

REPORT ON VISITS TO TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMMES: USA



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Transitional Living Programme for Children in State Care

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1. BACKGROUND:

The University of the West Indies, through the Caribbean Child Development Centre (CCDC), in partnership with the Child Development Agency (CDA) submitted a successful grant application to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the implementation of a *Transitional Living Programme for Children in State Care*. To guide the implementation of this programme, members from the CDA and CCDC team, accompanied by the USAID Agreement Officer Representative for the project, undertook a study tour to observe transitional living programmes in the USA. The team was particularly interested in observing programmes serving youth who have aged out of the foster care system with specific focus on housing that provide wrap around programmes facilitating education, job skills and life-skills development. The team visited two such programmes in the United States of America: The Lighthouse Youth Services (LYS), Cincinnati, Ohio and Casa Valentina (CV), Miami, Florida.

1.1.Objective of the visits:

To observe the operations of transitional living programmes and to have discussions with the programme personnel to glean operational knowledge on good practices that can be transferred to the operations of the transitional housing facility and the programme to be developed under the proposed Transitional Living Programme for Children in State Care (TLP-CSC) project.

The study team explored the programmes to understand:

- The operational framework of the housing programmes
- The legislative and policy framework that supports the transitional living programmes
- Research and evaluation around the best practices
- Determine the level of youth / child participation in the operations of the transitional living programmes.
- What practices work and the framework in place to complement these.

THE VISITING TEAM

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The visit to the LYS was conducted over a period of two days, with the first day spent in meetings with the programme team and their system partners to understand the history, the legislative and policy framework supporting the programmes, the strategic plan, the programmes in place and the operations of the programmes. The early part of the next day included visits to the various programme sites. The afternoon session focussed on the case management within the housing programme and were followed by an engagement panel with the programme participants and the staff. The LYS team constituting Mr. Bob Mecum, President; Mr. Geoffrey Hollenbach, Vice President; Ms. Bonita Campbell, Director, Youth Housing Opportunities and Ms. Shahzaade Ali provided information relating to various aspects of the programme over a period of two days.

Ms. Campbell also coordinated and accompanied the team to all site visits. Additional information was provided by project system partners, site managers, staff and programme participants. A group forum which allowed the team to interact with programme participants and field officers where the members explored, experienced and heard first hand recommendations that Jamaica should take into consideration in moving on to implementing a similar programme. Site visits included the Youth Crisis Centre, the Sheakley Centre for Youth, The Life Skills Centre, Supervised housing for males and females and scattered site housing.

Information for the Casa Valentina programme was provided by team members from the organisation that included Mrs. Sharon Langer; Founder, Ms. Wanda Finnie, Executive Director, Ms. Nicola Brown and Ms. Juanita Ambrister from the Young Parents Project and Ms. Ashley during a half-day visit to the programme sites. The team had an opportunity to talk to the programme participants and visit two housing sites, one for males and the other for females.

Supportive information has also been gleaned from the documents shared by the organisations during the visit and the organisational websites.

The report provides an overview of the two programmes within the perspective of the objectives highlighted above, followed by the learnings and recommendations for consideration during and beyond the implementation of the proposed TLP-CSC in Jamaica.

2. Lighthouse Youth Services, Cincinnati, Ohio

In the mid-1800s, the USA was plagued by major national calamities such as the Civil war and the influenza epidemic and several children were left destitute and homeless. The Churches led the

movement of establishing orphanages and asylums. Over the period the focus of these homes changed from caring for children who were made orphans to children whose parents are unable to care for them, or others made vulnerable due to incidents of abuse and neglect. . Interestingly, as reported by one of the programme personnel, in the earlier times, charges could not be filed against parents for neglect and abuse of their children and a police officer in New York brought attention to the issue by filing charges against parents who abused their child under the ‘Cruelty to Animals Act’. This led to the situation being reviewed. Several reforms later, addressing the needs of children has come a long way in the US.

In those days, Ohio was a free State that shared its borders with the State of Kentucky which permitted slavery. During the emancipation period, lot of children and youth came over to Ohio, sometimes with their parents and sometimes without. In Cincinnati, Ohio the Catholic Church established the first three orphanages in the 1960s. Since the past 40-50 years, the State has begun to disengage by privatizing these arrangements and involving ‘not for profit’ organisations such as LYS to provide the services. Thousands of organisations such as the LYS across the country are the new face of child welfare and delinquency prevention. The States outsource children’s services and pay the organisations or individuals (foster parents) for the children enrolled. However, the organisations have to compete with other NGOs for referrals as well as fulfil output and outcome requirements to continue receiving the grants. The organisations providing these services also require licensure and accreditation. The process is very stringent and trained staff from the Accreditation Councils that function independent of the State, periodically monitor to ensure that standards are adhered to. Generally licenses are renewed annually and a ‘deemed status’ is conferred, meaning an organization has met all the requirements.

Within the State of Ohio, the residents are obligated by law to ensure the safety of all children and report any incidences of abuse to a certified professional, who further reports it to the Children and Family Services Division. There are 88 counties in Ohio and each has its own child welfare departments, who are responsible to investigate and respond to cases of abuse by providing appropriate interventions. When a child in a situation of abuse is identified, a court order for temporary custody in care of the County’s Children’s Services Department is issued. Efforts are then directed to place the child in a protective custody of either a relative; foster parent (s) who is/are licensed, trained and supervised; a congregate or group home or an emergency shelter.



2.1. History, Mission and Vision:

The Lighthouse Youth Services Inc. operates from the Hamilton County, Ohio. It is widely regarded as a national leader of innovative services to address youth homelessness.

Youth from foster care constitute one of its dominant client group. LYS was founded in 1969 by a group of African- American women from the Baptist Women's Fellowship. They realised that many African- American children and

young persons from Cincinnati had been incarcerated in State juvenile correction institutions and were returning to the same difficulties that had led them into trouble in the first place. They realised that many youngsters placed in the juvenile homes had not committed an offence, but had run

MISSION OF THE LYS:

TO ADVANCE THE DIGNITY AND WELLBEING OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN NEED AND ENCOURAGE GOOD CITIZENSHIP, RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR AND SELF -RELIANCE.

VISION OF THE LYS:

BY 2020, ANY YOUNG PERSON IN NEED OF SHELTER WILL HAVE IT AND WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE WITH A PLAN AND RESOURCES NEEDED TO BECOME A SELF- SUFFICIENT MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY.

away from homes to escape neglect and abuse. When they emancipated, they returned to the same chaotic home environments that created the delinquency. With this realisation, the group along with a taskforce comprising of volunteers including the police and citizens, reviewed the situation and proceeded to establish a halfway house, a first group home for girls in the State of Ohio emancipating from juvenile homes. It was established in an abandoned building (which was refurbished) and was the first privately run shelter without Federal funds. It began filling up fast and became an ‘incubator of ideas’ providing a better understanding of what would help.

2.2. Accreditations and Funding:

Over the past 46 years, LYS has grown in terms of the programmes and services provided. It has grown in terms of its network of accreditations, affiliations and now receives support through several Federal, State and County grants. Lighthouse Youth Services is accredited by CARF International, licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services. Lighthouse is a United Way Agency Partner and is funded in part by the City of Cincinnati. Some of Lighthouse’s funding is provided by the Board of County Commissioners, Hamilton County, Ohio on behalf of the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services. All the 88 Ohio counties levy a tax on themselves to provide services for children. Citizens of Hamilton County have voted to levy a larger portion of their income to support services for children, thereby making it more resourced than most other counties.

