).

Foster Care

The transition between foster care and independent living for young adults can be tumultuous. Overall, the legislative cliffs associated with foster care are primarily focused on age cliffs. The two distinct age cliffs for foster care are at the age of 18 and 21 (Minn. Stat. § 260C.451, 2017). At 18, children living in foster care legally age out of services and become their own decision-makers in a variety of ways. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), “Approximately 26,000 youth who “age out” of foster care at age 18 each

year face significant challenges in meeting their needs for health care, education, employment, housing and emotional support” (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). In October 2010, Minnesota raised the age that the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) will provide access to Extended Foster Care (EFC) from 18 until the age of 21 to help smooth the legislative cliff (Department of Human Services - Kathleen Hiniker, 2015). However, because of the strict federal eligibility requirements, this program is not available to all youth in transition in Hennepin County (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

Regarding the EFC age being raised from 18 to 21, initially, foster youth were not allowed to opt-in after their appointment, but DHS updated their guidance to allow for foster youth to opt-in after their initial appointment at 17 ½ years of age. Previously, youth would be in foster care until age 18, then transition to homelessness prevention services. This legislation was also amended in July 2017 to extend services to all youth who qualify for EFC, regardless of funding available from the state (Minnesota DHS, 2017).

Juvenile Justice

Several legislative cliff exists within the juvenile justice system. These cliffs are stratified based on age and are linked to the seriousness of the offense. Generally, if a transitioning youth is under the age of 18 and the offense is minor and lawful if they were 18 or older (i.e., drinking and smoking) or a petty misdemeanor, or a first or second nonviolent misdemeanor, they fall within the petty offender category and have the benefit of being treated as a youth within the court system (Minn. Stat. § 260B.007, 2017). This applies to transitioning youth who fall within the delinquent category as well, meaning younger than 18 but whose offense is also unlawful if committed by an adult. Another cliff appears if the transitioning youth is between the ages of 16 and 18 years and breaks a traffic law. Depending “on the nature of the traffic offense, the matter

may be handled by the adult court” (Minn. Stat. § 260B.225, 2017). Traffic offenses that relate to this cliff include petty misdemeanor-level traffic offenses, driving while intoxicated (DWI), or related non-felony offenses (Minn. Stat. § 260B.225, 2017).

Another cliff is when the transitioning youth reaches age 14 and they have committed an offense that is particularly dangerous or if the transitioning youth has a past criminal record. In these cases, the youth may be certified to the adult court for prosecution as an adult defendant by the court or prosecutor. The law further presumes that youth who meet the criteria for severity of offense and are at least 16 will be certified to adult court without the court or prosecutor certification (Minn. Stat. § 260B.125, 2017).

If the court exercises a sentencing option that extends jurisdiction over the youth past age 18 until age 21, a new cliff is created for the youth. Extended jurisdiction was established in Minnesota in 1994 and was intended to help smooth out the legislative cliff and balance adult consequences for crimes with the protections of the juvenile justice (Mitchell et al., 1999). The law allowed individuals to remain in the juvenile system until age 21 with one last chance for rehabilitation. Extended jurisdiction provides extended juvenile status to transitioning youth up to the age of 21 provided they committed the offense while they were 14 to 17 years of age and meet the requirements to achieve the court designating the proceeding as an extended jurisdiction juvenile prosecution (Minn. Stat. § 260B.130, 2017).

A final cliff identified in the legislation for youth involved with the juvenile justice program occurs when the youth is accused of first-degree murder. A youth who is alleged to have committed this offense and is at least 16 years old may be charged and convicted in adult court without going through the juvenile court’s certification process, and without regard to the child’s previous criminal or juvenile record (Minn. Stat. § 609.055, 2017).

Youth with Disabilities

The youth with disabilities population is highly diverse. As a CRS report noted, “Among youth with disabilities, individuals experience visual or hearing impairments, emotional disturbances, congenital heart disease, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, diabetes, cancer, and spina bifida” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018, p. 5). As such, there are several legislative cliffs for youth with disabilities based on disability, age, high school graduation, and income. The four main federal funding programs for disability are Social Security Income from the Social Security Administration, special education funding through Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, funding for disability waivers through the U.S. Health and Human Services Administration and the state Department of Human Services (DHS), and workforce training grants through the U.S. Department of Labor being shepherded through the state Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Disability Waivers

At the county-level, Hennepin County works with DHS on implementing the Health and Human Services (HHS) major disability waivers (Brain Injury, Community Alternative Care (CAC), Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI) and the Developmental Disabilities (DD)) that may be applicable for transitioning youth. The disability waivers have a disability and an age cliff, in that to be eligible for the waivers, a transitioning youth must have a certified long-term disability under 18, and need to be eligible under the more expansive adult definition once they turn 18. (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: SSI Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). Through the interviews, the capstone team heard that once you are on a waiver, it is likely for life.

Social Security Income

The Social Security Administration (SSA) runs the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, which has two cliffs. The first is an age cliff at 18, where the eligibility becomes more restrictive. To be eligible for SSI under 18, “you must have: a physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments, which cause severe limitations in your daily life, and your condition is to have lasted at least 12 months” (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: SSI Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). When the transitioning youth turns age 18, SSA “determines an individual to be an adult, and eligibility is now dependent on if your impairments limit your ability to work in addition to the ability to work or engage in Substantial Gainful Activity in addition to the child eligibility” (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: SSI Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). In 2016, the SSA found that at the age cliff of 18, 30-40% of transitioning youth lose their SSI eligibility and the accompanied Medicaid (Medical Assistance) access they receive (SSA, 2018).

The second cliff for those receiving SSI occurs to those who had not been on SSI prior to age 18 and sign up for the program at age 18 or older. For this population, the transitioning youth with disabilities will have an income-based cliff at \$1,180 a month (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: SSI Eligibility for Young People,” 2018; SSA, ORDP, 2016).

