

Summer 2010

Welcome to *THP-Plus News*, a periodic newsletter of the Statewide Implementation Project. The Project is a partnership between the John Burton Foundation, the California Department of Social Services, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing. Our goal is to expand access to THP-Plus, California's only housing program for former foster youth. THP-Plus provides former foster youth with affordable housing and a rich array of supportive services, including job training, educational advocacy, mentoring, and case management.

To submit a question to a practitioner or to comment on the newsletter, e-mail simone@johnburtonfoundation.org

Visit the website at
<http://www.thplus.org/>



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THP-Plus News

Expanding Housing Options for Youth in Transition

In May Revise, Governor Retracts Proposed Policy to Eliminate THP-Plus

2010 has been a turbulent year for THP-Plus funding. After proposing to eliminate the program in January, Governor Schwarzenegger changed his mind and fully restored the program funding in his "May Revise" released on May 14th. Currently, THP-Plus funding stands at \$35.8 million for the 2010-11 fiscal year, the same level of funding as it had for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

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AB 12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act: It's Go Time!

AB 12 is in the final stages of consideration in the California State Legislature. First introduced in December 2008 by Assembly Member Jim Beall and Speaker Emeritus Karen Bass, AB 12 would increase the upper age until which youth in foster care could receive the support of the foster care system. It would also establish a subsidized guardianship program, partially funded by the federal government and modeled after California's Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (Kin-GAP).

AB 12 passed out of the Assembly unanimously in January 2010 on a bipartisan vote of 72-0. It was also successful in the Senate Human Services Committee (3-0) and the Senate Judiciary Committee (4-0). AB 12 will be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 3rd or August 10th and if successful, must be voted on by the full Senate by the end of August. From there, AB 12 will be referred to the Governor, who must sign or veto it by September 30th.

Sponsors of AB 12 are organizing a day of advocacy on August 4th to build support for the bill in the Senate and the Governor's office. If you are interested in participating, email Sara Rhodes at sara@johnburtonfoundation.org.

Summer's Here, Where's the 2010 THP-Plus Institute?

The approach of summer typically means the approach of the THP-Plus Institute. This year, however, expect to attend the Institute later in the year, on November 8, 2010. Another change is that the THP-Plus Institute will be held in Oakland, after being held in Los Angeles for the last three years.

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2009-10 THP-Plus Annual Report: Coming Soon

Expect the 2009-2010 THP-Plus Annual Report to make an appearance in August this year. It will include information from THP-Plus providers throughout California on the status of their programs, as well as data from the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System. The report illustrates the first reduction in capacity and number of youth served since 2003 as a result of the \$5 million reduction to the program in May 2009. Despite this setback, THP-Plus programs still provided services to over 2,000 youth over the twelve month period. The report will include data on participants who have exited THP-Plus during the first three quarters of the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year. Preliminary analysis shows that these youth have made modest gains in their educational attainment, employment status, and earnings despite challenging economic times.

The 2009-2010 Annual Report will be available online next month on the THP-Plus website at www.thplus.org. A policy brief will follow later this year with a complete analysis of the data presented in the Annual Report. Thank you very much to the 66 THP-Plus providers from around the state that completed the survey. We appreciate your participation very much.

THP-Plus Program Information System: An Essential Tool for Evaluation and Advocacy

With the generous support of The California Wellness Foundation, the John Burton Foundation developed the THP-Plus Program Information System in December 2008 and it now includes over 2,000 individual youth cases. Providers enter initial intake information about participants and then enter quarterly updates, information at exit, and information six months after discharge in the areas of education, health, employment and assets.

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"In May Revise" continued from page 1

While there was good news for THP-Plus in the May Revise, there was not for Child Welfare Services as a whole, which received a \$133 million reduction by the Governor (\$80 million General Fund). The Governor first made this cut on July 28, 2009 and sustained it in his proposed 2010-11 budget, released in January 2010. Child Welfare Services includes over 50 individual programs, including core child welfare functions such as payment for child welfare workers. It also includes a range of programs that assist transition-age youth, including THP-Plus, emancipation stipends, and the Chafee Grant for higher education. On average, these programs received a 10% reduction and if the budget cut is sustained, these cuts will stay in place. THP-Plus received a smaller reduction, based on the fact that the program budget had already received a \$5 million reduction in May 2009 from the Legislature.

According to the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), the Governor's cut to Child Welfare Services is jeopardizing child safety, "Finally, California has something to be proud of – significant improvements in the last decade to a system that serves our most vulnerable children," said Frank Mecca, Executive Director of CWDA. "But now, we're seeing major setbacks and devastation for abused and neglected children as a result of the Governor's \$133 million veto to Child Welfare Services. How can we continue to build on the improvements to these children's lives if we don't make the commitment to invest in them?"

Fortunately, both the Assembly and Senate Budget Committees have voted to fully restore the reduction to Child Welfare Services in the 2010-11 budget. From here, whether or not the Child Welfare Services budget is fully restored will be determined in final stage budget negotiations between the Governor and the leadership of the Assembly and the Senate.

If you would like to join a coalition of organizations and individuals urging the Legislature and Governor to restore funding cuts in the Child Welfare Services program, join the "Protect Our Children Protect Our Future" campaign by sending an e-mail to Diana Boyer at dboyer@cwda.org.

"THP-Plus Institute" continued from page 1

A key factor in changing the timing for the 2010 THP-Plus Institute was Assembly Bill 12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act, authored by Assembly Member Jim Beall and Speaker Emeritus Karen Bass. AB 12 would extend the upper age until which youth may receive support from the foster care system. For the THP-Plus community, passage of AB 12 would mean big changes, particularly for THP-Plus providers. AB 12 creates a new foster care placement called THP-Plus Foster Care. This new placement type would allow current THP-Plus providers to access newly available federal funding. The deadline for Governor Schwarzenegger to sign or veto the bill is September 30th.

The 2010 THP-Plus Institute will address many of the implementation issues related to AB 12. If AB 12 is not successful, the 2010 THP-Plus Institute will emphasize managing THP-Plus in light of the budget crisis. Until then, we will keep you updated on the progress of AB 12 and other legislation important to your work. Registration information for the 2010 THP-Plus Institute will be posted on the THP-Plus website on August 15th at www.thplusplus.org. We look forward to seeing you all at the 2010 THP-Plus Institute on November 8th in Oakland.

"Program Information System" continued from page 1

The THP-Plus Program Information System has is the only source of information on the 66 individual THP-Plus programs and the over 2,000 program participants. The California Department of Social Services, which oversees and funds THP-Plus, does not track individual youth cases in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) because the youth who participate in THP-Plus are not legal dependents. Without the THP-Plus Program Information System, no aggregate information about youth in THP-Plus would be available.

According to Amy Lemley, Policy Director at the John Burton Foundation, this information is critical because it can be used to improve programs and advocate for ongoing support, "We know from the Program Information System that youth in THP-Plus are making measurable gains in education and employment," said Lemley. "Given the current budget crisis, programs must be able to demonstrate their effectiveness if they hope to sustain funding."

For the THP-Plus Program Information System to be effective, however, it must include complete information. Participation in the Program Information System is voluntary. If your program elects to participate, you will have access to program reports as well as have a tool for tracking individual youth progress. If you would like to use the THP-Plus Program Information System or already use it and require technical assistance, please contact Simone Tureck at simone@johnburtonfoundation.org or at 415-693-1326.