



Taking Charge!

Meryssa B.
(Former Youth in Care)



The 7th annual DCYF/DJJS Teen Conference was held on August 11 at Plymouth State University. This year's theme - **Taking charge of the game of LIFE** - was reflected in activities throughout the entire day.

Youth participated in a variety of activities to prepare them for the game of life, such as building a house made of needs and wants. This included finding out what necessities they must acquire, such as food and heat, before they get a flat screen television. There were also workshops where youth could learn a wide range of different things - from how to go from being a youth in care to a youth in college. Former youth in care who went to college (or are still in college) shared their experience on making that transition. There were also workshops on: how to pay for college, how to stay safe online, how to find a roommate, healthy relationships, and information about Job Corps.



Team Building Competition at the Teen Conference

*Teen Conference
continued on page 5*

Continuing the Communication

Maggie Bishop, Director
Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) &
Division for Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS)



Since becoming the Director of DCYF and now DJJS, it has always been my expectation that New Hampshire will lead the way for permanency and permanency planning for our children, youth and their families. It did not take me long to realize that youth voice is critical to improving our overall child welfare system. I am not talking about just youth "presenting" to the agency, but that they are a part of local and state decision-making processes impacting their lives. To achieve this, we are working to provide numerous avenues for on-going dialogue .

This year's Teen Conference was one of the best opportunities I have had to talk openly and passionately with youth from all over the State. The actual conversations and other messages from youth throughout the day provided me with invaluable insights about policies and practices. - about what is working and what is not.

I left the conference with numerous written questions, comments and thoughts from many youth and I would like to address as many of them as I can in this letter.

There were questions around policies regarding physical contact between residential staff and youth. This is a difficult area to address in a broad sense when I know each of you had a personal example in mind when the questions were submitted. What I can say is that I am committed to normalizing youth's experiences while they are with us. Residential providers are well aware of our expectations in this area. Children and youth in residential homes need support and encouragement and that comes in many forms, including normal physical contact.

I am also aware that under certain circumstances restraints become a factor in some fa-

*Communication
continued on page 5*

Fall 2011

TeenVoices

<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcyf/yab.htm>

New Hampshire

NH Teen Voices - Update

Robert Rodler

DCYF Adolescent Program Specialist

In addition to leading the 7th annual DCYF Teen Conference, the NH Teen Voices recently provided important feedback about the proposed Sibling Bill of Rights and Normalcy survey (see article by Ricky Curtis).

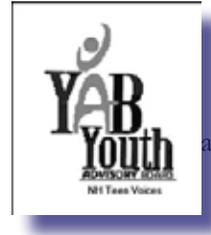
The next big item on the agenda is the development of a Bill of Rights for Youth in Care. Members spent several meetings discussing what should be in this document. A draft was developed and presented to youth at the teen conference. Topic areas of the draft include: input into case planning, placement and permanency, relationships with family/friends, communication with CPSW/JPPPO/access to information, placement and care, personal appearance/expression, adult living preparation, community involvement, education, use of technology, privacy/personal space and belongings including personal documents and health and well being.

The next step is for the NH Teen Voices to review the feedback provided by youth at the conference and determine what, if any, changes should be made. If you have any ideas or suggestions about a Youth in Care Bill of Rights, please make sure your voice is heard by attending your local NH Teen Voices meeting. A listing of regional meeting locations, dates and times is in this newsletter. You may also contact me at 271-4706.

NH Teen Voices

If we can see it and believe it, we have the power to achieve it.

The NH Teen Voices DCYF/DJJS Youth Advisory Board is made up of teens in out of home care between the ages of 14 and 21. The board's mission is "making a difference for youth in care by voicing opinions for positive change." The board is composed of five regional teams that meet on a monthly basis and quarterly as one group to work on variety of initiatives aimed at improving the lives of youth in care. The five regional teams meet the third Wednesday of every month (dinner is included). In March, June, September and December, the regional teams all meet together in Concord. **See below for information about each region, including meeting time and location.** We encourage you to check out the regional meeting nearest to where you live. Now is a great time for your voice to be heard!