The LYS has integrated several services related to families and children and hence receive funding from several funders. It also receives support from private entities and donors. It receives Federal funding under the national independent living services provided under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), which was created by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. The program offers assistance to help current and former foster care youth achieve self-sufficiency as they transition into adulthood. These services include but are not limited to a guaranteed education, housing, financial management, employment support and counselling. The annual budget for the LYS programmes is USD 28 Million. Lighthouse meets the Wise Giving Alliance Standards of the Better Business Bureau.

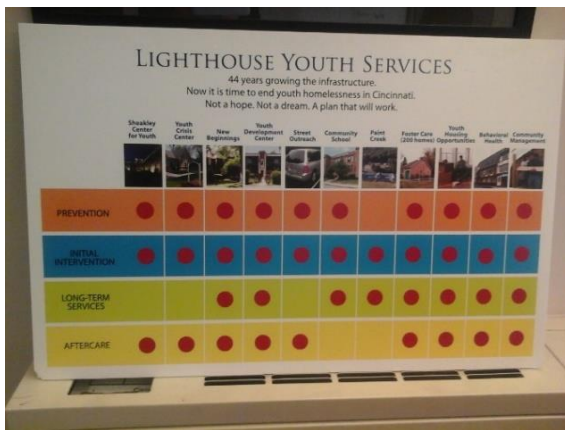
The programme is guided by a policy framework and guidelines stipulated by the Federal Foster Care Independence Act, 1999 (John Chafee Foster Care Independence Program), State General Assembly and the Children Services Division of the Hamilton County.

With close to 300 staff members employed in its various programmes, coupled with a robust team of dedicated volunteers, the LYS has pioneered the development of programs and services, some of which have become national models of innovation and efficacy.

The LYS focuses on young people who are at a high risk of becoming homeless, by concentrating efforts on strengthening the protective factors that nurture self-sufficiency. Every year, LYS helps more than 2000 youth who are either homeless or at imminent risk of being homeless. This group includes street children, youth from foster care and homeless youth. Foster care youth in the State of Ohio emancipate at age 18. The organisation adopts a comprehensive approach to ending youth homelessness that includes prevention, early intervention, long term services that include stable housing and aftercare that involves long term connections with caring adults.

2.3. Programmes:

The LYS offer a range of programmes, delivered through its seven service divisions. The divisions are:



- a. Early Childhood Services Division
- b. Education Division
- c. Behavioural Health & Psychiatric Services
- d. Community Based Residential Treatment Division
- e. Juvenile Justice Division
- f. Runaway & Homeless Youth Division
- g. Youth Housing Opportunities Division

The TLP-CSC team explored programmes that concern directly with independent living/transitional living programmes that are implemented under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Division and the Youth Housing Opportunities Division. This report has been organised to provide an understanding of the context and framework within which these programmes are implemented, considering that this is vital to the operations and sustainability of these programmes.

2.4. Continuum of Care: The Operational Framework

Services for youth provided by LYS are implemented within the framework of the Cincinnati/Hamilton County Continuum of Care (CoC) for the Homeless. Over 45 member agencies have been brought together, coordinated by Strategies to End Homelessness, to serve Cincinnati's homeless through outreach, shelter, housing and prevention. The coalition determines community priorities and written standards, as well as establishes performance standards. It also allocates Federal, State and Local funding as well as monitors and audits all the grants. It functions as a Homelessness Clearinghouse that operates in workgroups to set priorities.

To maintain community-wide data, VESTA- Virtual Electronic Service Tracking Assistant software, a community based software system, is used across the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC for the Homeless. VESTA is used in tandem with the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). LYS uses data collected through VESTA to track and manage their service and housing projects. Built using a metadata model, the software is customizable for each agency and project, allowing flexibility in data collection and robust reporting. VESTA is used as a tool to track and evaluate client services, case management, referrals, financial support, and other information that help agencies and community leaders evaluate the effectiveness of services they provide.

The CoC uses the 'Homeless' definition of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which requires that the individual to be 'without a fixed, regular and adequate night time residence.' This has implications particularly for youth 17 and over, as the information for the youth can only be entered once in the HMIS once he/she qualifies for being homelessness by this definition and not the fact that the youth is unsure where he/she will spend the night (or subsequent nights). So it requires that the youth is 'on the streets' before entering the system and not in anticipation. Once a youth is registered on the system, he/she is issued a 'Homeless Certificate', which is necessary to access services and/or funds. This data for the individual is entered at the first point of contact. Every homeless / housing provider can see this data entered by each provider. There is no option to be anonymous in the system. The youth are photographed, though fingerprinting is voluntary.

The CoC operates a shelter system with a total of 300 beds, for single and unaccompanied individuals, out of which LYS has 28 beds for youth, both males and females, ages 18-24 years. Hence, youth in this age group are referred to LYS by other providers/shelters/programmes. The

CoC housing system includes the rapid re-housing which is short term (6 months- 2 years) and permanent supportive housing, which is long term and permanent. A coordinated assessment/intake is conducted at the shelters or during street outreach, using a common assessment tool and ‘bed-finder’ system to prioritize housing needs and to determine the level of service the individual is eligible for. The CoC also focusses on homelessness prevention and shelter diversion amongst its activities.

The Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, operate an Aftercare Housing programme through which youth emancipated from foster care are supported in their transition through the Chafee funds. Youth in custody are assigned to a Youth Transition Specialist from the age of 16, with whom they meet every three months to review their plans. In coordination with this person, an emancipation conference that includes mentor/s, case worker, guardian/s and any other informal support is held. Following this they file for termination and the magistrate grants emancipation. Youth 18-21 years can contact the Hamilton County programme personnel on emancipation if they are willing to participate in the Emancipation conference. On verifying that they were in custody, the programme staff begins to work with them to help achieve their goals which includes seeking prospects in education, employment and housing and providing funds to achieve these. Follow up is done at least once monthly to monitor progress. The programme personnel also accompany them to sites at times and maintain contact to ensure adequate support and compliance.

2.5.Youth Housing Opportunities: Our programme of Interest

The LYS Independent living programme (ILP) and Transitional living programme (TLP) were merged in July 2013 under the Youth Housing Opportunities division. To be referred to the independent living programme, the youth comes from legal system or foster care and must be in the custody of legal entity that makes referral i.e. must be in custody of a child welfare agency or the Ohio Department of Youth Services. This programme serves youth between the ages 17-22 years, male and female, including



Team member handing a souvenir from CDA to the Coordinator of the Youth Housing Opportunities Programme

pregnant or parenting teens, and who based on their circumstance cannot return to their families. Youth must be willing to work at becoming self-sufficient. There are 12 ILPs agencies in Hamilton County, however LYS is the only one providing supervised housing and hence gets more referrals than the others. For the transitional living programme the referral is made through a community wide system of coordinated entry (CAPLINE) where referrals are received from local homeless shelters, as highlighted earlier. This programme serves youth between the ages 18-24 years. Services are provided and prioritized based on the problems presented and matched to the appropriate programme to meet their needs.

The LYS Youth Housing Opportunities Programme is implemented within the following framework of wrap-around services:

a. **Case Management:**



Study team with the Case management team.

