WHO ARE TAY AND WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS?

Transition age youth (TAY) are generally thought of as minors and young adults ages 16 to 25. This age span extends from adolescence to early adulthood, a time of profound neurological, emotional, and social development. In addition to achieving or being thrust into independence, many young people experience the initial onset of serious mental illness during these transitional years.

As they cross into adulthood, California’s approximately 5,500,000 transition age youth face the daunting challenges of paying rent, entering and persisting in college and/or employment, and developing significant adult relationships. For those who are transitioning out of the foster care or juvenile justice system, these challenges are even more formidable. For TAY struggling with mental illness, the challenges typical during this time period are exacerbated many times over. Young people who need mental health services must figure out how to transition to the adult system of care, which provides a significantly less robust array of services.

“TAY should be viewed as a unique culture, therefore having a unique set of needs. Systems of care and their providers must tailor approaches and services in ways that support young people’s needs and their development as they transition into adulthood. This can only be done by respecting and fostering young people’s culture, goals and hopes for the future.”

—NATHAN WOOLBRIGHT, MEMBER, NO STIGMA, NO BARRIERS GOVERNANCE BOARD AND YOUTH IN MIND CLINICAL SERVICES TECHNICIAN II, STANISLAUS COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES

ONLY 20% OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES RECEIVE SERVICES.

APPROXIMATELY 50% OF STUDENTS 14 AND OLDER WITH MENTAL ILLNESS DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.

THE AVERAGE DELAY BETWEEN ONSET OF SYMPTOMS AND INTERVENTIONS IS 8–10 YEARS.
EMPOWERING TAY TO IMPROVE THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT IMPACT THEIR LIVES

While California has been a leader in statewide youth-led policy advocacy in foster care and the impact of incarceration on families, TAY mental health services in most of our 58 counties are still largely planned and implemented by adults with little input from youth. Not surprisingly, these services are not effective for many of the youth who need them. As a result, many young people experience long-term disconnection from education, employment, and meaningful relationships.

California’s county mental health boards (MHBs) are responsible for championing their local community’s mental health needs with their local boards of supervisors, which make local determinations about funding. Yet despite their capacity to drive change, most of the state’s MHBs lack institutionalized, meaningful youth participation. Just six counties (Alameda, Fresno, Kern, Riverside, Santa Clara, and Ventura) have youth committees, and only two (Humboldt and Sacramento) have TAY board members.

The No Stigma, No Barriers collaborative has set out to change this.

JOIN US!

HERE ARE THREE WAYS TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE COLLABORATIVE:

1. Sign up for our email list to stay connected at www.nostigmanobarriers.org/sign-up.

2. Learn more about our MHB campaign by visiting www.nostigmanobarriers.org or by emailing info@nostigmanobarriers.org.

3. Request a training or workshop for your staff by NSNB TAY Advocates. Email info@nostigmanobarriers.org for more information.

ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE

The No Stigma, No Barriers Collaborative, led by transition age youth (TAY) ages 16 to 24, was formed to end stigma towards mental illness and break down barriers to care for young people in California. We do this through trainings, outreach, and advocacy at the county and state level. The collaborative is a three-year project funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). Project partners include California Youth Connection, Youth In Mind, Young Minds Advocacy, and VOICES.