

# Creating a “Picture of a Life” for Transitioning Youth with DD in Foster Care



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

**Sonoran Center for  
Excellence in Disabilities**

Education | Research | Service

Expanding Possibilities | Enhancing Independence

**ABILITY360**



**DIRECT**  
Center for Independence  
ENCOURAGE - EQUIP - EMPOWER



**DES**

Arizona Department of Economic Security  
Division of Developmental Disabilities



ONE Community Working Together

Primary funding was made available by the  
Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council  
through contract No. ADDPC-03-08-2012

# History – Arizona Climate

- For over 20 years DDD had legal custody of eligible children/youth in child welfare system
  - Child Protective Services (CPS) investigated reports
  - Established dependency with Court
  - DDD eligible children transferred to DDD foster care
- DDD performed all child welfare functions
- DDD provided all supports/services needed regardless of Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCs) eligibility

# Background

- 2009 – Decision made to transfer all child welfare functions back to CPS
- DDD no longer had legal responsibility and unable to provide supports/services to Non-ALTCS eligible children/youth in foster care
- Created the need for more intensive transition planning to address housing, employment, and independent living skills



History of poor outcomes for foster youth.  
Youth with disabilities have at greater risk.

# “Picture of a Life” Project

- Collaborative state-wide project funded by the Arizona DD Planning Council and managed by the Sonoran UCEDD and DDD
- Targets young adults age 14-18 with DD making their transition into adulthood and aging out of the child welfare system
- Focus on non-ALTCS youth first

# POL Goals

## Improve transition outcomes for foster youth with DD

- Develop Persons-centered Plans (PCPs) built on strengths, dreams and choices
- Increase knowledge about options available
- Build on strengths of informal and formal supports and community networks to support young adults
- Provide opportunities to gain & practice self-advocacy/determination and independent living skills

# POL Goals

- Train facilitators – grow the cadre of people able to facilitate plans in AZ
- Ultimately, to improve services for youth with DD exiting foster care in Arizona by offering a mechanism for youth to exercise meaningful choices

# Major Activities

- Developed and supported implementation of PCPs for foster youth with DD
- Supported youth to attend self-advocacy & determination workshops
- Trained PCP Facilitators & professionals/ community on person-centered practices
- Project Evaluation
- Convened a State-wide Workgroup on PCP and Transition

# Collaborators

- Department of Child Safety (DCS)
  - Legal Guardians of youth in foster care
  - Increase involvement of Case Managers in PCP Project
- Independent Living Centers (ILCs) – DIRECT & Ability360 + Diverse Ability Incorporated
  - Providing self-advocacy workshops > Summer **Picture YOUR Life Academy**
    - Promote informed decision making
    - Promote involvement in community

# Collaborators

- Office of Children with Special Health Care Needs (OCSHCN)
  - Providing training and materials for Health Care Organizers
    - Improve long-term health and well being
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
  - DDD and VR developed a “Memo of Understanding” regarding youth in foster care
  - 2 dedicated VR Counselors to work exclusively with DDD eligible youth in foster care
- Behavioral Health
  - Many of the youth have co-occurring behavioral health diagnoses

# POL Youth

- Over 60 youth engaged
- 33 enrolled in POL program
- 22 plans completed

Experienced significant barriers in recruitment and retention of youth in the project

Barriers to Participation & Data Collection	
Plans started but not completed	7
Case Closed	6
Moved to restricted facility	3
Moved out of state	2
Death	1

# POL Youth Demographics

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>#</b>
White/Caucasian	15
Hispanic	9
African American/Black	6
Native American/Alaska Native	1

<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>#</b>
Male	24
Female	6
Transgender, male-to-female	1

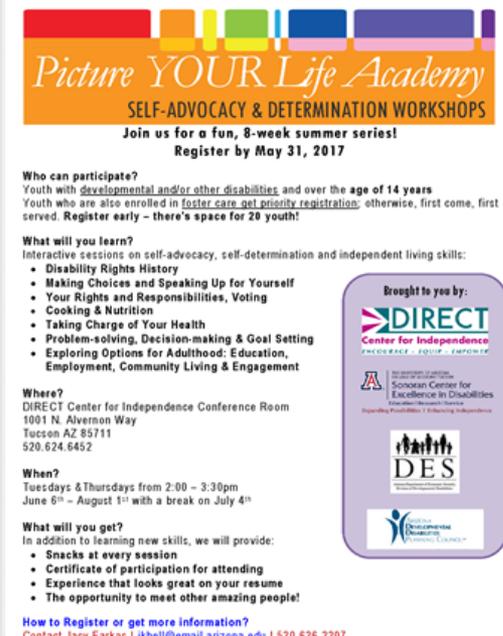
<b>Disability</b>	<b>#</b>
Intellectual/Cognitive	22
Autism	8
Seizure Disorder	3
Cerebral palsy	2
Deaf	1
Other special health care need	5