The Case management approach is the overarching strategy utilised throughout the programme duration. The VESTA system detailed earlier, electronically maintains records of the case at each point along the CoC. The LYS also has its own record management system, TOTAL, that electronically maintains detailed demographic, medical and educational

data for each youth. Some data is stored manually. The care process is coordinated. Services for the youth are provided through a network of system partners and service providers. These partners collaborate to coordinate care services on the continuum of care. The case management strategy includes development of individualized treatment and trauma informed care plans.

b. **Individualized Treatment plans:**

Each youth referred to the programme is sent for an in-house testing at intake. A detailed intake and diagnostic assessments are conducted on entry. A trauma assessment is

conducted using the Child and Adolescents Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment and the Daniel Memorial Independent Living Assessment for Life Skills is used to create a

Youth Voices:

A perspective on the transitional living programme

"I guess I've learned like from this point on, every choice I make, it directly affects the outcome of my life. Everything like one of this. I don't know I think of it as driving in life; you can either go left or right. One way you're gonna be happy and the other way, it's gonna be messed up but you're just not gonna make it going right. That's one of the big things I've got from this, because you're not on your own, you are on your own really. You make all your choices, like we buy all your food and all your clothes and all of that. So it's a real good sense of the real world, even though you're not in the real world. You're still kind of secluded still in a bubble kind of thing, but you still have to handle everything like you're in the real world. So it's just a learning experience really."

programme plan. The results are used by case workers to prioritize life skills to be inculcated or reinforced. The Daniel Memorial assessment system tabulates output and suggests a plan tailored to the life skills outcomes. Every youth develops a plan in assistance with his/her case manager, upon entering the programme. This plan addresses the movement toward self-sufficiency, particularly education and employment; any health, mental health or substance abuse issues the youth may have; and mastery of basic life skills necessary to become good citizens who behave responsibly and are self-reliant. For pregnant or parenting teens the plan also addresses safe and effective parenting.

Using a strengths approach to casework, the case workers meet with the youth at least twice weekly for about 45-60 minutes. Each case worker handles about 20 cases at any point. Case workers do intensive work with the youth, including transporting/accompanying them to interviews etc. The personalized service plan is updated every 60 or 90 days depending on programme. The youth are reminded of the rules periodically and are also provided with a folder outlining the details of various programme components.

Youth new to the program and youth at higher risk have more frequent meetings. Nearly all youth have daily telephone contact with their social workers. Staff members are available for crisis assistance 24/7.

c. **Mental health and substance abuse services:**

All the youth that access services of the LYS have a history of trauma, in most cases beginning in early childhood, the organisation attempts to focus its efforts in addressing this issue adequately. The organisation has a Behavioural Health and Psychiatric Services division that works from prenatal up to ages 24 years. A team of psychiatrists, therapists and social workers work with the youth in addressing the issues using a trauma informed approach. The organisation also operates a residential treatment centre for boys who have committed crimes using weapons. The LYS team emphasized that their experience of working with this population over the years has brought a realization that if the issues of trauma are not dealt with and addressed appropriately, the most promising youth, equipped with all the skills required for independent living (schooling, life skills, vocational skills) and supports (housing, mentors) tend to fall through the cracks. They consider this as a foundation for building programmes for independent living and ensure successful transition to adulthood.

d. **Groups with specialized needs:**

Lighthouse Youth Services partners with Strategies to End Homelessness; Human Rights Campaign (HRC) of Greater Cincinnati; and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) of Greater Cincinnati; and other stakeholders to develop and implement a community plan to improve Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth outcomes. LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population, yet there are too few systems and services designed to meet their needs. Many LGBTQ youth become homeless because of identity-based family rejection, as well as involvement in the child welfare system, poverty, abuse and neglect. Through its Safe and Supported initiative, it aims to prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness by:

- Recognising the unique circumstances LGBTQ youth face (including identity based family rejection)

- Utilising interventions that address specific risk factors
- Ensuring that programs are safe, inclusive, and affirming of LGBTQ identities
- Improving relationships and increasing the level of collaboration between state and local youth-serving organisations.
- Improve outcomes in four core areas: Stable Housing; Social and Educational Well-Being; Permanent Connections; and Education and Employment.

Youth with HIV and disabilities are prioritized for housing and medical services, though that is not a significant number as youth with special needs are referred to partner agencies providing specialized services. With respect to HIV, if youth enter the system as HIV positive, they are referred to special services. If they contract HIV whilst in the system, they continue to stay in the system and receive the same benefits. Children with developmental disabilities, are funded for services based on what parents think their children need and are tracked separately. If child is in foster care, he/she loses out and may not receive benefits from developmental disabilities funding and support.

e. **Education, Skill training and employment:**

These are important services for the target population. LYS provides opportunities for education through its community school, considering that mainstream schooling can prove challenging for this group. It affords opportunities for youth to complete their high school diploma. To access skills training, the youth are referred to the Job Corp, which is a free vocational skills programme. The programme offers training in a range of vocational skills and the as a part of the programme the youth are eligible to do co-ops and apprenticeships, and receive stipends. The youth are linked up for employment with potential workgroups and organisations such as Ohio need Jobs, Centre for Independent Living, organise quarterly job fairs. There are also several employers on board who acknowledge the challenges faced by these youth and are willing to give them more than one chance to adapt to the workplace.

f. **Mentoring:**

The LYS implements a relatively limited mentoring programme considering that this group of youth is not a captive audience. They have a volunteer base from which mentors are

drawn. Rigorous background checks including Federal and State background checks and fingerprinting are mandatory. Prospective mentors are also required to undergo a mentoring and volunteering training programme. They also partner with an existing mentoring programmes 'Big Brothers and Big Sisters' that offers a programme called 'Connecting the Dots' which works with youth, ages 15-21, who are in foster care or aging out of foster care. Youth are linked with a mentor to support them with their employment and housing goals, and works with them on developing healthy relationships, life skills, career, and education goals.

g. Supervised and scattered housing:

One of the core components of the Youth Housing Opportunities programme is the provision of housing. The programme provides

supervised and scattered apartment living for youth who are aging out of foster care or group home services without having suitable or appropriate living arrangements. Youth can also be referred through the coordinated entry. The program offers an opportunity for youth to live on their own in a program setting that guides and supports them as they grow toward independence.

- **Supervised living arrangements** are independent apartments in a building with an onsite house manager. Four shared-homes which include an onsite house manager, are used for new participants when it is not clear that they are ready for the independence of a scattered site apartment or to "step back" youth who may have found scattered site living arrangement overwhelming. Supervised building have resident managers who have full time job elsewhere and work on a part time-basis with the programme. Youth can stay in these apartments usually for a period ranging

Youth Voices:

What am I learning as I go along in the programme?

"Kind of, I'm a little anxious but I mean I have been groomed for living on my own since birth. But still like being in this programme and having all of the responsibility fall on me that show there is a lot of work to go into living a successful life. It's not just for a lack of a better phrase it's not just cake and ice-cream, you can't just walk through it, like you have to put in work."

from three months to two years. However, based on extenuating circumstances, the period of stay may be longer than two years.

- Open market housing is used for all **scattered site apartments**. Scattered site apartments are located throughout the city and surrounding communities on the following criteria:
 - Easy access to public transportation.
 - Affordable to youth on emancipating from the system.
 - Safe.