Medical Assistance Eligibility for Transitioning Youth with Disabilities

Disability-Based Medical Assistance

For disability-based Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility, the disability eligibility is the same as guidelines under SSI, which contain a disability cliff, an income-based cliff, and an age cliff at 18. If an individual is declared by SSA or DHS to be disabled, “MA will only assess the individual’s income and not your parents’ income” (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young

People: MA Eligibility for Young People,” 2018) and the income-based cliff is at 100% of the federal poverty guidelines (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). Another age-based cliff occurs for transitioning disabled youth at age 21, when they are subject to an asset limit of \$3,000 as a single person and \$6,000 for couples. (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). The age cliff for those on disability-based MA occurs at 18, where there are additional eligibility (inability to engage in substantial gainful activity due to a disability of at least 12 months) restrictions (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA Eligibility for Young People,” 2018).

Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities Eligibility

The Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD) program has a disability-based cliff (same as SSI), an income-based cliff (over \$65 a month), and an asset-based cliff for those 21 and over (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA-EPD Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). To become eligible for MA-EPD, transitioning youth must be certified disabled by the SSA/DHS, “not be eligible for standard MA, pay a monthly premium based on your income, and if you are 21 or older, meet the MA-EPD’s \$20,000 asset limit. If you are under 21, you are not subject to the asset limit” (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA-EPD Eligibility for Young People,” 2018). The asset limit of \$20,000 for MA-EPD is considerably higher (\$20,000) than the asset limit for disability-based Medical Assistance (\$3,000) (“DB101 Minnesota - Benefits for Young People: MA-EPD Eligibility for Young People,” 2018).

Special Education

The federal government provides funding for special education through IDEA. There is an age and graduation cliff for transitioning youth in the education system. The federal and state governments allow transitioning youth with disabilities to stay in high school until they are 21 or until July 1 after they turn 21. Another cliff appears when funding for youth with disabilities disappears from the Department of Education when students graduate from high school. A 2012 GAO report noted that students with disabilities are eligible for transition planning and services until they leave high school, at which time they are no longer eligible for federal transition services under IDEA. The graduation cliff was discussed numerous times during the team's interviews as being a major cliff and challenge for the school districts and the social services to coordinate their services. A recent push to graduate disabled transitioning youth prior to age 21 has exacerbated this challenge and the funding challenges it presents for the county social services.

Workforce Training:

The workforce training and transition programs for transitioning youth with disabilities are conducted prior to their 21st birthday. Within the state, the Department of Employment and Economic Development operates the Minnesota Youth Program, which provides workforce training for transitioning youth until age 21 and is applicable to foster care and juvenile justice transitioning youth as well (Minn. Stat. § 116L.56, 2017). Additionally, transition planning done through the IDEA also ends at age 21 or when youth with disability graduate high school (Minn. Stat. § 124D.454, 2017). A 2012 GAO report noted, "Eligible students with disabilities are entitled to transition planning services during high school, but after leaving high school, to receive services that facilitate their transition they must apply as adults and establish eligibility

for programs administered by multiple federal agencies. Students with disabilities may face delays in service and end up on waitlists if these programs are full” (GAO, 2012, p. i).

Youth with disabilities are about half as likely as their non-disabled youth counterparts to be employed in the workforce. A 2015 federal task force found that as of May 2014 the “employment rate for youth with disabilities, ages 16 to 19, was 15.1 percent, as compared to 27.3 percent for their peers without disabilities. The employment rate for youth with disabilities, ages 20 to 24, was 30.2 percent, and 63.9 percent for youth without disabilities” (“The 2020 Federal Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy,” 2015, p. 6).

Challenges

The capstone team undertook a number of interviews of key stakeholders and an extensive literature review in determining the challenges in the transitioning youth process in Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota. The team focused on developing a series of high-level findings that cut across disciplines versus discipline-specific findings. In addition to the high-level findings, the capstone team also compiled a list of issues to be researched further in each respective discipline in Appendix D.

Overarching Theme: Need for Improved Coordination Across Government (Federal/State/County) Agencies

An overarching theme the capstone team found through the research and interviews was the lack of coordination across government agencies both vertically and horizontally at the federal, state, and county levels.

One reason for the tension at the state and county level is that counties handle liabilities and state agencies handle oversight.

Most of the authorizing information travels down from the federal level to the state and then onto the county for implementation. A concern of Hennepin County staff interviewed was that the

information being shared between the county by the state was being done on a “need to know” basis versus a “need to share” basis. Often times, the county felt that the state could do more to increase transparency and share relevant information. Since the information and rules travel downwards but feedback rarely gets shared upwards, Hennepin County staff have felt pressure to implement programs without clear directions from state agencies. Similarly, at the state level, those interviewed noted a “tension” with the counties and unclear guidelines from their federal partners. One reason for the tension at the state and county level is that counties handle liabilities and state agencies handle oversight. A 2018 CRS report noted, “Despite the range of services and activities programs for vulnerable youth, many of these programs appear to have developed with little attempt to coordinate them in a policy area or across policy areas” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018, p. 24).

Policy and practice at both the state and county levels are highly hierarchical, being only coordinated and communicated through the independent agencies. For example, many youth within the juvenile justice system are involved with other social service systems (Federal Interagency Reentry Council, 2015) requiring better coordination across systems. Known in Hennepin County as multi-system youth, or youth who crossover between juvenile justice and social services systems, the majority of these youth are youth of color, male, have special education needs, mental health issues, drug use problems, and are victims or witnesses of domestic violence (Herz et al., 2012). In addition, youth in both social service and juvenile justice systems may find barriers to employment which can lead to difficulty in finding housing upon an attempted transition into adult programs.