<b>Behavioral Diagnosis</b>	<b>#</b>
Emotional/Mood Disorder	12
Bi-polar Disorder	6
ADHD	6
Depression/Depressive Disorder	2
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	2
Oppositional Defiant Disorder	1
Reactive Attachment Disorder	1
Mania	1

**Youth is a Parent** 1

# Picture YOUR Life Academy

- 33 youth with disabilities – I/DD, physical, sensory, learning, speech, and psychiatric
- 22 of youth with DD in foster care
- 10 Females | 23 Males
- 24% from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups
  - Hispanic, Native American, and African American



**Picture YOUR Life Academy**  
SELF-ADVOCACY & DETERMINATION WORKSHOPS

Join us for a fun, 8-week summer series!  
Register by May 31, 2017

**Who can participate?**  
Youth with developmental and/or other disabilities and over the age of 14 years  
Youth who are also enrolled in foster care get priority registration; otherwise, first come, first served. **Register early – there's space for 20 youth!**

**What will you learn?**  
Interactive sessions on self-advocacy, self-determination and independent living skills:

- Disability Rights History
- Making Choices and Speaking Up for Yourself
- Your Rights and Responsibilities, Voting
- Cooking & Nutrition
- Taking Charge of Your Health
- Problem-solving, Decision-making & Goal Setting
- Exploring Options for Adulthood: Education, Employment, Community Living & Engagement

**Where?**  
DIRECT Center for Independence Conference Room  
1001 N. Alvernon Way  
Tucson AZ 85711  
520.624.6452

**When?**  
Tuesdays & Thursdays from 2:00 – 3:30pm  
June 6<sup>th</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup> with a break on July 4<sup>th</sup>

**What will you get?**  
In addition to learning new skills, we will provide:

- Snacks at every session
- Certificate of participation for attending
- Experience that looks great on your resume
- The opportunity to meet other amazing people!

**How to Register or get more information?**  
Contact Jacy Farkas | [jkbell@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jkbell@email.arizona.edu) | 520.626.2207

Brought to you by:  
**DIRECT**  
Center for Independence  
ENCOURAGE • EQUIP • EMPower

Arizona Department of Education  
Sonoran Center for  
Excellence in Disabilities  
Special Education Services  
Empowering Possibilities | Educating Independence

**DES**  
Disability Empowerment Services

Arizona Department of Education  
Sonoran Center for  
Excellence in Disabilities  
Special Education Services  
Empowering Possibilities | Educating Independence

# Picture YOUR Life Academy

- 100% Satisfied with workshops attended
- 92% learned more about Self-advocacy
- 96% learned more about Self-determination

## What Youth Liked Most about PYLA:

*“learning new things,” “voting workshop,” “the videos,” “meeting new people,” “making new friends”*

***“[The workshops] were very helpful and taught me how I have my own voice and should speak up.”***

# POL Training

Training	# of Trainings	# Trained
PCP Facilitator Training	6	81
Facilitator Webinars	18	varied
Person-centered Thinking & Practices	8	327

Extent of Agreement by Training Participants:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with the knowledge and skills gained from the 2-day training.	62%	35%	3%	0%
As a result of this training, my knowledge of person centered thinking , planning and practices increased.	47%	47%	6%	0%
The training was useful and relevant to the work I do.	67%	33%	0%	0%

# POL Evaluation

## **Questionnaires: (YR1 – YR5)**

Pre, Post, Post Annual Follow-Up (each year engaged in program)

- Youth and Facilitators

## **Transcriptions of facilitator trainings (YR1)**

## **Qualitative Interviews: (YR2 & YR5)**

- Youth and Facilitators

## **Document Review: (YR5)**

Person-Centered Plan (PCP)

Individual Support Plan (ISP – DDD)