Every attempt is made to place young people in neighbourhoods where they believe they can be successful. Since this program is not limited by a fixed number of bed spaces it always has openings. Apartments can usually be located for new applicants within 7-10 days. The LYS also maintains a registry of such dwellings. Effort is made to ensure that these are located in safe communities, though finding safe affordable dwelling could prove challenging. These are client leased apartments and rent payments are made by LYS on behalf of the youth for the duration of the programme.

Programme personnel visit the dwelling at least once in a month. Complaints from neighbours when they learn that a youth living beside them is being assisted by the State are a concern, but not frequent. When youngsters present continued challenges, the LYS personnel intervene and may find an alternate location for the youth.

- Some youth may also be supported in other forms of **support housing** e.g. college dorms if in school.

Young people can keep their apartments, furniture, supplies and security deposits if they are employed at graduation and have proved to the landlord that they are responsible. Youth who do not have a stable source of income at termination are assisted in finding other living arrangements.

LYS pays for the security deposit, rent, utilities, phone bills and furnishings to begin with. During the program, as youth become more financially self-sufficient, they gradually take on some or even most of the bills themselves. Participants also receive

a small weekly stipend of which a portion is placed in savings. The stipend is only expected to cover food, transportation and personal items. Youth must work to have

Youth voices:

What the programme taught me?

"Basically I learnt like responsibility, to be responsible and maintain my household and I'm still working on the budgeting thing. But as far as what this programme has taught me, it taught me to be like independent, try to work on my own success, try to give me the confidence and the motivation to want to better myself. And you know I am very humbled that you know there is a programme like this that really helps the youth because like if it wasn't for this programme and a couple other things that has guided me along the way, I wouldn't know where I would be honestly".

additional spending money, one of the goals for participants is to be financially self-sufficient by the time they graduate from the programme.

While youth are free from moment to moment oversight while in the programme, they are not completely without structure. Participants are expected to follow a number of program rules and policies. These include a prohibition against overnight guests, a limit of two guests at a time and a curfew based on their work or school schedule.

Ideally, young people participate in the Youth Housing Opportunities programs for 12 to 18 months. Lighthouse experience has demonstrated that participation less than six months appears to have insignificant benefits for the youth. Participants in the program are expected to continue their education, work or carry out active community service and strive to master essential life skills. Being placed in their own apartments offers them the opportunity to experience life just as they will when they become adults. The programme personnel acknowledge that there is clearly some risk involved in placing young people in the unrestricted setting of their own apartment. They argue that the risk involved in doing so, while providing them with an extensive support system, is minimal when compared with the option they would

otherwise experience by aging out of the foster care system with no support. Support is the heart of the system.

Youth Voices:

How did the programme help?

"The programme has helped me like with responsibility, household living. I graduated college since I've been in here you know. Like I haven't had no job since I've been down here, but since I got down here like, I aint got no job, they finally found me find a job. Once I lost that job because it was seasonal, I got another job. So I learn how to maintain and keep a job. One job was all the way in Kentucky and I couldn't like get on the bus whatever and my case worker went out of the way, got up every morning to make sure I was downtown.

I just like I'm thankful for everything they did for me and taught me cause I came a long way, I'm not from here. I'm from South Carolina, and I first came down here, I met a couple of friends and I don't have family down here. I met some friends that promised me housing, jobs and all that stuff. I slept on the bench for a couple of days while I was down here. I befriended a couple, they helped me out and brought me to the Sheakely shelter. When I was at the Sheakely Centre, I was still in my shell, I would finally come out of my shell like once I got to know people, and people started helping me. And ever since then that's just what I've been doing."

As the LYS programme personnel believe, "ILP is a harm reduction model for the child welfare system. It does not represent the best of all possible worlds. But it is the most cost effective model for a child welfare system with limited resources. It is one last chance for this system to give the young people entrusted to its care an opportunity to move into adulthood, at least partially on par with their more fortunate peers."¹

¹ Lighthouse Youth Services website. <http://www.lys.org/ilp2.html>

2.6. Visits to Programme sites:

The visits to the various sites helped the team to understand the operational processes involved in the housing programme, the support components that are integrated as a part of the programmes that enhance the continuity and sustainability, in achieving the goal of helping youth transition to independence. This section of the report highlights the programme sites the team visited and also shows how they are linked to address the needs of the youth.

a. Youth Crisis Center:

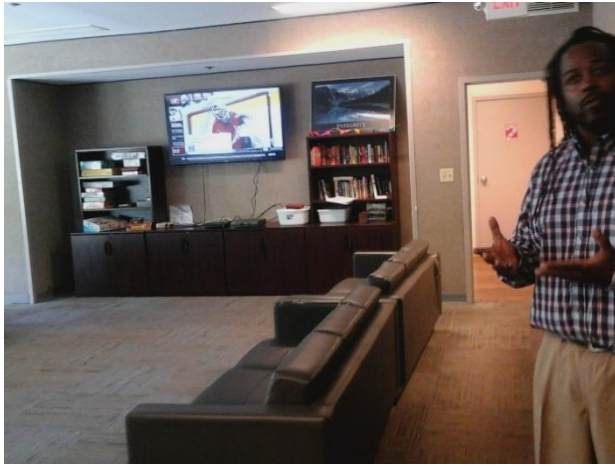
The Youth Crisis Center offers services under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Division. It is the only facility in the Cincinnati area where unaccompanied youth, between ages 10-17 years are eligible to seek shelter and safety. It is a 20 bed emergency facility open 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. The Center also operates a twenty-four hour youth crisis line. It is a safe haven for young people who are physically or sexually abused, neglected or for some other reason believe that they cannot safely be in their own home.



Under Ohio law youth may voluntarily seek shelter at the Youth Crisis Center without consent while their situation is examined by appropriate child protection investigators. It aims to provide safety and effective crisis resolution to the young people when their living situation is disrupted or endangered. This is accomplished while encouraging reconciliation and reunification within families, diversion of young people from the juvenile justice system and decreasing unnecessary reliance on the child welfare system. The court might send them to the Youth Crisis Center for temporary shelter.

The goal is to keep the children for as short period as possible. Reportedly, 10-12 year olds are out within a day whereas for the 12-17 years, the average stay is 5 days. The length of the stay depends on the nature of the case and varies from case to case. The length of stay does not exceed 30 days. The Center serves approximately 1000 young people each year with 20 percent of those youth returning more than one time.

Parents of unaccompanied youth are contacted within 24 hours of the youth's arrival at the Youth



The manager shares more about the process

Crisis Center in almost all circumstances. Parents have the right to decide whether their children remain at the facility or return home immediately. Though the youth can leave whenever they wish to, they are encouraged to leave only when they have a plan to do so safely. Some residents, those 12 and younger or those likely to be at increased risk on their own, must have their parent's approval to leave on their own.

In general, young people who have an outstanding warrant must clear the warrant before becoming a resident at the Center. Every youth has to undergo a crisis intervention intake process, usually conducted by a trained youth worker, to ensure that the youth is safe, to define the parameters of the particular crisis that the youth is undergoing, to understand the conditions that have given rise to this crisis and to develop a plan. Each resident is also assigned to a licensed Social Worker who works further with the youth and family to develop and begin implementing the young person's plan. This plan ensures the youth's continued safety, addresses the current crisis and sets out a strategy for the youth and family to address the underlying causes of the crisis. Crisis counselling is available for every family undergoing disruption. Young people do not need to be residents of the Youth Crisis Center for families to request crisis counselling. Any family or young person may request crisis counselling by calling the youth crisis line.