The capstone team heard during numerous interviews about challenges in dealing with a population that moved across counties and the communication challenges between counties it

posed on this cross-cutting issue in sharing relevant information to assist transitioning youth. Jurisdiction and rules come into play when handling cases such as when a juvenile ends up in juvenile supervision in Ramsey County, but is in a foster home in Hennepin County.

Jurisdiction and rules come into play when handling cases such as when a juvenile ends up in juvenile supervision in Ramsey County, but is in a foster home in Hennepin County.

Examples such as this have led to tensions amongst the counties and exacerbated communication silos that already exist between counties. During interviews, a participant noted that the real cliff was the lack of coordination among government entities. The challenge of graduating youth with disabilities was discussed earlier and serves as a bureaucratic hurdle between social services and school districts.

Additionally, the capstone team heard of internal communication issues. Within the state government, DHS staff mentioned challenges working with their interagency partners on prioritization and communication issues. The capstone team also heard about the need for

... the real cliff was the lack of coordination among government entities.

(State Interviewee)

improved coordination between foster care and youth with disabilities staff, especially at the age cliff that occurs at 21. In addition to the five first-tier findings below, the capstone team also developed a second-tier of

high-level findings and recommendations, which can be found at Appendix C.

**Finding #1:
Lack of Single Point of Entry within Hennepin County:**

In initial discussions with the client, the capstone team was told that the transitioning youth field was “all doors and no hallways” (“Interview with Lexi Prahl of Hennepin County,” 2018). This metaphor was confirmed during our research and interviews as there were numerous

entry points into the county system, but not a lot of coordination between the agencies within Hennepin County.

**Finding #2:
Conflicting Understanding of Youth in Transition**

An initial challenge that became apparent was the multiple and varying terms of the population being studied, youth transitioning to adulthood. For example, a 2015 workgroup of the key federal agencies involved in transitioning youth noted that there was a lack of a standard definition in determining youth in transition (“The 2020 Federal Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy,” 2015). Case in point, the U.S. Social Security Administration determines transition age individuals as those between the ages of 14 and 25 (Martinez et al., 2010), while the Department of Labor helps eligible youths between 14 and 21 years of age prepare for work or postsecondary education (GAO, 2006)

**Finding #3:
No “One-Stop Shop” Website for Hennepin County Transitioning Youth**

Hennepin County offers a wide variety of services for youth, but there is no easily accessible website to access the full spectrum of services. For example, the “Resources” link for youth on the Hennepin County website requires a user to click on Residents->Human Services ->Advocacy->Learn More (under Resources for youth). This path and site fit in with the general aesthetic of the county’s overall website, but the logic of ‘Advocacy’ leading to services (including Veterans, Multicultural, and Housing) does not seem clear.

**Finding #4:
Existence of Artificial Cliffs**

In examining the legislative cliffs in interviews with county staff, the capstone team learned about the establishment of artificial cliffs being set at the state and county levels in addition to the fiscal cliffs. These artificial cliffs were not present in the legislation, but occurred

during the implementation process. These artificial cliffs were most apparent in years when the state budget was cut forcing the county to prioritize their waitlists. This was especially apparent with the disability waivers. The capstone team also heard that efforts have been made to eliminate these artificial cliffs in recent years, in which the funding has increased and the waitlists have dwindled.

Another factor of artificial cliffs is potential pressure to increase public/legislative perceptions of the agency. The pressure for transitioning youth with disabilities to graduate prior to 21 to increase graduation rates is an artificial cliff that has the same effect of a legislative cliff. Artificial cliffs in juvenile justice may be called “collateral consequences” (Ryon, Chiricos, Siennick, Barrick, & Bales, 2017). These consequences result from felony charges, when made public, which put juveniles on lists that are reported through background checks, complicating finding housing and employment later in life.

**Finding #5:
Lack of Data System Integration/Data Privacy**

Minnesota’s strong voter concerns have led to stringent HIPAA and data privacy laws (Minn. Stat. § 13, 2017) that impact the ability of agencies to coordinate exchange of information that would aid in streamlining services. Data collected within social services and Department of Corrections programs is organized within one of five categories: public, private, non-public, confidential, and protected non-public (Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust, 2015) and provisions can only be fully understood after reviewing other referenced statutory sections. In interviews, the capstone team heard about the state’s strict data privacy laws which have prevented attempts to share information and were told that the data privacy concerns were a bigger challenge than simply updating the existing data systems.

Recommendations and Promising Programs

In the following section, the capstone team identified a number of programs across the country, within the state, and within Hennepin County that could help smooth out the cliffs identified in the Challenges section of this report. In surveying programs serving transitioning youth, the capstone team found that while many organizations have programs designed to service the transition-age population, many of the programs are designed specifically to address issues

When institutions were innovating, even in small ways, the concept of emerging adulthood is front and center.

(Multiple Interviewees)

and utilize funds available from federal legislation and are therefore similar. An example of this the capstone team heard during the interviews was the coordinated entry program for housing where since funding and legislation derives from the federal level, many state and county governments are trying to meet the “letter of the law,” which leads to similarly designed programs.

One common theme the capstone team identified during the interviews was that when institutions were innovating, even in small ways, the concept of emerging adulthood is front and center. The promising practices outlined in this section below offer narratives that indicate that these populations, while legally adults, may not have the ability to fully comprehend the full consequences of their actions, even under the best of conditions, and outlined the importance of support networks.

Recommendation 1: Hennepin County should work to establish a single front door entry point to better care for the transitioning youth population.

During the interviews, the capstone team heard about there being “all doors and no hallways” (“Interview with Lexi Prahl of Hennepin County,” 2018) in working with the

transitioning youth population. The capstone team proposes setting up a pilot project to establish a single front door process where transitioning youth and their guardians can be processed and educated on their path to successfully navigating the county system. Currently, only the homelessness programs in Hennepin County has a coordinated entry process.