- Pre-PCP
- Post-PCP

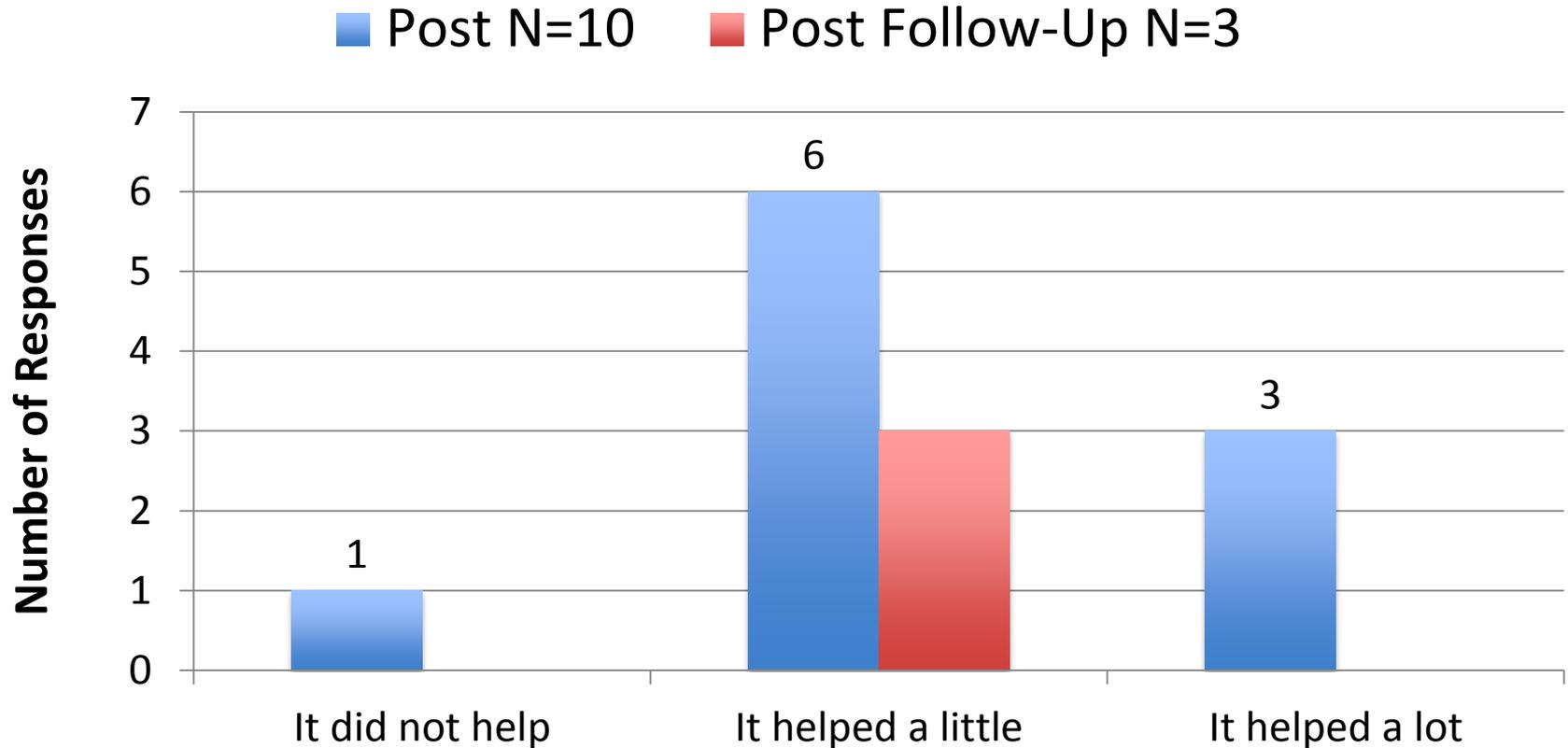
# Measurable PCP Outcomes

Outcome	Benchmark	Achieved
PCP has concrete steps for obtaining permanent living arrangements	30%	45%
PCP has concrete steps to plan for future employment incorporating job exploration and post-secondary education opportunities	50%	81%
Youth are better prepared for life after high school	75%	85%