The study area

During the school year all residents attend their home school if that is possible. Residents are expected to use public transportation to and from school. Those who cannot attend their home school attend class at the Youth Crisis Center. Those students not enrolled or in unusual academic situations work with the Adolescent Manager from Project Connect, a program that specializes in education for homeless children.



Dorm at the Center

A typical day schedule at the Center includes waking up in time to get to school, showers, making beds and cleaning rooms, breakfast and going off to school. All residents of the Youth Crisis Center are eligible for free lunch at school under the Ohio Free Lunch program. When they return from school, individual tutoring services are available plus an extensive after school program which, depending on the day of the week -

includes creative writing, ceramic arts, ecological art, video scrap booking, all led by professional artists, as well as weekly field trips to museums, art galleries and other educational settings.

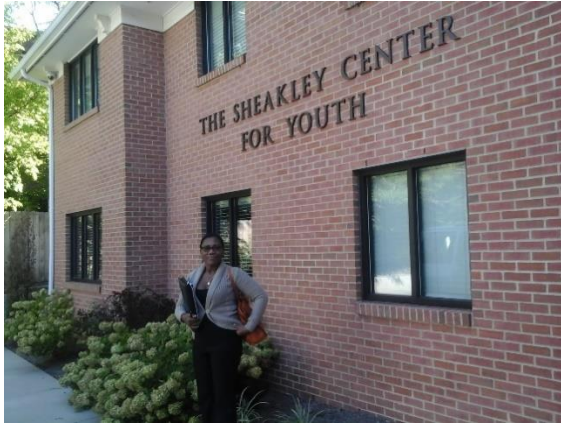


Team members in the locker area

Dinner is at about six, followed by household chores, then group time which usually is a prevention and education or community group. This is followed by leisure time and then bedtime at 10:00 pm. Residents are given the opportunity to wash their clothes, do homework and prepare for the next day. All of this is interspersed with phone calls home and to friends, visits with the assigned social worker and individual and family conferences.

b. Lighthouse Sheakley Center for Youth

Lighthouse Sheakley Center for Youth offers a multi-faceted program providing shelter, day services and outreach to homeless young adults to help them achieve success in the community through case management services, referral to housing, mental health, and substance abuse services, and access to harm reduction supplies.



Team member outside the Sheakley Centre



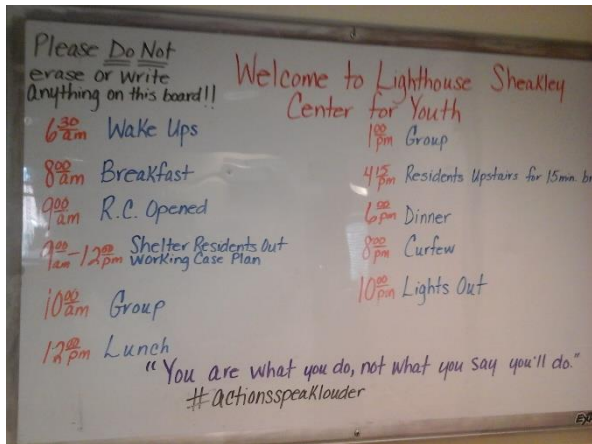
The Sheakley Centre mission display



The resource Centre and common area



Laundry area for walk-in youth



Time table on display board at the Centre

The resource center provides day services for homeless teens and young adults up to the age of 24 years. It provides food, personal hygiene items, survival clothing, showers, laundry facilities, access to the internet, mail service, and other survival and harm reduction services. They are screened on entry for weapons, alcohol and drugs using a security wand. They receive coaching in life skills such as budgeting, cooking, cleaning, medication, hygiene, health education, dealing

with the justice system etc.

It is staffed by a full time coordinator who can assist guests in accessing employment opportunities, housing, mental health and substance abuse services as well as self-sufficiency training, including financial literacy. A registered nurse is on staff to provide basic health care and first aid, as well as referrals to other health care resources.



Nurse at the Centre talks about the Programme

The shelter services can be accessed by single, unaccompanied males and females ages from 18-14 years, who are motivated to move from homelessness to housing. Boys are housed separately on one side and the girls on the other side. They must be willing to participate in a thorough intake and assessment, including trauma assessment, development of an individual service plan, and attendance in weekly psycho-educational groups. The housing goal is

developed in conjunction with a case manager and the goal is shelter residents will be exited into housing within 30 days. All residents meet with their case manager frequently and are expected to adhere to the rules of the shelter. Youth who exit from the shelter are eligible for after-care services for a period of up to 90 days to ensure on-going contact and success in the community.

A Street outreach team operates from a clearly marked van that allows outreach workers to access water, food, clothing, blankets, personal hygiene items and other survival supplies that might be

needed by young people living on the streets. Using a method called “harm reduction” workers attempt to bring the most basic levels of safety to those on the street. For those young people who really want to leave the street or to get help for other basic needs, the street outreach workers provide extensive case management services, as well as assessment them for eligibility to enter the shelter in order to help the young person make that transition.

c. The Life-Skills Centre:



Touring the life-skills centre

With support from IKEA, the LYS has set up a life- skills training Centre in one of the residential buildings being used for transitional living. Children in out of home care often miss out on critical opportunities to learn some basic life-skills. LYS assesses and trains youth in it’s out of home care programs in the development of individualized basic life skills.



Practical training kitchen at the Center

Every youth in these programs, 12 years and older, is monitored using the Daniel Memorial Independent Living assessment for Life Skills (Long form) and follows a plan based on this assessment and the learning style of the youth. It assesses 14 domains and there is a pre-test and post-test for each domain. The Daniel Memorial curriculum is used along with a number of best



Room to train youngsters to optimize use of small spaces

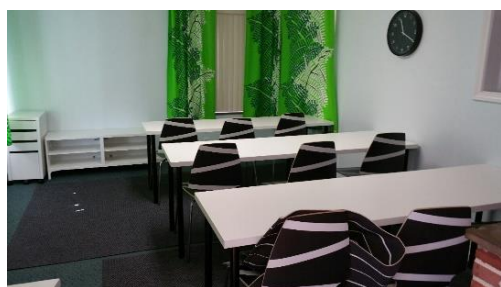
practice curricula based on the youth’s plan and the setting. Topic areas range from budgeting, cooking, cleaning, health education, working with the justice system, medication, hygiene etc. Very few youth complete the entire curriculum. Focus is emphasizing coaching in areas that are related to the youth’s challenging areas and the LYS preferred outcomes.

Yet another programme ‘Personal Responsibility and Education Programme’ is also implemented to address pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and healthy relationships. It is a ten module curriculum for trainers.



Room to train youngsters to optimize use of small spaces

Life skills coaching in several LYS programmes begins as early as eight years. Youth in foster care are expected to be prepared for independent living skills from 14 years onwards for which State laws also require that foster parents be trained in life skills and independent living coaching. Youth receive a stipend to attend the life skills group sessions.