<u>Promising Program of Single Front Door Entry Point: Foster Youth Transition Centers</u>	
Location: Texas	Website: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/transition_centers.asp
<p>The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, through partnerships with local providers and the Texas Workforce Commission, support 18 Transition Centers at which youth in transition can access services. The Centers offer a range of services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Courses • Employment Assistance • Food Assistance • Housing Assistance • Substance Abuse Counseling • Mental Health Counseling (Texas, n.d.) <p>A 2009 policy brief outlined the effectiveness of these centers at the time that the initial seed money for implementing 10 centers was running out (Miller, 2009). This study indicated that clients of one location in Austin, Lifeworks Youth Resource Center, showed very positive results. “In 2013, Lifeworks established a Research Department to oversee program evaluation, conduct research, and implement evidence-based solutions” (Lifeworks,</p>	

2016). Lifeworks offers computer access, voicemail services, and other technology access, beyond the basic services (Miller, 2009).

Key Takeaway: The capstone team believes that a single front door for all Hennepin County “county-involved youth” would provide a primary access point for youth helping to eliminate confusion and provide hallways between services.

**Recommendation 2:
Adopt common “Emerging Adult” terminology**

In the report’s findings, the capstone team discussed the lack of a single term for this population. In interviews with Hennepin County staff, interviewees brought up the concept of emerging adulthood and used it as a reason for many of the program decisions being made. Hennepin County should consider making this narrative prominent in its literature. Not only does this idea justify the investment of resources in this population of emerging adults, it allows those examining these programs to identify incidents in their young adulthood that may have taught them harsh lessons, but they were able to recover from due to a strong support network. This information can help build empathy and public support for these programs.

Promising Program of Adopting a Common Emerging Adult Terminology Young Adult Court

Location:
San Francisco County, CA

Website:
<https://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/collaborative/yac>

San Francisco County in California offers a variety of court settings designed to specifically address disadvantaged populations. These include:

- Young Adult Court (YAC) – this court recognizes the that the human brain is not fully developed at the age of 18 and that special consideration should be given to this fact
- Behavioral Health Court – for individuals with serious mental illness
- Community Justice Court – focusing on issues facing defendants rather than their offenses
- Drug Court – a self-contained treatment focused process with direct judicial supervision of compliance with a sanctions/incentives model to encourage compliance
- Veterans Justice Court – provides programs to help veterans in the criminal justice system (San Francisco County, 2018)

All of these courts offer holistic approaches to the populations that they serve. Many of the programs end with a “graduation” ceremony recognizing accomplishment.

In the case of the YAC, the court is explicit in its recognition of the latest science regarding brain development and has designed its programs to meet the needs of this population. The YAC was started in 2015 and serves individuals ages of 18 and 25.

Key Takeaway: Using common terminology for the transitioning youth provides a focal point for programs and services and allows the county to leverage resources to better meet the needs of the target population.

**Recommendation 3:
Build an “Emerging Adulthood” Website for Transitioning Youth**

Hennepin County should consider a dedicated website specifically to communicate with this population. Input from youth on advisory boards could help make the information more relevant to the population, by using vocabulary and media that connect in a more organic way.

Hennepin County should incorporate DHS’s DB101 and HB101 websites, which outline the eligibility requirements for housing and disability but should be expanded for all transitioning youth. The DB101 website currently has a separate section focused on transitioning youth. Additionally, DHS’s The Vault, which keeps personal records secure, should also be explored.

<u>Promising Programs of “Emerging Adulthood” Website HealthShack</u>	
Location: Allegheny County, PA	Website: http://www.steelcitysafe.org
<p>Modeled after www.healthshack.info in California, serving the cities of Sacramento and Stockton as well as Placer County. This site looks more fully developed but has not been updated since October 2017 and attempts to contact were unanswered.</p> <p>HealthShack offers three main services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A secure online document storage system that meets HIPAA requirements. <p>Document scanning services are offered at libraries, a youth center, or using personal devices. They focus on four categories of documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Education Records b. Health Records c. Employment Records d. Housing Records 2. Connections to support resources. The site has three categories of support resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advocacy – links to a variety legal and rights-oriented resources for youth b. Resources – links to Medical, Housing, Food, and education resources c. Foster Parents – Resources for current and potential foster parents 	

3. Links to Financial resources (under FAQ)

- a. Bank account comparisons
- b. Connection to Opportunity Passport information (This program is described separately at Appendix B) (Allegheny County, 2018)

By providing youth in transition with a secure location to store images of critical documents, this site helps to allow easy access to information often hard for transient youth to maintain in a physical form. One concern of this type of service would be maintaining a secure repository of these documents to prevent this information to be exploited by others. Since the county must already maintain similar secure environments and has no commercial interests in the information, they are well suited to take up this role as stewards of vital information.

The second component of this site is that of service gateway. In lieu of having a physical aggregation of service providers, creating an online compendium of youth transition services can offer clients an opportunity to discover services that they need, but may not be aware of. An important part of this would be a long term plan to maintain and curate the services listed on this site.

Key Takeaway: A single website that is driven by youth input allows youth to feel a sense of agency and can become a tool for ensuring youth have a voice in programs and services which, in turn, will ensure programs and services are correctly aligned.

Recommendation 4:

Conduct a county-wide review to eliminate artificial cliffs that could hinder efforts to best serve transitioning youth.

During the interviews, the capstone team learned of a number of artificial cliffs that are not due to legislation, but in the implementation of the program.

