



INFORMATION

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The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services A Healthcare Service Agency

John G. Rowland
Governor

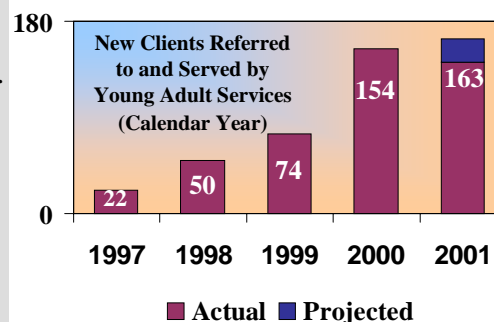
Special Services for Young Adults

Thomas A. Kirk Jr., Ph.D.
Commissioner

Late adolescence and early adulthood is typically a period of transition, vulnerability, and--most of all--*opportunity*. This is especially true for older adolescents and young adults with mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Services that are geared to a person's age and stage of development during this critical time give young people a better chance of successful adjustment and reduce the likelihood of long-term intensive services. Many young adults who move into the DMHAS system have been served previously by the Department of Children and Families and have many needs, often related to histories of significant trauma. Effective services for these young adults must pay special attention to the impact of this trauma.

The typical young person who is referred to DMHAS Young Adult Services has the following characteristics:

- A history of physical and/or sexual trauma, often starting before age three.
- A major mental illness, either fully manifested or in development.
- A long history of out of home placements.
- Limited independent living and social skills.
- Behavioral difficulties such as self-harm, suicidality, substance abuse and dependence.
- Neurological difficulties such as learning disabilities and problems with concentration and impulse control.



DMHAS is developing new age- and developmentally-appropriate treatment and support services that help older adolescents and young adults move from dependence to independent adult functioning. Services are provided at state-operated and private-non-profit Local Mental Health Authorities and include:

- ✓ Access to special education (academic, independent living skills, vocational readiness).
- ✓ Linkage with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and other vocational options.
- ✓ Development of independent living and social skills.
- ✓ Specialized treatment to promote positive social behavior and personal responsibility.
- ✓ Specialized trauma treatment to understand the effect of the past experience and to improve self-control and self-discipline of emotions and behavior.
- ✓ Short-term 24-hour/day staff support for small number of persons that may require this level of intensity.

By the time he was five years old, "John's" behavior seemed to be out of control and his father was beating him regularly. Psychiatric hospitalizations began when he was nine for suicide attempts and aggression toward others. He had more than a dozen inpatient stays and several residential placements by age eighteen. Contact with parents was limited due to a history of physical and sexual abuse.

"John" has been served in DMHAS' special services for young adults for the past two years. "John" currently has his own apartment and is working full-time. He is hoping to begin part-time community college soon. "John" has had no hospitalizations, incidents of self-harm or aggression for over a year.