



Inter-Agency Team (IAT)

Priority Issue Areas

The Montgomery County Collaboration Council convenes the Bridges to the Future - Interagency Advisory Team (IAT) which is comprised of representatives from agencies in Montgomery County that serve transitional-age youth and young adults (Y/YA) with mental health challenges ages 16-21 years old. This cross-system collaborative team is brought together through a common desire to provide the best continuum of services and supports services to create a smoother pathway for a healthy transition into adulthood. The team shares successes, identifies barriers to services, and collectively addresses needed policy or program changes. The IAT is the local “barrier busters” for Y/YA at both the program and system level. Members of the team are critical to the success of Bridges to the Future Initiative and to the Y/YA that it serves. The IAT meets monthly at MCCC on the 3rd Monday of each month from 1:30pm - 3:30pm, so if you have an interest in joining our team, please contact Debra Cady, Project Director at 301-610-0147 to join.

The IAT's work for 2019 is focused on the following priorities:

1. Identify system-wide practices that enhance outcomes of Y/YA with mental health challenges and identify gaps in the system that prevent successful transitions.

In this area, the IAT priority for this year is to create a process/practice to support the smooth transition for Y/YAs who are exiting child welfare and juvenile justice systems and moving on to independence. The IAT membership identified that youth in these two systems are officially discharged without a natural support network in place to support the real life transition. This is a gap in our system where the combination of limited life skill experiences and the loss of their worker with whom many known for years can have an adverse effective on the youth's ability to meet their goals and become self-sufficient. IAT membership recommended that Bridges pilot a process/practice of pairing a trained peer support specialist/mentor with a youth exiting the systems prior to discharge to establish a relationship with the youth to provide a network of support, bridging the gap into independence from the system.

2. Contribute to the social media campaign to make Y/YA priority throughout the county.

The IAT identified that stigma for youth asking for or getting help interferes with them being open to the possibility of mental health help. The IAT recommended the use of May's Children's Mental Health Awareness Month to be the catalyst to launch a “Be an Advocate for Youth Mental Health” at the Collaboration Council yearly symposium which is meant start the movement to be TAY friendly. This campaign is designed to increase knowledge of Y/YA and engagement strategies for practitioners in the community while helping to reduce stigma.

3. Develop partnerships with agencies and collaborative working arrangements.

The IAT shares resources with its members and each month a new collaboration strategy for members to build capacity. For example, the Youth Advocate Program (YAP) who has transportation for youth but lack for positive community activities and Bridges has Pop-up youth activities but few resources for transportation will explore a collaboration/partnership that strengthens the system of supports for positive, attractive, and developmentally appropriate youth and young adult activities.