Ready By 21 Overview

The Ready By 21 Team, chaired by Department of Human Resources (DHR) Secretary Brenda Donald, was established in January 2008 to oversee the implementation of the Maryland Children's Cabinet's Ready By 21 Action Plan.

The following are the goals outlined in the Ready By 21 Five Year Action Agenda:

1. All Marylanders will understand the urgency of providing supportive services and resources, are aware of existing gaps, and are supportive of investments that will improve the odds for youth to be Ready By 21.

2. All Maryland's youth, especially older youth (14+), will have the support of capable, competent and caring adults.

3. All Maryland's transition-aged youth, with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of public systems, will have access to safe and affordable housing that is convenient to services, supports, transportation, schools, employment and other youth.

4. All Maryland's youth, especially transition-aged youth, will receive necessary supports to ensure health and well-being.

5. All Maryland's youth, with an emphasis on vulnerable youth, will be prepared to successfully transition into post secondary education, advanced training and the workforce.

6. Maryland's social service and juvenile service systems will treat all young people equally and fairly.

7. Maryland will have an infrastructure that promotes sufficient funds and is held accountable for the preparedness of transition-age youth for college, work and life.

The Ready By 21 Leadership Team convened four subcommittees whose membership included local providers, stakeholders and state child serving agency staff to develop benchmarks in the areas of Education, Employment, Health, and Housing. Cross-cutting issues, which cross multiple age groups and subject areas, and corresponding benchmarks, were also indentified. The Ready By 21 Action Plan is the compilation of all five areas, with corresponding strategic action steps. The Action Plan is intended to benefit all youth; unless otherwise specified, benchmarks and action steps apply to all youth. Benchmarks are listed according to the age level or range when services should commence and continue through adulthood, as appropriate.

Housing Benchmarks

Age	
14	• Youth will live in safe, decent, and affordable housing, with a caring, competent adult.
	• Youth will demonstrate the ability to purchase items and understand the purchase process – including cost, sales tax, and tips.
15/16	• Youth will understand how to purchase and manage a cell phone, including contractual payments, etiquette, and safety.
	• Youth will be able to go shopping for food, prepare simple food and meals, and safely store food.
	• Youth will be able to make good meal decisions when eating in fast food restaurants and shopping for food in grocery stores.
	• Youth will be able to use coupons, big box, and wholesale facilities to improve "purchasing power".
	• Youth will be able to safely and effectively manage their money; establish alternatives to using check cashing services, and payday lending, etc.
	• Youth will be able to identify a safe haven for short stay housing, if needed.
	• Youth will begin to acquire necessary household items and care for them.
	• Youth will possess basic financial skills – checking/savings, loans/contracts/budgets, credit cards.
17/18	• Youth will be able to identify possible housing options, if needed, including prospective roommates and subsidized housing.
	• Youth will have a "safety plan" if current housing fails and assistance with re-engaging with family.
	• Youth will have basic knowledge of entitlement programs, qualifications and how to apply/receive assistance with application for SSI (Social Security Insurance), MA (Medical Assistance), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and WIC (Women, Infants and Children), etc.
	• Youth will develop an understanding of state and federal income tax responsibilities.
	• Youth will be able to understand the legal rights and responsibilities of tenancy and tenant-landlord relationships.
	• Youth will be able to understand their adult responsibilities – draft, voter registration, child support.
	• Youth will be able to understand financial obligations relative to loans and credit history.
	• Youth transitioning from DJS, DHR and DHMH systems will undergo a transition planning process.
19-21	• Youth will possess the life skills required to maintain housing.
	• Youth will be able to maintain a personal budget and project the costs of living.
	• Youth will be able to establish and maintain a savings plan.
	• Youth will be able to understand taxes (including tax credits).
	• Youth transitioning from DJS, DHR and DHMH systems will undergo a transition planning process.