Central Region

Laconia & Concord
4:30 pm - 7:00 pm
Concord District Office
40 Terrill Park Drive
Concord, NH 03301

Eastern Region

Rochester & Portsmouth
4:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Rochester District Office
150 Wakefield Street
Rochester, NH 03867

Northern Region

Berlin, Conway & Littleton
4:00 pm - 6:30 pm
NFI Davenport
Davenport Road
Jefferson, NH 03583

Southern Region

Manchester, Nashua & Salem
4:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Manchester District Office
195 McGregor Street
Manchester, NH 03102

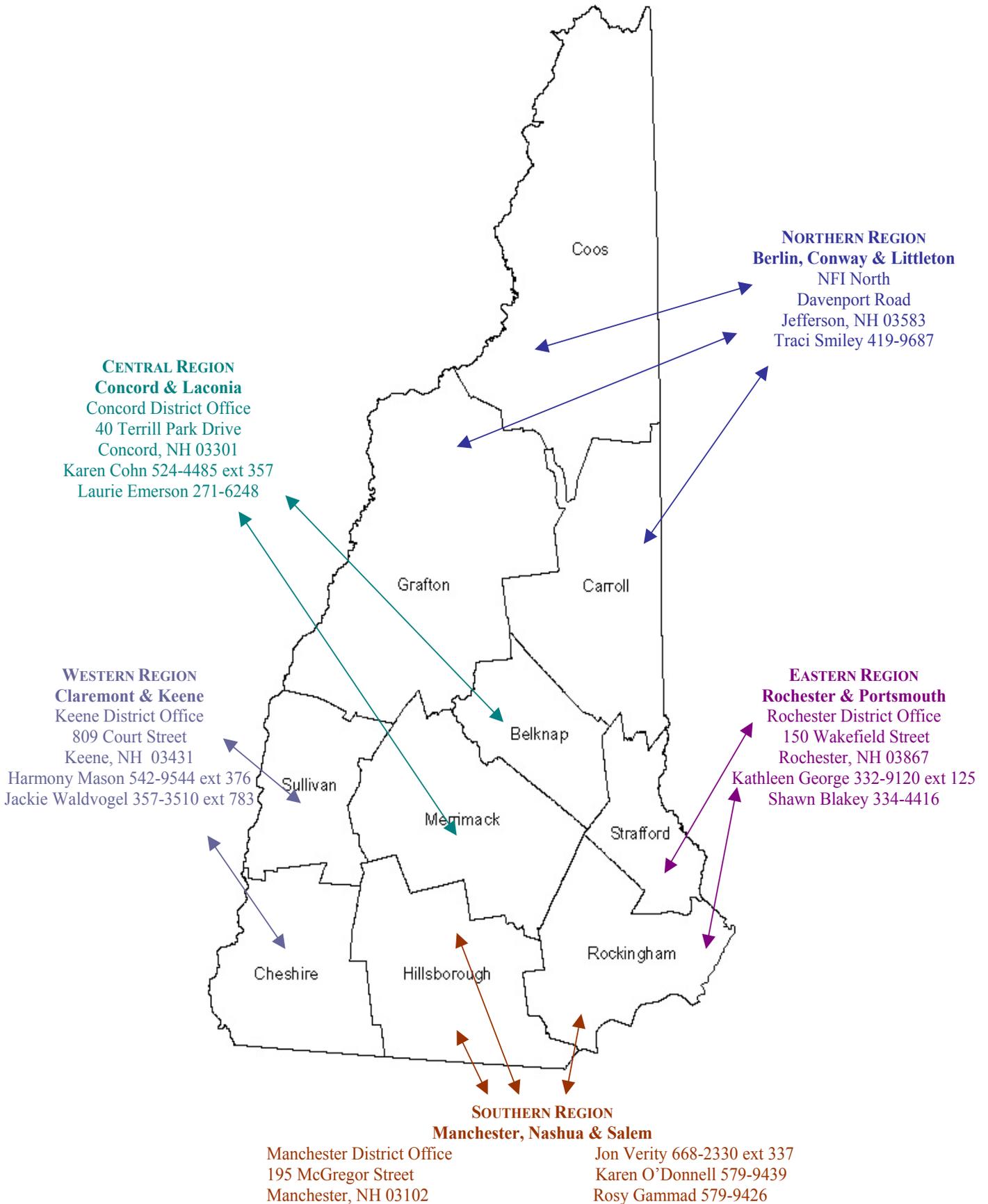
Western Region

Claremont & Keene
4:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Keene District Office
809 Court Street
Keene, NH 03431

In This Issue

Teen Conference.....	p. 1
Continuing the Communication	
NH Teen Voice Update.....	p. 2
Next YAB Meeting	
NH Teen Voices	
YAB Meetings/ Locations Map.....	p. 3
Startegic Sharing.....	p. 4
Contact Information	
NEYC Update.....	p. 6
IDA's	

New Hampshire Teen Voices DCYF/DJJS Youth Advisory Board Regional Teams Meeting Locations & Contact Information



**CENTRAL REGION
Concord & Laconia**
Concord District Office
40 Terrill Park Drive
Concord, NH 03301
Karen Cohn 524-4485 ext 357
Laurie Emerson 271-6248