<u>Promising Program to Eliminate Artificial Cliffs: Collaborative Safety Model</u>	
Location: Minnesota Department of Human Services	Website: http://www.collaborative-safety.com/
<p>Modeled after collaborative National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigations of plane crashes, the Collaborative Safety Model seeks to bring together an interagency team to investigate traumatic issues in child protection cases. The investigative team seek to identify causal factors that may have led to the traumatic event and seeks to make systemic change to prevent future events.</p>	
<p>Key Takeaway: Although used for traumatic events in the example, the collaborative model ensures a youth-centered approach to services for transitioning youth over the course of their involvement with county services. An inter-disciplinary team can look at the needs of the youth, identifying and eliminating artificial cliffs.</p>	

**Recommendation 5:
 Hennepin County should enhance efforts to share data within the county structure to better track and assist transitioning youth.**

Improved data sharing could help counties know what is going on with transitioning youth and provide better service. Part of this recommendation would necessitate working with state legislators to fix the state’s strict data privacy laws to allow for the sharing of relevant information to ensure transitioning youth are being best served. In developing these revisions,

outreach should be done with data privacy and cyber security experts to make sure the information is secure and cannot be obtained by bad actors.

<u>Promising Program to Improve Data Sharing: Dakota County Birth-Eight Collaborative Initiative</u>	
Location: Dakota County, Minnesota	Website: NA
<p>When attempting to identify a data sharing program, the capstone team searched for an example in Minnesota given the state’s strict privacy laws. The program identified was a 2017 initiative that passed the state legislature and was given a \$200,000 grant that sought to share information with the school district and the social services for early childhood programs (MACSSA, 2017). A 2018 Minnesota Office of Legislative Auditor (OLA) Report recommended the legislature broaden state agencies’ authority to share data and better serve youth and families (Program Evaluation Division, 2018, p. 86). This pilot program shares information between the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the school districts in setting up a referral process to ensure youth and families get the support they need.</p>	
<p>Key Takeaway: This pilot project shows there is a window to work with the state legislature to provide funding for a data-sharing project. The capstone team recommends that Hennepin County work with the legislature to establish a youth transitions data sharing pilot program between schools and social services. This pilot would seek to ensure a case manager can find out if a transitioning youth has missed classes or is struggling in school to lead to an</p>	

intervention before a negative outcome occurs. This scenario was specifically discussed in multiple interviews.

Political Feasibility

In addition to developing recommendations on a potential pilot, the capstone team also met with legislative staff to assess if the legislature would be receptive. The upcoming 2018 election will have an impact on the feasibility as the Governor's office, and control of the State House (all 134 up for re-election under current GOP control) and the State Senate (tied 33-33 with a special election on the November ballot) are all up before the voters. The legislature has taken an interest in smoothing out legislative cliffs with the passage of Extended Foster Care in 2010 and the 2017 data sharing pilot mentioned in Recommendation 5.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations present during the capstone team's study and analysis of this topic. A primary limitation was regarding the vulnerability of the population involved in the programs for transitioning youth. A second limitation was the limited focus of interviews with county and state administrators, excluding providers of the services under review. A third limitation was the limited number and positions of individuals interviewed. A final limitation was the time frame the project needed to be completed within.

In an ideal world, the capstone team would have interviewed and conducted focus groups with transitioning youth to ascertain their understanding of the process and been allowed to understand and empathize with their concerns and issues regarding these three programs. The "vulnerability" and age (as some of the participants would be minors) put this step outside the

scope of the research design, but is a limitation nonetheless. The client focused the work on legislative cliffs versus outcomes and the design of the research was limited intentionally to accommodate the timeline, as accessing youth would have necessitated a more robust Internal Review Board application.

Another limitation was the lack of access to current providers who could better assess the county's role in the process. Attempting to analyze this problem without the perspectives of those at the center of the problem is a major limitation the team was trying to overcome.

Very early in the work the team realized that two limitations with the research was with the number and types of people interviewed. Time constraints are a factor for both of these limitations. The capstone team interviewed 19 subject matter experts within each of the topic areas at both the county and state levels. This limits the perspectives as both interviewees at the county and those from the state will have understanding of this work that will be informed by their sphere of influence and government experience.

Finally, the limitation of time was a critical factor in the team's research and study of youth transitions in Hennepin County. With a team of four people, all full-time employees outside of the research study, and less than three months to complete literature reviews, interviews, and analysis, the findings and recommendations were appropriately researched and presented with the time available. With more time, the team would have expanded the study, number of interviewees, and discipline specific topics. A list of potential future research topics related to discipline-specific topics can be found at Appendix D.

Discussion and Conclusion

All youth face a daunting transition into adulthood. They are navigating the complicated pre-adult world of shifting social groups; adjusting to physical and physiological changes; and dealing with emotional fluctuations caused by these changes that are brought about by normal human maturation (Spear, 2000). When legislative cliffs add abrupt termination of services, or those services do not match or compliment those offered in adult systems, youth are left to figure out for themselves how to fill the gaps. These gaps are more than simple complications for the youth. In many cases they lead to recidivism (Heretick & Russell, 2013) or other anti-social behaviors such as homelessness (Toro, Dworsky, & Fowler, 2007).

Understanding where the legislative cliffs are and how they impact services for youth within

Hennepin County is essential to solving the issue. This report aims to assist Hennepin County staff work with their government partners to level these sharp drop-offs and ensure youth have access to services that bridge these gaps. This will then help transitioning youth to more quickly acclimate to adulthood and increase the likelihood of having positive outcomes for each transitioning youth.

Youth are navigating the complicated pre-adult world of shifting social groups; adjusting to physical and physiological changes; and dealing with emotional fluctuations caused by these changes that are brought about by normal human maturation.