Action Steps Current status/implementation of each step in Harford County	MD State Responsible Agencies/HC Responsible Agencies	MD Timeframe/HC Timeframe
(4.1) DHR will advise DJS regarding rapid clearance procedures for kinship caregivers.	DHR, DJS	October 2009
DSS: HCDSS does not know if the information has been shared at the state level. However, locally they have an internally developed condensed process to link youth with kinship care. **DJS:** HCDJS is not aware of these procedures.	DSS	
(4.2) Investigate school curricula and life skills training taught by caregivers, i.e. ILPs, DJS, RTCs. (also see item 4.11)	RB21 Housing Subcommittee	October 2009
DJS: When needed, youth involved in DJS are referred to Mentor Maryland, a Treatment Foster Care - Independent Living Program which utilizes foster families in Baltimore. Website: http://md-mentor.com/welcome.aspx. Another program used by DJS as needed is Our House based in Montgomery County which serves at-risk youth through hands-on instruction in carpentry and construction as well as life-skills classes. Website: http://www.our-house.org/. **DSS:** Utilizes the Independent Living Program New Pathways for youth involved in foster care.	Community based programs, DJS, DSS	
(4.3) Require transition plans to include housing and to specify when youth will make contact with a permanent housing option.	DHR, DJS	October 2009
DSS: Housing options are always a part of HCDSS Transition Plans and/or Service Agreements with youth. Transition plans begin to be developed around age 14-16 and Family Investment Meetings are held to plan a youth's transition out of care. By age 18, foster care youth are engaged in the Independent Living Program and must show that they are working towards independence to maintain their benefits. **DJS:** Transition plans are created for youth coming out of a committed program such as a youth center or substance abuse center, based on the recommendations of the program staff. DJS case workers coordinate with program staff to assist youth in carrying out these transition plans.	DSS, DJS	Ongoing
(4.4) Children's Cabinet agencies will request a prominent link on each of their respective websites to the Governor's website (www.problemsolver.maryland.gov) so that members of the public can assess their eligibility for entitlement benefits and services. The link will also be featured on the youth website.	Children's Cabinet	October 2009
LMB: Link has been incorporated into State agency websites, also added to the Harford County Ready by 21 page. Problem Solver site links to another helpful resource "We Connect You: Maryland" http://weconnect.net/index.php/public/home/map with access to information on health, housing, food, finances, jobs, home buying, etc.	LMB	Completed
(4.5) Provide information on alternative housing options through roommate sharing resources and affordable	DHR, DJS, DHMH	December 2009

housing: www.mdhousingserach.org in established professional development trainings, school settings, the youth resource website (see benchmarks for cross cutting issues), local CBO's and libraries.		
DSS: Housing options are discussed between the caseworker and the youth. In addition, Family Involvement Meetings are held for youth who are transitioning and housing issues and resources are a part of the discussion at that time.	DSS	Ongoing
(4.6) Identify and train System Navigators to provide targeted case management to assist homeless youth.	DHR, DJS, DHMH	December 2009
DSS: HCDSS does not know if this training has taken place. **HCPS:** As part of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, all schools must have a Homeless Liaison. Steve Richards, Supervisor of Psychological and Pupil Personnel Services, oversees this function at HCPS. In addition, PPW's offer coordination regionally when students or families are homeless. **Alliance:** Provides targeted case management to individuals who are homeless. **Homeless Shelters:** All shelters in the county have a caseworker that works with individuals facing homelessness. As part of this case management, they require that children are attending school. **Mobile Crisis:** Mobile Crisis services respond to emergency calls, providing support to individuals facing a mental health crisis.	DSS, HCPS, Alliance Case Management, Homeless Shelters, Mobile Crisis	

(4.7)
   A) Request the National Alliance to End Homelessness to provide language from other states regarding housing for youth under the age of 18;
   B) Housing Benchmark group will recommend language for new regulations.
	RB21 Housing Benchmark Subcommittee	March 2010

Access information from the National Alliance to End Homelessness at http://www.endhomelessness.org/		
(4.8) Adapt Legal Aid document, "Homeless Youth and Young Adults in Baltimore: An Overview of Law", to the statewide population and distribute through state agencies, including DHMH, DJS, and DHR and their contractors.	RB21 Housing Subcommittee, BHYI, Legal Aid	March 2010
Legal Aid: Document provided by Baltimore City Legal Aid, available online: http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/Services/LMB/Documents/215.pdf	Baltimore City Legal Aid	
(4.9) Train caseworkers and analogous staff in the administration of tenant training modules as a supplement to existing housing related content during the transition planning process.	DHR, DJS	June 2010
DSS: HCDSS does not currently utilize a training module addressing tenant rights and responsibilities, but may incorporate into the Life Skills curriculum. DSS could potentially offer this training to its families as well as foster care youth. *Potential resource for this type of training is Baltimore Neighborhoods Inc. (BNI) **DJS:** Caseworkers are not currently trained in tenant rights.	DSS	
(4.10) Incorporate tenant training into programs for homeless youth such as Restoration Gardens and City Steps and into the youth resource website.	DHR, DJS, DHCD, DHMH	June 2010