The life-skills training room

d. Housing sites:

The team visited two supervised (one for males and the other for females) buildings and one scattered site dwelling. (Details described in the ‘Supervised and scattered site housing’ in the earlier section) Supervised apartments are designed for two persons with individuals having shared living and dining, kitchen and bathroom spaces. However, there are some spaces where only one individual currently resides in an apartment.

2.7.Measuring Outcomes:

Outcomes assessed from the interventions vary based on the need for which they are being assessed. For example, the transitional living programmes are measured on the continuum of care outcomes. Outcomes and future funding from CoC for the programme is based on outcomes in the following categories:

- a. Housing results: Clients exiting to stable permanent housing in a positive manner
- b. Income result: Clients exit with income.
- c. Employment: Clients exit with income from employment
- d. Mainstream benefits: The number clients that are receiving public assistance
- e. Chronic Homelessness: number served

f. Homeless Families: number served

The LYS uses the following outcome measures to assess its Youth Housing Opportunities programme:

- a. Sustainable Housing
 - Independent Housing
 - With relative or significant other
 - Supportive Housing
- b. Planned and unplanned discharges
- c. Employment Status
- d. Academic Progress
- e. Length of Stay in the program
- f. Client Satisfaction – Frequency of meeting
- g. Income

Yet another research initiative is the Youth at Risk for Homelessness (YARH) planning project, which attempts to strengthen and coordinate State and local systems to meet the needs of youth at risk of homelessness through engaging 35 community partners in strategic planning and research activities to develop an implementation plan for a model intervention. The initiative is being led by the LYS in partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Hamilton County Job and Family Services. Current and former foster care youth have been involved in planning the intervention. The goal of the intervention is to ensure successful transition to adulthood for youth who are or have been involved in foster care and are most likely to experience a difficult transition, including homelessness. This is being achieved through:

- Integrating trauma informed care and youth development
- Using reliable screening and assessment tools
- Implement evidence-based/informed treatments including trauma therapy, high fidelity wraparound, assertive community treatment and experiential independent living skills.
- Providing stable housing
- Ensuring that the system and provider staff are culturally competent
- Continued community planning efforts.

Data is being gathered through community readiness assessment sharing agreement among all service providers. The impact is expected to help youth move beyond traumatic experiences to wellness and capability, receive mental health care, achieve individual goals, access system and natural supports and gain experiential life skills. The project outcomes focus on youth having:

- Stable housing
- Opportunity to achieve educational goals
- Permanent connections and family
- Successful transition to adulthood
- Opportunity to maintain social and emotional wellbeing
- Employment
- Leading voice in decisions that impact them.

The LYS team shared that overall, the programme outcomes are assessed through the use of retrospective data. They reported that no longitudinal or tracer study had been conducted till date on the effectiveness of their independent living programme.

3. Casa Valentina, Miami, Florida

3.1. Overview, Mission and Vision:

Casa Valentina is a relatively small organization, only 10 years old, founded by a group of five women who came together to assist children who faced trouble with transitioning out of foster care. They were concerned that about close to 100 youth age out of foster care each year in Miami-Dade County and lack the life experience, financial stability and support systems they need to survive on their own. These youth are vulnerable to homelessness, incarceration, mental and physical illness, early childbearing, prostitution, and more and are expected to overcome the many challenges they face on their own, often without stable and supportive adults to help and support them. To address this, they hosted a successful entertainment event, a play, to raise initial funds. This was followed by a private donor providing the building to house the programme participants and Casa Valentina was born.

Casa Valentina's mission is to help at-risk youth and youth transition successfully from foster care to independent living.

3.2.Funding:

CV does not receive any Federal funding. Funding is largely provided by private entities. The youth in the programme receive support for rent, education, food stamps, transportation from other Federal (Chafee) and State supported programmes.

3.3.The Programme:

Casa Valentina is an affordable housing and intensive support services program for at-risk youth in extended foster care, having turned 18 without

being adopted or permanently reuniting with their families, as well as for young women at-risk of becoming homeless. For a small monthly program fee (USD 350), CV provides participants with fully furnished apartments in safe neighbourhood close to public transportation; intensive case management; academic and career planning support; help accessing services, such as health, dental care; and weekly group life skills training. The programme requires that the youth are not actively mentally ill at the point of intake and that they opt to enrol in the programme by choice.

Youth Voices:

How did the programme help?

“Well it benefited me as it gave me somewhere to stay. It benefited me in sharing how to get custody of my daughter. And school, I am going to get my GED result next month so hopefully I pass it. They basically help you with everything that you need.”



Newspaper article announcing the opening of Emmaus Place

Casa Valentina serves 12 young women (2 with children) and seven young men in its two sites, Casa Valentina (females) and Emmaus Place (males). There are no onsite managers (though there was one earlier, which did not work out well) and no curfews in place as the programme personnel believe that the youth are adults and this setting provides them an exposure of true independent living.

The visitation policy allows residents to have visitors to share their apartments not more than three nights at a stretch. The apartments are secured by an alarm system. There is a meeting room in one of the buildings, which is utilized to conduct training and other activities with the residents. Programme personnel shared that the participants are not singled out as youth from foster care and so face no resistance from the neighbours. Since opening doors in October 2006, Casa Valentina has helped more than 140 at-risk and former foster youth gain skills and confidence they need to succeed.



Study team members with CV programme personnel at the Girls apartment complex

Recognizing that educational success is the key to the residents' futures, Casa Valentina has spent much energy in the past year on the academic support program. Residents are now tested on their basic educational levels and their study skills upon entry into the housing programme and at the beginning and end of each school year. It pairs residents who request tutoring with a professional educator who is an expert in their field,

supporting their work together throughout the semester.

Casa Valentina has also launched the initiative for young mothers aging out of foster care, and welcomed the first families into this program which is partnering with the Young Parents Project (YPP), an intensive home visiting programme that addresses the complex needs of teen mothers involved in the delinquency and dependency systems and their babies to ensure that both the mothers and babies are receiving the support that they need. Initiated by the Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early intervention and adapted from Yale University's Minding the Baby model, the YPP aims to initiate positive life changes to alter the multi-generational cycle of trauma, early parenting and court involvement.

The programme has a case management system in place and trauma management is considered an important component while working with the youth in developing and implementing the individualized plan. It implements an evidence –based trauma management programme.

Partnerships with other agencies that provide Mentorship and Life Skills training are integral to the programme. Youth receive assistance and guidance for employment opportunities through Casa Valentina partnership network. Cross-agency partnerships and networking are crucial to sustainability of their programme.

The programme personnel reported challenges to longitudinal and tracer studies, due to fluidity of children in the system. Hence, data on programme outcomes is gathered largely from anecdotal evidence to assess impact of programme on youth outcomes.



Visit were made to youth apartments and the study team interacted with three programme participants. Participants reportedly were satisfied with the services received and indicated that the programme is helping them to work towards their goals.