(Spear, 2000)

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Appendix B: Further Promising Programs

Programs Beyond Minnesota

<u>Opportunity Passport</u>	
Location: 18 States in 2015	Website: http://www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative/areas-of-expertise/opportunity-passport/
<p>The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s James Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative</p> <p>Summary: The James Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative: “A notional and state-based effort that believes every young person leaving foster care should have the family connections, opportunities and support needed for a successful transition to adulthood.” (Annie E. Casey Foundation, n.d.)</p> <p>This initiative has several programs which target youth ages 14 to 26, specifically in foster care, but could also be used in support of other populations.</p>	

The capstone team looked at the Opportunity Passport (OP) program because it came up in examinations of both the Texas Transition Centers and the HealthShack/SteelCitySafe programs. The OP program approaches financial education through a variety of avenues:

- Making sure youth have trusted adults from whom they can seek financial advice.
- Rewarding participants for attending financial literacy training.
- Assisting youth in creating Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).
- Setting financial goals and saving money in IDAs to meet them.
- Matching funds deposited in pursuit of said goals.
- Making the purchases. (Lloyd, 2017)

One of the positive milestones indicated in the literature is that several states have begun funding this program directly with tax dollars (some from federal foster care independence funds) rather than having the programs continue to rely on private and foundation money (Lloyd, 2017).

<u>Kalamazoo Promise</u>	
Location: Kalamazoo, MI	Website: http://www.kalamazoopromise.com
<p>The Kalamazoo Promise is a place-based scholarship program that offers awards based on longevity of attendance to the Kalamazoo Public School (KPS) System, predicated on graduating from said school district. This program offers students who have attended and graduate from KPS a sliding scale of award with K-12 attendance at 100% down to four years of high school being awarded at 65% funding. Funds are applicable, for tuition, at any of 15 state universities in Michigan, and 29 community colleges. 14 private colleges and university are also partially reimbursed along with matching funds from the educational institutions (Kalamazoo Promise, 2018).</p>	

This program eases one of the major hurdles facing youth in transition, funding the education and/or training that will qualify them for entry level jobs with future potential. Studies of this and other similar programs show a positive effect on student outcomes (Bartik & Lachowska, 2013) and on several socio-economic indicators (Bartik & Sotherland, 2015).

Eligibility for the Kalamazoo Promise:

- “All students who graduate from Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS), 2006 and beyond, are residing in the district, and have been KPS students four years or more. (Enrollment and residency must be continuous.)

- Admitted to and enrolled at any school listed on the application and acceptance forms.
- Make regular progress toward a degree or certification as defined by Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) of the school.
- Must maintain a 2.0 grade point average at the post-secondary institution.
- Be enrolled as a full-time student, typically 12 credit hours a semester. Exceptions to this requirement are made for all students at Kalamazoo Valley Community College and all students enrolled during summer semester.
- If the GPA drops below 2.0, a student may be reinstated if he/she is able to bring their GPA back to at least a 2.0.” (Kalamazoo Promise, 2018)

This type of program could be modified to target specific disadvantaged communities, if a broad-based program is infeasible, but a broader program may find more public support.

<u>Know Before You Go Program</u>	
Location: California	Website: http://knowb4ugo.org
<p>In California, the Know Before You Go program was established as a collaboration between the Alliance for Children’s Rights and Children’s Law Center (“Know Before You Go – B4UGo,” n.d.). This program serves youth in the critical years of 18 to 21 as they become independent and empowers them to make positive life decisions as they transition. As federal and state funding is concerned, the Know Before You Go program appears to be independently funded through the two nonprofits and their donors (National Alliance on Mental Health, 2014).</p>	

There is no evidence of governmental support for their services, however, their services do include assistance navigating legal systems and accessing governmental support (“Know Before You Go – B4UGo,” n.d.).

Minnesota-Specific Programs:

<u>DHS Foster Care Improvements</u>	
Location: Minnesota	Website: https://www.lcc.leg.mn/tfcp/meetings/01192016/Child Foster Care Work Group Report December 2015.pdf
<p>The Minnesota DHS recently took a number of steps to improve Minnesota’s foster care processes. In December 2015, a Minnesota DHS working group on foster care noted that “short-term placements, and a lack of appropriate and timely services can create hardships and poor outcomes for children” (Minnesota DHS, 2015, p. 2). The report issued a series of recommendations to help foster care youth transition to adulthood including: updating processes to assure youth get transition documents, developing assurances for youth before they leave foster care that foster child/youth bill of rights has been completed, and providing training and oversight to ensure extended foster care is available to all eligible foster children aging out of foster care (Minnesota DHS, 2015).</p>	

Hennepin County-Involved Pilots

<u>It’s Working Program</u>	
Location: Hennepin County	Website: NA
<p>Hennepin County has a pilot program to fund opportunities to create employment within the Youth with Disabilities community. One example given was Sammy’s Sweets.</p>	

<u>Walk the Talk Program</u>	
Location: Hennepin County	Website: NA
<p>Hennepin County also has a pilot program “Walk the Talk” which seeks to hire disabled workers in their county workforce. The staff interviewed noted several individuals who have been hired in their office.</p>	

<u>Project Search</u>	
Location: Across Minnesota	Website: http://www.mn.gov/projsrch/mn-sites.html
<p>Project Search is a state-sponsored program that seeks to provide internships and place transitioning youth with disabilities (18-21, during their last year of high school) into entry-level jobs at a number of healthcare-related jobs (Project Search, 2018). According to their website, “Student interns are provided systematic instruction during three 10-week internship rotations at a host business. This provides interns with the opportunity to practice a variety of employment skills in a professional environment and to learn what it means to be a valued member of the workforce” (Minnesota Project Search, 2018)</p> <p>Current Minnesota Sites include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Minnesota Hospitals and Clinics • Hennepin Healthcare • Avera Medical Group Marshall • Medtronic • State of Minnesota 	

- Mayo Clinic
- Fairview Lakes Medical Center
- Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare (Minnesota Project Search, 2018)

Youth Funding Model Pilot

Location:
Hennepin County

Website:
NA

Hennepin County is working on a Youth Funding Model pilot with YouthLink, which sought to assist County-involved youth. Half of the units of new housing were for “county-involved Youth” (foster/juvenile justice), with the other half being dedicated to homeless. These young people would get funding until the age of 24. The goal of this program was to get rid of red tape, which was rolled out in 2018. The pilot follows the recent federal mandate of “coordinated entry,” which means that the most vulnerable are housed first.