# Key Findings: Youth

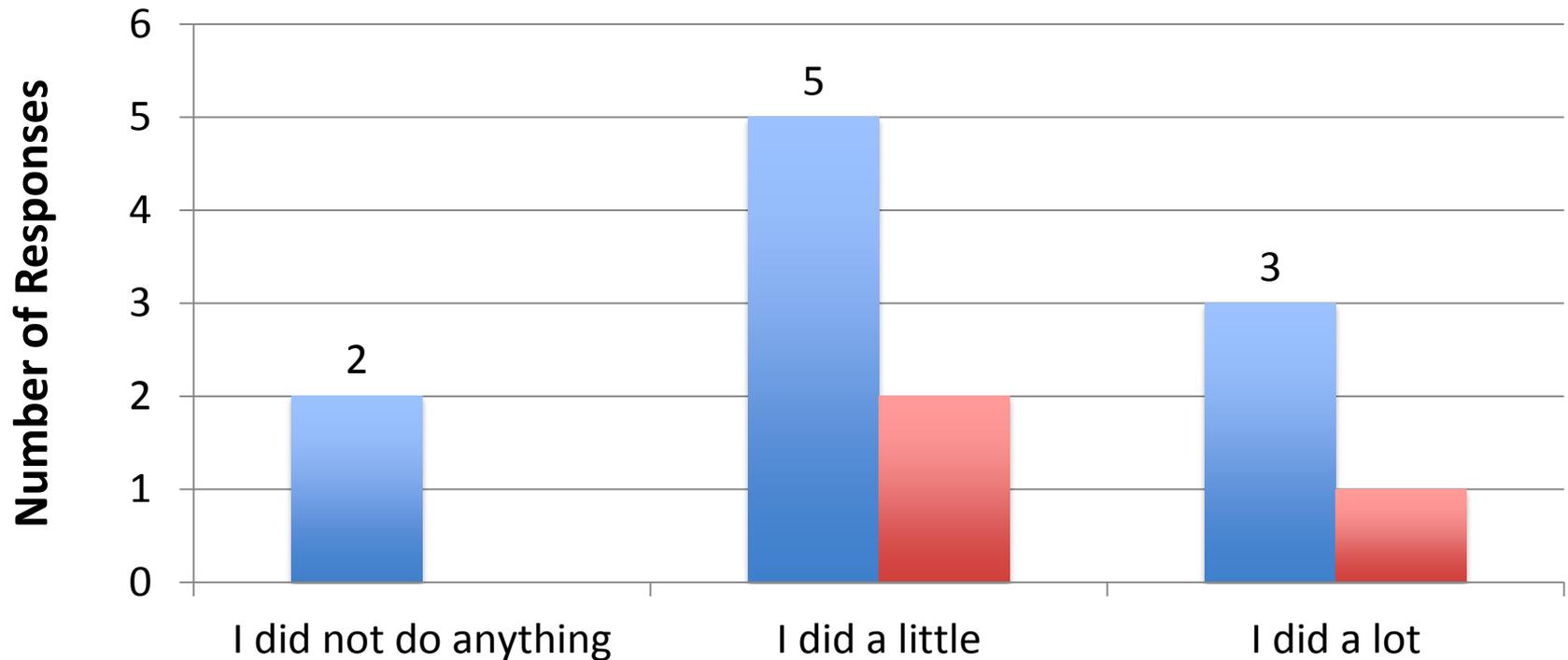
- Youth learned a more about the things they could do after they finished high school and places they can work
- Readiness for life after high school increased a after the planning process
- Youth had little knowledge about skills related to finding work and wanted more training in this area > this improved overtime
- Youth felt they could better describe and felt more comfortable talking about their health
- Youth making decisions and being able to tell others what they want or need increased

# How much did person centered planning help you to do the things you want to do?



# How much have you done to get what you want in your plan?

■ Post N=10    ■ Post Follow-Up N=3



# What Youth Have Said about POL

**I am satisfied with this program.**

**30% - Strongly Agreed; 60% - Agreed**

**My life is better because of this program.**

**30% - Strongly Agreed; 70% - Agreed**

**70% could do more things in my community as a result of this program.**

**100% had more choice and control as a result of this program.**

# What Youth Have Said about POL

“I like it because they listen to me and will help me get a job after high school.”

“If [other youth] joined, they’d get the help they wanted like I am.”

“It taught me a lot about how I can benefit some things and benefit myself and how I can be a more responsible citizen of the US.”