**NORTHERN REGION
Berlin, Conway & Littleton**
NFI North
Davenport Road
Jefferson, NH 03583
Traci Smiley 419-9687

**WESTERN REGION
Claremont & Keene**
Keene District Office
809 Court Street
Keene, NH 03431
Harmony Mason 542-9544 ext 376
Jackie Waldvogel 357-3510 ext 783

**EASTERN REGION
Rochester & Portsmouth**
Rochester District Office
150 Wakefield Street
Rochester, NH 03867
Kathleen George 332-9120 ext 125
Shawn Blakey 334-4416

**SOUTHERN REGION
Manchester, Nashua & Salem**

Manchester District Office 195 McGregor Street Manchester, NH 03102	Jon Verity 668-2330 ext 337 Karen O'Donnell 579-9439 Rosy Gammad 579-9426
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Strategic Sharing

Emily Quigley



On July 13th and 14th, Casey Family Programs and the NH Practice Model sponsored Strategic Sharing Training. Eleven youth currently in care attended the first day, where the youth learned what strategic sharing is, the benefits and risks of sharing, and created and shared their own personal stories. Bob Boisvert, DCYF Administrator, and Sandy Ziegra, DJJS Field Supervisor, were blown away by the courage and honesty of all 11 youth who shared their stories. "It is important for all of us in this line of work to hear youth's stories because it reminds us and reenergizes us to focus on what's really important, and that's the youth," said Administrator Bob Boisvert.

The second day was Train the Trainers. Three former youth in care, three parents who previously received assistance from DCYF, and Division staff attended the training to become trainers in the future. The training covered materials from day one, as well as how to be an effective trainer and how to create a safe haven to encourage the youth to share their story in a safe effective manner. Going forward, this training will be regionalized across New Hampshire, giving more youth the opportunity to share their story.

"Strategic sharing is about making good choices when we tell our life stories so that our voices can be heard, our message is effective, and our well-being is protected." Casey Family Programs 2007

Adolescent Workers

**Berlin -
Conway
Littleton**

Traci Smiley 419-0514

Claremont -

Harmony Mason 542-9544 x 376

Concord -

Laurie Emerson 271-6248

Keene -

Jackie Waldvogel 357-3510 x 783

Laconia -

Karen Cohn 524-4485 x 357

Manchester -

Jon Verity 668-2330 x 337

Rochester -

Kathleen George 332-9120 x 125

Seacoast -

Shawn Blakey 334-4416

Southern -

Rosy Gammad 579-9426

Karen O'Donnell 579-9426

Robert Rodler

Adolescent Program Specialist
1-800-852-3345 x 4706

New Hampshire Teen Voices

Goal of Newsletter

This newsletter has been created in an effort to spread awareness of **New Hampshire Teen Voices**, and its monthly meeting of the Youth Advisory Board, or YAB. As a result of YAB efforts, significant outcomes have been achieved and participating youth have found the process both rewarding and empowering.

By publishing a quarterly newsletter focusing on YAB activities, it is the hope of both youth and staff that news of upcoming events and initiatives will generate even more interest and participation from staff, providers, and youth alike.

Editor

Robert Rodler, Adolescent Program Specialist

<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcyf/yab.htm>

Adolescent Program

**NH Department of Health and Human Services
Division for Children, Youth and Families**

www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/adolescent.htm

603-271-4706 or 1-800-852-3345 x 4706 (toll free in-state)
7-1-1 (NH Relay)

NH DHHS Mission Statement

To join communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence

A highlight of the day was “Maggie’s Town Hall meeting” where youth could ask DCYF/DJJS Director Maggie Bishop questions they had about the agency, herself, caseworkers, or just ask for advice. There was also a talent show where very brave youth got on stage and showed their talents. There were singers, dancers, poetry readers, break-dancers, guitar players, and many others. Throughout the day, staff handed out little red and blue raffle tickets to youth who showed leadership, gave a helping hand, answered questions, participated in activities, and many other things. These tickets were used to raffle off multiple laptops and gift cards. Many youth left very happy with a new laptop in hand.



All about Independent Living Skills



Enhancing computer skills

During dinner, there was an awards ceremony for youth and workers. Awards were given to a youth in care (Taylor M.) and a former youth in care (Nicole P. and Meryssa B.) who showed leadership throughout the year. Community member Erica Hoyt from NFI Davenport and DCYF Adolescent Worker Harmony Mason received awards for their leadership and hard work. After dinner, youth and staff members said their good-byes. I think that youth and workers alike left with more knowledge and tips on how to get through the game of life, resources they didn’t have before, new friendships with people they didn’t know, and a strong sense of knowing they are not alone in this battle. I know I did!

ilities. It is my hope that as we normalize the youth’s experiences these types of contacts are seldom or, better yet, won’t happen at all.