Hennepin County Pilot with the Link, YMCA, Legal Aid on Youth Homelessness

Location:
Hennepin County

Website:
NA

To combat the issue of having out-of-home placements after the age of 16, Hennepin County is on a DHS-led Minor Connect pilots with The Link, YMCA, and Legal Aid on a pilot for 16-17 year olds who appear with no adults at a homeless shelter. Hennepin County has two Navigators that are working to reunify homeless youth that show up at a homeless

shelter. This pilot seeks to smooth out the cliff that occurs when older youth were not being screened for EFC, and seeks to build capacity to serve older minors.

Appendix C: Second-Tier Findings and Recommendations

In the main report, the capstone team discussed the overarching theme of improved coordination/communication and five high-level, first-tier findings and recommendations, including promising programs to explore further. In addition, the capstone team identified four further findings and recommendations, outlined below.

Finding #6:

Outdated data systems do not interact with other systems

The county's data systems do not sufficiently interact with one another, which has led to workarounds to overcome the data challenges. The capstone team acknowledges the potential cost for fixing this challenge, but understands the immense value it could bring the county in the long-term to have more updated, in-sync data systems.

Recommendation 6: Hennepin County should work with the state to find funding to update its data systems. The capstone team heard during interviews about the need to update data systems, which, in some cases, are 20-30 years old. This significant investment will be a challenge to obtain funding, but will help the county better track the transitioning youth population and allow the state to provide more effective oversight and better prevent any potential fraud, waste, and abuse.

Finding #7:

Need for improved coordination with state and other metro counties

The capstone team heard from both state and counties that there is a “tension” between the parties as well as a lack of coordination at the programmatic/policy implementation level. At times, the lack of coordination can lead to artificial cliffs.

Recommendation 7: Hennepin County should expand their task force to include relevant state and metro county partners to provide further recommendations on how to better

serve the transitioning youth population. Hennepin County should reach out to state and metro county partners to expand their task force to build partnerships and share best practices moving forward. A model for this process could be the federal government, where, in 2015, a federal task force comprised of several government agencies released their recommendations to improve coordination between federal agencies. This strategy included broad recommendations such as helping transitioning youth prepare for post-secondary education, developing leadership skills, and connecting transitioning youth to health and wellness programs (“The 2020 Federal Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy,” 2015).

Finding #8:
Importance of leadership/elected official buy-in

In conducting interviews, the team heard positive feedback on the Interagency Council on Homelessness having success at the state-level by achieving buy-in on a Commissioner level, which is essential to make change and implement the recommendations of the task force. This buy-in at the leadership, as well as the elected official level could help increase support for sustaining the gains of the Youth Transitions Task Force and allow for easier approval of pilots to enact policies to smooth out the legislative cliffs.

Recommendation 8: Hennepin County should work to acquire leadership buy-in at the agency/departmental leadership and elected official level. In conducting interviews, the capstone team heard positive feedback on the Interagency Council on Homelessness having success at the state-level by achieving buy-in on a commissioner level, which is essential to make change and implement the recommendations of the task force.

Finding #9:

Amount of legislative changes has made keeping staff informed difficult

The amount of legislative changes at the federal and state level in the last few years in foster care, youth with disabilities, and juvenile justice has proved challenging for the county leadership to keep their staff informed. The full-time nature of Congress combined with the part-time nature of the Minnesota Legislature has at times created confusion as to the implementation of the new laws.

Recommendation 9: Develop a better system for educating staff and supervisors on recent legislative changes at the federal, state, and county levels. The capstone team heard from a number of stakeholders about the rapidly developing changes on the legislative front, and that it was hard for program staff to keep up with the legislative changes. The team recommends looking for ways to better incorporate the county's government relations staff in education and training efforts to ensure all county staff is informed and educated on the latest changes on the legislative front.

Appendix D: Further Research to Explore by Discipline

The capstone team focused on identifying high-level findings that cut across topics in the research and final report. However, throughout data collection, additional discipline-specific were identified and explored. This appendix outlines those discipline-specific topics, to be explored in further research. Additional topics include:

Foster Care

- Inadequate housing alternatives when transitioning youth age out of foster care
- High caseload for Hennepin County case workers
- Gap in funding for housing and medical services for out-of-home placements
- Need for Independent Living Skills training at an earlier age
- Need for possible coordinated dual case management (youth/adult) during transition for youth in foster care who will seek case management into adulthood

Juvenile Justice

- Changes to how transition age youth interact with parole officers
- Program approaches to housing, chemical dependency programming, and innovative approaches to transgender youth
- Gaps between policy that identifies youth as younger than 18 or younger than 21 if under the EJJ and practices that are not responsive, supportive and in line with transition age youth development levels
- Collateral consequences for youth in the juvenile justice system linked to their juvenile record and ability to gain employment, housing, and civil rights

Youth with Disabilities

- Further examine the issue of equity in staffing with transitioning youth with disabilities

- Address need for interpreters and diversity in staffing at the county level
- Explore the high case workload of case workers.
- Look into expanding current pilot programs (It's Working, Project Search).

