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The information contained in this discussion guide is intended to provide useful information regarding the subject covered but may not contain all relevant information. The information contained herein is not intended to be construed as legal advice or considered a substitute for statutory, procedural or other legal authority.

## Local Children's Roundtable Discussion Guide When Considering Congregate Care Placement Practice

- ◆ What is the highest agency-level position needed for congregate care approval?
- ◆ Are community mental health services available, offered and working for the older youth in your county?
- ◆ Are court ordered services routinely offered, prior to a recommendation and approval of congregate care?
- ◆ How is family finding conducted in older youth cases? Is the youth asked directly about their supports? Are family and kin continuously assessed as placement and connection options for the youth?
- ◆ Is Family Group Decision Making used routinely for older youth to engage lifelong connections?
- ◆ What does visitation look like for youth when placed in congregate care? How quickly do visits begin? With whom can a youth visit? How often?
- ◆ Are older youth being placed in congregate care for behavioral issues or treatment needs? Has the need for additional community services been explored to address the specific needs of older youth?
- ◆ How are least restrictive placement settings exhausted for older youth? How are foster homes for older youth specifically recruited?
- ◆ Are county school districts at the table for discussions around older youth? Are services available in school districts to address issues affecting older youth, prior to congregate care, such as truancy and academic struggles?
- ◆ How is it determined whether a youth will attend public or on grounds schooling, regardless of a facility's preference?
- ◆ Could the youth's anger, incorrigibility and behaviors be attributed to a sense of fear or trauma?
- ◆ Are youth progressing or regressing based on treatment or "level system" requirements?
- ◆ How is a congregate care facility's performance measured by the county? How is data collected? How is it determined that a facility's program or services are effective for older youth's permanency and well-being?

In 2016, the State Roundtable's Transitional Youth Workgroup completed a nine county analysis to examine the use of congregate care for older youth. The nine counties identified represented all Leadership Roundtables ensuring small, medium and large county representation. The analysis revealed the following information which provides guidance for congregate care right-sizing planning:

#### Youth...

- ◆ 95% experienced mental health challenges
- ◆ 86% had no court involvement prior to congregate care
- ◆ 80% were in congregate care due to behavioral issues
- ◆ 73% experienced problems in school prior to placement
- ◆ 63% were attending school on congregate care grounds
- ◆ 64% were on a level system
- ◆ 61% had no date to move to a less restrictive level
- ◆ 58% went to congregate care as their first placement of care
- ◆ 54% of the requirements to move levels were subjective in nature

#### Connection...

- ◆ 58% of the time father's visitation was inconsistent or never
- ◆ 45% of the time mother's visitation was inconsistent or never
- ◆ < 50% of the time Family finding was done with mother (40%) and father (30%)
- ◆ 47% had a Family Group Decision Making Conference

The intended use, of this discussion guide, is to spur local examination of right-sizing congregate care use, and if needed, guiding practice change based on the findings of the analysis. The discussion guide is grounded in both the findings of the Workgroup's nine county analysis and from national research which identifies the following five systemic areas to reducing congregate care:

1. **Composition of Service:** Make Congregate Care less accessible and least restrictive options more accessible
2. **Front-Line Practice:** Ensure practices that engage youth, parents, family and kin in planning and decision making
3. **Finance:** Create financial disincentives for congregate care and redirect savings to more youth based community services
4. **Performance Management:** Use permanency and well-being data and outcomes to evaluate congregate care facilities and only use facilities with high performance
5. **Policy:** Ensure policies that support permanency and well-being for older youth, including high-level agency authorization for initial and ongoing use of congregate care, limited use of APPLA as a permanency goal and redefining congregate care from a placement to a treatment level of care

(Annie E. Casey Foundation)