

Lessons Learned While Transitioning Youth to Independence



Lesson One

Lessons learned from the years at Kaleidoscope

The young adults tended to stay in neighborhoods that they had chosen to live in, despite, in some cases, many runaways from previous placements. Kaleidoscope experienced only two runaways during the first 13 years of operation



Lesson Two

When the services were based on young adults strengths while also planning for their issues, our success rate skyrocketed, and we learned some amazing things about the incredible strengths and abilities of these youngsters. For example, if a young person was interested in art, then we would surround her with people who had the same interest. We also worked to enroll the young person in art classes or find a job that had something to do with her interest.



Lesson 3

We learned that it was imperative that we individualized the service



Lesson 4

The young people had to be part of the decision making process.



Lesson 5

Whenever possible, we included their biological and/or extended families.



Lesson 6

Twenty-four-hour crisis intervention services had to be a critical piece of every service plan.



Lesson 7

A team approach was important, not only to prevent staff burnout but also to provide consistency of service providers to youngsters who in the past had formed staff relationships only to have them severed when staff left or the young adult was moved to another agency. The team approach ensured that they were always involved with someone familiar to them.



Lesson 8

We needed to be patient. Often it takes years of intense services for youngsters to be truly independent. Because, like many of us, our first attempts at independence were less than totally successful. Hence, the importance of a no-eject policy.



Lesson 9

Natural consequences plays a significant part in the process of moving people toward independence.



Lesson 10

Many of these young people came from different ethnic groups and sometimes from different regions of the United States and thus had been assimilated into American culture to varying degrees. Our cultural components became an absolute necessity.



Lesson 11

Our main responsibility was to “work our way out of a job” by making sure that the young adults knew how to gain access to community resources.



Lesson 12

Last but not least, a vehicle for after-care services was needed.



Resources

Everything is Normal Until Proven Otherwise
By Ira Lourie & Karl Dennis

Transition to Adulthood A Resource for Assisting
Young People with Emotional or Behavioral
Difficulties By Rusty Clark & Maryann Davis