The study team with a Casa Valentina participant

4. Reported Challenges:

Highlighted in this section are some challenges experienced and shared by representatives in both the programmes studied, and how the same are being addressed within the programmes. The visit exposes the TLP-CSC team to possible challenges and the knowledge gained could guide in devising contextually appropriate strategies to address similar challenges:

- a. The youth come with unresolved mental health and trauma issues, which restricts them from achieving the desired outcomes for independent living. Youth apparently on track with life-skills and education, may fall through the cracks if these issues are not resolved. This is being addressed through a programme that deals with mental health and ensuring that staff are trained and certified in trauma management.
- b. Despite several efforts, employment options for this population are extremely limited. Retaining employment has also been a concern. Youth in TLPs lack education, employment experience and self-sufficiency skills. Some may come with criminal backgrounds and a history of evictions, further challenging employment prospects. Organisations continue to network with potential employers, lobbying for opportunities and providing more chances to the youth.
- c. The programmes also noted that the ability of youth to sustain housing (on emancipating from the programme), and understanding responsibility pose a constant challenge. Abiding by the rules is challenging and disputes related to laundry, visitation, violence, etc. emerge frequently. Disruptive youth may impact other residents. In supervised buildings, the relationships between the resident managers and youth may be strained. At times relatives may take undue advantage of the benefits that the youth receives. In the case of scattered housing options, there is a lack of safe affordable housing and they areas where affordable housing is available are not necessarily the safest. Drop-out and attrition rates are also a concern, considering the circumstances of these youth.

This issue is addressed by regular monitoring by programme personnel, avoiding rigid rules and inflexibility and encouraging diversity of staff. Most importantly, they urge that ‘respect feelings of the youth and keep it real.’
- d. Resistance to coaching and implementing life skills is a constant challenge. Efforts are made to reinforce these in a variety of ways, including group and individualized coaching and providing incentives to attend sessions. Prioritizing areas of concern and flexibility also has indicated better outcomes. Also establishing connections with caring adults might help in the youth being better equipped with several life skills.

- e. Though funding sources are widely available, the funding is extremely competitive and the programmes have to exhibit positive outcomes for youth on criteria requested by the funders and ensure stringent monitoring for sustained funding.

5. Learnings and Recommendations

The visits to the two facilities provided enriching perspectives in implementing transitional living programmes for youth aging out of the care system. Though contextually the system within which the programmes operate in the USA is different and the resources available vary greatly, there are possibilities to consider, particularly to strengthen the existing services and to enhance the sustainability of the TLP-CSC programme, particularly in resource crunched settings.

Presented below are some learnings and recommendations that could guide the TLP-CSC project in Jamaica, including the drafting of the Standard Operating Procedures for the Independent Living Programme. Some of the recommendations may require additional support in terms of human and/or financial resources.

1. Incorporating a trauma informed care system:

Learning: Experiences of personnel from both the settings focussed and emphasized the importance in addressing the trauma faced by these youth in lives. A system or a programme to address the mental health issues in a consistent and ongoing manner is integral to ensure outcomes such as education, employment and other independent living outcomes are achieved and sustained. As evident, quite a few challenges reported in the earlier section by both the programmes, are inextricably linked to these issues.

Recommendation:

1. Ensure that the youth psychosocial needs are met before and during his or her stay in the transitional living programme. This can be through direct services offered by the Child Development Services or as a referral to allied agencies. Such direct services here refer to but is not limited to sessional access to the therapeutic centre once it is made operational.
2. A psychosocial and trauma management strategy is to be included as a part of the service continuum and its provisions thereto outlined in the standard operating procedures and other attendant documents as necessary.

3. As part of the orientation programme both the Site Manager and Youth must be made aware of different psychosocial service providers available nationally, especially those with whom an existing working relationship exist and those provided by Ministry of Health et al.
4. In an effort to complement existing assessment tools, the CDA is to take steps to assess psychological and behavioural services assessment and tools used by the Lighthouse Youth Services to determine relevance and use in strengthening its psychosocial care delivery. The tools in reference are (a) Child and Adolescents Needs and Strength, and (b) Daniel Memorial Independent Living Assessment for Life Skills.

. **When:** 2nd and 3rd year of the project

2. **Case management and individualized plans:**

Learning: It is crucial that each youth in the TLP receives an individualized plan that is developed based on individual assessment and worked together with a trained professional through the period that the youth is in the programme. The nature of challenges faced by this population are complex and require support from a caring, trained individuals to ensure that the youth is on track to achieving the goals. Continued and frequent monitoring of progress is crucial. Trauma management also needs to be integrated within this approach.

Recommendation:

1. Part of the orientation programme for all staff and volunteers working in the transitional living programme is training necessary to enable them to design and delivery personal development, conflict resolution, stress and trauma management programmes for residents. Mentors to be engaged to provide support for the youths, must be fully sensitized on these practices.
2. The Site Manager, volunteers, and mentors assigned to the programme, must be familiar with detecting and responding to psychosocial issues and is knowledgeable of the services available to which the youth and be referred. All effort must be made to ensure that the standard operating procedures provide guidelines on such matters.

When: 2nd and 3rd year of the project

3. Incorporating life skills coaching:

Learning: Interactions with the LYS and CV personnel highlighted the challenges of implementing life skills programmes with youth in group settings, in the sense that dropout and attrition rate is high. Most youth do not complete the entire curriculum. Yet another issue faced is, needs of each youth may vary in areas being targeted and hence a group approach needs to be supported by an individualized approach. Individualized in depth work in areas of particular concern for each youth is warranted. This can be integrated in the youth's individualized case plan along the continuum of care. Life skills coaching needs to be continued as long as the youngster is in the TLP programme, i.e. even after aging out of the care system.

Recommendation:

1. Life skills assessment and coaching needs to be incorporated within the children's individualized care plans and integrally built into the core care delivery.
2. The care plan process must be structured so that it articulates practical steps in response to the evolving need and development cycle for the youth. Provisions for independent living commencing at age 14 with an assessment to determine if the youth is academically or vocationally inclined or both, and again at age 16 for transitional living provisions.
3. The care plan must maintain at the forefront provisions for the overall safeguarding and development of the child/youth and the pursuit of reintegration at the earliest possible timeframe. Any such reintegration must be in a safe and nurturing environment.
4. The Site Manager must be trained in 'Life-skills development programme' being implemented by the project so as to ensure that the skills are reinforced.
5. Any mentorship training being undertaken as a part of the project should also include strategies to reinforce these life skills.

When: 2nd year (Assessment and Training); 3rd year (Implementation) of the project. To continue post project stage into the programme phase.

4. Strengthening data management systems:

Learning: Updated, well managed and integrated data management systems play an important role in effective dissemination and sustainability of services, especially in programmes of this nature with diversity of scope and services. Additionally, considering the fluidity of this population and the different services providers they may interface with, such a system helps in ensuring provision of the appropriate and adequate services required as well as tracking short term and long term outcomes from these programmes. The CDA has implemented an automated case management system (SOHEMA) that covers all children in care and includes information related to independent living.

Recommendation:

1. The CDA is to explore the possibility of utilizing the existing application software SOHEMA to manage the independent / transitional living programme.
2. Any process of engagement of partnership to provide service under the transitional living programme must take into consideration the need for said services beyond the project life cycle.
3. Formalize relationship with all partners through the establishment of a Service Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. Such provisions will include confidentiality and accessibility of services among others, irrespective of whether such services, data or information are shared electronically or manually.
4. The standard operating procedures for the transitional living programme must clearly outline use / sharing of data and other information on youth served and how such information can and should be accessed.

When: 2nd year (Assessments) and 3rd year (system implementation) of the project

5. Networking with service providers to strengthen systemic partnerships:

Learning: One of the factors that can strengthen and sustain programmes such as the TLP, is developing networks of service providers that support the programme, thereby reducing the strain on resources of one agency or organisation. Involving organisations that provide specialised services such as mentoring, life skills training, mental health counselling, career counselling etc. and operate as active system partners can help create a strong support system for the programme.