Appendix E: Minnesota State Statute Legislative Cliffs for Foster Care, Juvenile Justice, and Youth with Disabilities

(Minnesota State Revisor Website: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/>)

<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Subcategory</u>	<u>Web link</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Impact</u>	<u>Title</u>
Youth with Disabilities (YwD), Foster Care (FC), Juvenile Justice (JJ)	Employment training	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2017/cite/116L.56	Age, Disability	Eligibility into Minnesota Youth Program, employment training program for at-risk youth.	Minn. Stat. § 116L.56, Subd. 2.
YwD, FC, JJ	Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/256B.055	Age	MA eligibility for "children" under 21 where the individual nor the person's relatives are financially able to provide.	Minn. Stat. § 256B, Subd. 9.
FC	Extended Foster Care	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260C.451	Age	Eligibility for youth to receive foster care services past age 18 until age 21	Minn. Stat. § 260C.451
FC	Transition to Adulthood	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260C.452	Age	Outlines transition planning for youth leaving foster care at age 18 or 21	Minn. Stat. § 260C.452

YwD	Health Insurance	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/62C.14	Age, Disability	Provides an exemption for disabilities to the limiting age of 26 to stay on their guardian's health insurance.	Minn. Stat. § 62C.14.
YwD	Special Education	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/125A.02	Disability and Age	Definition of child with disability.	Minn. Stat. § 125A.02, Subd. 1 and 2.
YwD	Special Education, Workforce training	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2017/cite/124D.454	Disability and Age	Access to MN Transition System for Children with Disability, Special Education	Minn. Stat. § 124D.454.
YwD	MA eligibility	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2017/cite/256B.092	Disability	Eligibility determinations by Counties on disability waivers.	Minn. Stat. § 256B.057; Minn. Stat. § 256B.092.
YwD	MA eligibility	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/256B.057	Disability and Income	Eligibility for MA for working disabled adults	Minn. Stat. § 256B.057, Subd. 4.
YwD	MA eligibility	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/256B.057	Disability (SSI eligible) and age	Eligibility for MA for disabled adult children	Minn. Stat. § 256B.057, Subd. 5.
YwD	Affordable Care Act (ACA)	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/62Q.01	Age for health insurance	ACA eligibility age for staying on parent's employer insurance.	Minn. Stat. §,62Q.01.

YwD	Developmental Disability (DD)	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2017/cite/252A.02	Age and disability	Definition of developmental disability for adults.	Minn. Stat. § 252A.02, Subd. 2.
YwD	Special Education eligibility	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2017/cite/121A.41	Age and high school diploma	In education, disabled students are considered youth until 21 or until the end of the school year after they turn 21.	Minn. Stat. § 121A.41.
YwD	DD	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2017/cite/260C.007	Disability	Connecting the state definition of DD to federal definition of an adult with a DD.	Minn. Stat. § 260C, Subd. 12.
YwD	MA eligibility	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/256B.055	Disability, Income, and Age	MA eligibility for disabled children under 18 and meet income eligibility of SSI.	Minn. Stat. § 256B, Subd. 7a.
YwD	MA eligibility	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/256B.055	Age and disability	Medical assistance for disabled children under 19	Minn. Stat. § 256B, Subd. 12.
YwD	Special Education	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/125A.03	Age and Schooling	Youth with disabilities must be provided secondary schooling until July 1st after their 21st birthday.	Minn. Stat. § 125A.03.
YwD	Mental Health, transition services	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/245.4875	Disability and Age	Counties may continue to provide mental health transition services from age 18 to under 21 for students in special education classes.	Minn. Stat. § 245.4875, Subd. 8.
JJ	Extended Jurisdiction	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260B.130	Age, Offense	Youth who meet the requirements receive a stayed adult prison sentence and are placed on juvenile probation	Minn. Stat. § 260B.130, Subd. 1.

	Juvenile Eligibility			until they are 21. If the youth successfully completes the probation they retain their juvenile delinquency disposition and avoid an adult criminal conviction.	
JJ	Extended Jurisdiction Juvenile Revocation	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260B.130	Offense	Youth lose extended jurisdiction juvenile status and juvenile court jurisdiction status if they violate their probation or commit a new offense. They can be housed with adults and can receive adult sanctions.	Minn. Stat. § 260B.130, Subd. 5.
JJ	Jail	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2015/cite/641.14/pdf	Age and Offense	Youth who are 14 -17 can be housed with adults under certain conditions. Transgender youth are housed with individuals who match their birth gender.	Minn. Stat. § 641.14.
JJ	Children tried as Adults	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/609.055	Age, Offense	Children age 14 and older can be tried as adult assuming they meet specific criteria.	Minn. Stat. § 609.055, Subd. 1 and 2
JJ	Category of Juvenile Offender	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260B.007	Age, Offense	Classifies criminal offenses and codifies youth status based on type of offense and age.	Minn. Stat. § 260B.007 Subd. 6, 16 - 18.
JJ	Category of Juvenile Offender	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260b.225	Age, Offense	Allows youth 16 and older who have committed a major traffic offense to be tried in adult traffic court. However, youth may not be held in adult facilities.	Minn. Stat. § 260B.225 Subd. 2- 5, 7-9.
JJ	Certification as Adult	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260B.125	Age, Offense	Youth who are 14 or older and who is alleged to have committed a felony may be tried as an adult. The law also 'presumes' youth who are 16 or older	Minn. Stat. § 260B.125 Subd. 1-10.

				and have committed a felony will be certified. Youth in these cases lose the responsive and supportive structure of the juvenile justice system. Records may be made public and may have implications for future employment and housing as they will appear on background checks	
JJ	Extended Jurisdiction Juvenile Prosecutions	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260B.130	Age, Offense	<p>Courts extend the shelter of the more responsive and supportive juvenile justice system to youth older than 18 but younger than 21. This law is a reverse cliff and requires special petition from the court or prosecutor. Youth in EJJ are subject to a juvenile sentence and a potential adult sentence if they break the requirements of juvenile probation.</p> <p>Youth in EJJ are not allowed to ship, transport, possess, or receive a firearm for the remainder of their life unless those rights are returned to them under Statute 609.15.</p> <p>Records may be made public and may have implications for future employment and housing as they will appear on background checks</p>	Minn. Stat. § 260B.130 Subdivision 1-6.
JJ, FC	Juvenile safety	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2017/cite/260C.007	Age	Definition of child for juvenile safety.	Minn. Stat. § 260C, Subd. 4.