There were also several questions or references to system issues such as consistency or the lack consistent practices across the State. I can say clearly that I am aware of such differences from not only office to office, but also worker to worker as well. It is for that reason New Hampshire is creating a “Practice Model”. This will be a statewide family-centered practice model. DCYF will merge all aspects of our practices into a statewide approach that is developed in collaboration with youth, parents, staff, and community partners. I believe building this unified model for practice will ensure consistency in family engagement and communication. This change will not be seen overnight but I promise it will evolve into more consistent practices across the State.

In closing I thought I would also respond to the many questions directed to me personally regarding my role as Director, e.g., do I like what I’m doing and what am I passionate about and why. First, I would like to share that I went to college originally to be a teacher because I knew I wanted to work with children and youths. This interest soon changed as I began to study more about psychology and social work.

My first job out of college was as a Social Worker for the State of New Hampshire. I knew almost immediately that I had found my place in the working world.

Social work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help improve people’s lives. For me, it was specific to children and youth, as it was their lives that I wanted to help improve. I have always believed that children/youth deserve and have a “right” to a safe and healthy life. Yet, I am aware that is not always the case. Therefore, I was determined to commit to this both personally and professionally. As Director, I am truly honored that I can impact statewide how New Hampshire children and youth are served. We may not always do everything perfect every time, but what makes me passionate and excited about the work we do is that we are always trying to do better. I think that is all any of us can do. Be aware that we can always do better and never stop trying to be the best.

I hope this year’s conference was as rewarding for all you as it was for me. I also hope it was just one of many opportunities I will have throughout the year to talk with or hear from you.

Thank you to all the youth who worked with our staff to put on this amazing and successful conference!

NEYC Update

My name is Ricky Curtis. I am a former youth in care and I am the NH DCYF/DJJS representative to the New England Youth Coalition (NEYC), which met in Massachusetts in July and August.

The New England Youth Coalition, with the support of the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners & Directors, move that a declaration is created to ensure that the rights of youth in care in regards to their siblings are protected. We propose that all six states join us in preserving the relationships between the siblings of youth in the custody of the six New England States' Child Welfare Systems.

The NEYC is currently working on two initiatives: a Sibling Bill of Rights and a Normalcy survey.

Proposed Sibling Bill of Rights: The goal is to have all six New England states adopt it, which they are considering right now. I have included a general summary of the document below. I think if we get the states to adopt these rights it will ensure that we have a better system than what is in place right now.

The proposed Sibling Bill of Rights strongly advocates siblings being placed together whenever possible. If apart siblings are to have regular visitation/contact as appropriate, be updated regularly on each other's status and be notified of any placement changes. Youth living in other states have a right to be able to visit and have contact with their siblings as appropriate. Sibling visitation is not to be withheld as a behavioral incentive, restricted as a penalty or punishment or removed as a behavioral consequence or during times of crisis. Youth in care have the right to have their siblings included in permanency planning conversations as appropriate. Siblings' rights should be expressly integrated into all phases of permanency planning. Ongoing sibling contact should be included in any permanency plan. Youth in care have the right to be supported in maintaining contact with their siblings as appropriate, regardless of custody status. The adults in their life should work with them to encourage contact, facilitate support and process whatever contact siblings choose.

Normalcy Survey: NH DCYF presented the NEYC with a draft of a normalcy survey. The purpose of the survey is to measure the opportunities that youth ages 14-21 who are placed in residential treatment facilities have for “normal” and developmentally appropriate activities and to measure the opportunities these youth have in developing the plans for their care and treatment. Normal refers to standard or usual activities regularly experienced by youth not in residential care as well as opportunities for youth in residential care to have input and participation in their treatment.

NEYC members very carefully went through each section of the Normalization Survey, making sure everything was on target and making sure any changes that needed to be made were made. We provided some ideas on how to make the survey more understandable and more presentable. We came up with the idea that each state use this survey, making minor changes to it in order for it to be appropriate for each state. The NEYC brought the survey to a commissioners meeting in Vermont to have them look it over and have them give feedback on it. The commissioners were interested and agreed to review our revised version once it's completed. DCYF has already piloted the survey with some youth in residential care and will continue to do so in the coming months.

If you have any questions about the proposed Sibling Bill of Rights or the Normalcy survey, you can email me at vandetta1@gmail.com or contact Robert Rodler at 271-4706.

Resource Corner Individual Development Accounts (IDA'S)



Do you want to someday go to college or get professional training, buy a car, start a business or own a home? An Individual Development Account (IDA) can help you achieve your dreams.

The IDA program quadruples your savings by matching every dollar you save with \$3. You can turn \$2,000 into \$8,000 and make your dreams a reality!

There are requirements to qualify for and remain in the program. To learn more about Individual Development Accounts, go online to www.communityloanfund.org/how-we-help/ida or call (800) 432-4110.