The visit to both the LYS and CV highlights the importance of strong partnerships to help achieve programme objectives.

Recommendation:

1. Develop a Transitional Living Service Provider Registry and begin tri-partite discussion necessary to formalize arrangement that will better enable better and most cost effective access to services offered.
2. Retrieve and review directory of services developed by the Ministry of Education, USAID and UNICEF for ease of identification of potential partners.
3. A mapping process is to be carried out that allow the project to match the needs of youth to be service with the service partners. This information is to be incorporated in standard operating procedure and must be updated annually.

When: 2nd and 3rd year

6. Funding and sustainability:

Learning: Most of the financial support to operate and sustain these programmes comes from a range of funders: Federal, State, County and private donors. Youth also benefit from other existing social service programmes (food stamps, transportation vouchers, education benefits). Though such supports are extremely limited in Jamaica, it might be worthwhile to explore possible programmes that this population could benefit from and explore on how these could be accessed.

Recommendation:

1. The CDA is to take the constituents to be served by the transitional living programme in consideration in negotiating any new service agreement with its partners.
2. The CDA is to make available a profile of relationship with partners such as The project implementation team can tap into the existing social protection systems and programmes that are available (The Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH), Jamaica Values and Attitudes Project for Tertiary Students (JAMVAT), Students Loan Bureau, National Health Fund (NHF) etc.) and to explore how best to widen the

access to such services, through formal service agreements / memorandum of understanding.

3. For sustainability purpose, efforts are to be made to ensure any relationships entered into can be extended beyond the life of the project. In addition to this provisions, a sustainability plan is to be developed to reflect how the programme will be subsumed and maintained within the CDA service continuum beyond the project life cycle. Such plan may include but not limited to the financing of the programme, the monitoring and evaluation framework that will be applied, and strategic and operational framework that will be used to govern the programme.

When: 2nd and 3rd year of the project

7. Sustaining the housing programme:

Learning: Sustainability of the TLP programme, particularly the housing component can prove to be challenge in resource crunched settings. Building a registry of available low cost scattered site housing options in safe communities, as well as working with the housing sector to explore affordable permanent housing options for this population might be some long term solutions.

Recommendation:

1. Hold discussions with the Real Estate Board, private home owners/renters and other real estate management companies, to determine how affordable housing options can be made accessibility for youth served by the State.
2. Arising from discussion in number 1 above, a Registry of Housing Options is to be developed and updated bi-annually or as necessary.
3. Work towards establishing partnerships with providers (e.g. Food for the Poor, National Housing Trust) for access to affordable housing options (temporary and permanent).
4. Hold discussions with Home furnishing chains such as Courts Jamaica and Singer Jamaica Limited with intent to have them providing furnishing and fixtures for the transitional living sites. Importantly, Food for the Poor Jamaica can be approach to provide such support.

When: Dialogue to be initiated in the mid-2016; Post- programme implementation. (2017 onwards)

8. Creation of a Life skills training Centre:

Learning: LYS life skills training centre is a practical way for children to learn life skills related to maintaining a dwelling, cooking and equipping youngsters with hands-on training in home management. Also providing this training in a setup different from their regular place of residence, by external individuals (and trained) individuals may enhance receptivity.

Recommendation:

1. Replicate the model life skills training site observed at Lighthouse Youth Service, which allows the simulation of different learning environment (housing, care of kitchen, proper care for bedding, proper care of bathroom etc.). These skills could be learned or enhanced using the common shared spaces at the complex, for example, the laundry room, as well as the residents' bedroom, kitchen, etc. Youth could be timetabled to demonstrate their learnings.
2. As part of the overall development of a child, similar simulation referenced in number 1 above can be applied in existing children's homes. This will see the existing spaces being setup and children are guided how to take care of the space.
3. Work with HEART to allow children in care, especially for those 14 years and upwards to participate in summer workshops. This will enable the youth to further develop have basic skills taught reinforced in a different setting.

When: 2nd and 3rd year of the project

9. Considerations for the housing complex:

Learning: The programme sites consisted of features, as well as operational practices that the TLP-CSC could benefit from.

Recommendations: Some considerations for the housing complex based on what was offered at the programme site included:

- Incorporate a Resource/ Entertainment area equipped with computers and other material and equipment to be used for schools/work assignments, job and housing searches. Such an area is to be equipped with Wi-Fi to access the Internet, television, information board to communicate announcements or share information related to jobs, etc., a pamphlet display rack with information about the various services the youth can access and other reading material.
- Green spaces are to be created at all transitional sites. Such spaces will help youth experience the outdoors especially for those who live in urban areas with limited outdoor space, while providing them with additional space for socialization.
- Ensure that the spaces to be established are equipped with adequate signage, for example, Exit, Laundry, Safety Assembly Area, Basic Rules for the Home, No Smoking, etc.
- Provisions of safety equipment such as fire extinguishers and CCTV cameras/alarm systems in common areas are to be taken into consideration.
- Youth are to be engaged, as part of their responsibility, the managing and maintaining of the transitional living environment. These could include but not limited to; a shared code of conduct, setting of rules governing the use of the facility, and handling of disputes. Youth are to be allotted chores for which a small stipend is to be paid.
- Private sector partnerships could be forged to support the same.

When: 3rd year of the project



Outdoor spaces at Casa Valentina

10. Challenges in tracking outcomes:

Learning: Both programmes expressed challenges in researching outcomes of the TLPs largely due to the fluid nature of the targeted population and the difficulties in tracking these youth over a period. Most of the data is based on anecdotal or retrospective data on the outcomes. Other significant challenge is segregating the impact of the TLP from the several other confounding supports the youth may have received over the period.

Recommendation:

1. Develop strategies that will enable us to track and monitor the youth development and progress during and after their stay in the transitional living programme

When: 2nd and 3rd year of the project.

11. Sharing experiences of youngsters:

Youth voices:

Aspects to be mindful of whilst engaging young people in independent living/transitional living programmes.

"Well, I think as far as you guys working with youth, kind of have an open mind because its plenty of youth from different walks of life that would be coming to you guys for help. And I guess it's also good to be like non-judgemental. You know try to be very consoling in a way and try to be careful with

"Yeah I second that. I'll tell you also I'd watch out for people who suffer in silence. There are a lot of people who do that in this programme. I know because I know a lot of them. If the programme is structured in a way, it's like they feel like if it's a system where all the rules or whatever is like harsh or like you're trying to push back. Yea if they feel like you're not flexible enough to deal with like some of the things that they go through. You could, like you said there are a lot of different youth from a lot of different backgrounds with a lot of different mind sets with a lot of different problems. And they're all going to react in different ways to like whatever happens like if you put a certain programme in place, five different youth are going to react five different ways to it. So you have to be aware that's gonna happen and have programmes in place and just ways to work with all of them."

Learning: The team interacted with various young people at both organizations. Their experiences and recommendations for consideration as we go on the journey of establishing similar services in Jamaica, are useful and would add value.

Recommendation:

1. Explore the possibility of inviting the youth being served by Casa Valentina to serve as a motivational speaker at the next CDA National Children's Summit.

When: 2016