Currently, Restoration Gardens and City Steps are housing programs for transitioning youth in Baltimore City.		
(4.11) Review life skills curricula utilized by providers.	DHR, DJS	June 2010
DJS: The Restorative Justice Program is an eight week program required of many youth that are on probation. This program teaches youth victim awareness and healthy decision-making. Life skills information is also provided to youth through individual counseling. Two evidence-based counseling programs which DJS refers to are Multi-System Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT). As mentioned above, two community-based providers that have life-skills training include Mentor Maryland and Our House (both outside of Harford County). **DSS:** No set curriculum, over classes in Hygiene, family planning, help youth who have children, abstinence, budgeting, savings accounts and checking accounts – SECU provided financial assistance for youth who participated; help with drivers education, permit, license; obtaining a state ID; classes on grocery shopping, meal planning, cooking; college preparation, applying for FAFSA; job readiness – resume writing, interviewing, link with SWN; internet safety; personal safety; healthy relationship groups – how to interact with all members of the community. **Housing Agency:** provides course in how to interact with a landlord, similar to interviewing for a job; Money smart classes - FDIC resources; resume writing; APG a partner in offering financial resources, classes **Upper Bay:** Transition Age Youth program currently being built, will provide individually tailored life skills training, similar topics as those above.	DJS, DSS, Housing Agency, Upper Bay	
(4.12) Engage MHEC and institutions of higher learning in discussion regarding current housing options for youth during college breaks and the possibility of expanding housing options.	MHEC, USM, DHCD, DHR	June 2010
HCC: As Harford Community College does not currently offer on-campus housing, this is not an issue. The issue our students who live in apartments run into is that they get forced into 12 month leases and they really only want a 9 1/2 month leases. If HCC pursues instituting campus housing (which we are looking into), this is an issue that we should try to address- providing housing options during college breaks. **DSS:** Individualized plans are developed for the few Harford County children who need housing options over school breaks.	HCC, DSS	
(4.13) Establish "host" families programs for the holidays and summer.	DHR	June 2010
DSS: HCDSS licensed foster parents served as host families for children for Thanksgiving and Christmas, 2010	DSS	Completed
(4.14) Implement model transitional housing options.	DHCD, DHR	June 2010
DSS: HCDSS is not certain if such a model has been developed		
(4.15) Develop the National Youth in Transition Database for youth in the child welfare system.	DHR	October 2010
DSS: The NYTD was implemented in October 2010.		Completed

Acronyms

BHYI	Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative
CSA	Core Service Agency (Office on Mental Health)
CBO	Community-based organization
CTE	Career and Technology Education
DDA	Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration
DHCD	Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development
DHMH	Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
DHR	Maryland Department of Human Resources
DJS	Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
DLLR	Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
DOD	Maryland Department of Disabilities
DSS	Department of Social Services
FFT	Functional Family Therapy
GEEF	Greater Edgewood Education Foundation
HCC	Harford Community College
HCPS	Harford County Public Schools
HD	Health Department
IDA	Individual Development Account
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
ILP	Independent Living Program
LMB	Local Management Board
LSS	Local School System
LWIB	Local Workforce Investment Board
MANSEF	Maryland Association of Non-Public Special Education Facilities
MHA	Mental Health Administration
MHEC	Maryland Higher Education Commission
MSDE	Maryland State Department of Education
MSDE-DORS	Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services
MSDE-CTAL	Maryland State Department of Education, Career technology and Adult Learning Services
MSDE-DSE/EIS	Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
MST	Multi-Systemic Therapy

MVA	Motor Vehicle Administration
OST	Out of School Time
ROP	Rites of Passage (Harford Community College Program)
RTC	Residential Treatment Center
SES	Supplementary Education Services
SPP	State Performance Plan (SPP)
SWD	Students With Disabilities
SWN	Susquehanna Workforce Network
USM	University System of Maryland
WIA	Workforce Investment Act