# Key Findings: Facilitators

Facilitators accepted: 35

Actively Planned/Completed PCPs: 15

- Facilitators found it challenging to engage and work with the different systems of care in supporting the process and resulting plan
- Overall, facilitators did not find that services were better coordinated across multiple service systems nor that there was improved communication among different systems

# Key Findings: Document Review

Pilot of 6 sets of plans:

PCP, Pre-PCP ISP, Post-PCP ISP

- PCPs were more person-centered than the ISPs
- In comparison to PCPs:
  - ISPs focused more on deficits
  - ISPs addressed health, safety and risks well
  - ISPs lacked evidence of exploration
  - ISPs did not demonstrate future orientation and being youth-led

# POL Challenges

- Nature of Child Welfare placements
  - Complicated personal histories – trauma, abuse
  - Issues of victims becoming perpetrators
  - Issues surrounding reunification with family members who were abusers or practice unsafe lifestyles
- Enrolled in multiple service systems: DDD, Department of Child Safety (DCS), Behavioral Health (BH), special education
  - Obtaining full participation and everyone on the same page
  - Turnover/Changes in case managers/support coordinators

# Challenges

- Lack of access to the youth as most communication and scheduling had to go through guardians, group home support staff or foster parents
- Transient lifestyle – transfer to new residential placements
- Circle of support limited to paid professionals
- Lack of consistency of people of youth's life
- Time and effort needed to complete plan
- PCP implementation dependent on team

# Lessons Learned

- Starting early is important
  - Hard to get young adult to refocus if already aged out
- Participation from different players difficult to obtain
- System and community barriers present significant challenges to working with youth
- Ongoing support and education for facilitators, systems of care administrators and staff, direct supports (ie., foster parents, residential staff)

# PCP & Transition Workgroup

Convened to promote the use of PCP and practices in youth to adult transition across the state

- Focus on systems change efforts > cultural shift
- Training: PCP incorporated into ADE training and outreach activities

## Representatives:

- Sonoran UCEDD  
Employment First
- DDD
- DCS
- Dept. of Education
- AHCCCS
- SILC/Diverse Ability  
Incorporated
- VR
- OCSHCN
- Behavioral Health
- Institute for Educational  
Leadership, Youth Technical  
Assistance Center

# PCP & Transition Workgroup

- Gathered information on Best Practices & Gaps in AZ
- Identified barriers and challenges to implementing person-centered practices and planning in the systems of care that support people who have developmental and other disabilities
- Recommendations for Fostering a Person-Centered Arizona: Cultivating a Community of Inclusion, Respect and Empowerment

# Final Thoughts

Many of the youth have endured challenges in their life. Despite all this, they continue to be **resilient**.

Their person-centered plan reinforces and supports their goals.

Youth appear to be more resilient if they have a supportive team, family, or network that are providing appropriate guidance at key transition points in their lives.

# Success Stories

- When we first met Jack he was living in a group home with many restrictions. He had limited access to the community because of some perceived risks. Since aging out of foster care, he has accomplished many things. He got a full-time job with Waste Management, which he maintained without employment supports for close to a year. Because he is not ALTCS eligible, he lost the funding for residential placement when he turned 21 in February of this year. However, the group home manager took an interest in Jack and took him into his home to live with his family. Jack has developed a very good relationship with the family. He is currently looking for a new line of employment, and his guardian is completing a referral for Vocational Rehabilitation. He would like to work with animals.

# Success Stories

- After aging out of foster care, Valerie decided to move out of state to live with her grandmother. When this didn't work out, she moved back to Arizona. She contacted DCS to enroll in the Young Adult Transitional Living program. She has been living independently, working at a call center, and is going to community college.
- Shannon, mother of two, came into care because of domestic violence in the home. Her children were taken into care and placed with Shannon's grandmother. She successfully completed her tasks in the CPS Case Plan, and her children were returned to her. When we spoke to Shannon earlier this year, she still had custody of her children, was living independently and she had a job at a call center.

# Acknowledgments

## Project Staff/Interns:

Melissa Kushner

Lynne Tomasa

Julie Armin

Ryan Peterson

Clare Emmert

PCP Facilitators

## Collaborators:

Michael Smull

Deni DuRoy-Cunningham

Laura Love & Kim Simmons

Barbara Guillen

DDD | DCS | VR

OCSHN

DIRECT Center for Independence

Ability360

AZYLF & Diverse Ability

Incorporated

**Most Importantly –**

**We thank the youth who participated in the program  
and to all who support them**



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Sonoran Center for  
Excellence in Disabilities

Education | Research | Service

Expanding Possibilities | Enhancing Independence



# Questions/Comments?

## Contact:

Jacy Farkas, MA  
Project Director &  
Principal Investigator

[jkbell@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jkbell@email.arizona.edu)  
520.626.2207