

Developing and Implementing a State Policy

Another major goal of the initiative to support transition-aged youth in Maine has been to develop a statewide policy around transition. During Year Three, the State Policy Advisory Board was convened five times. This board included State-level (decision-making) staff; youth and young adults; consumers of mental health services; case management-providing agencies; and *Moving Forward* staff. The team drafted a Mission Statement and addressed the following policy elements:

- Purpose
- Foundational Guiding Principles
- Suggested Practice Guidelines
- Policy Development
- Background of the issues
- Policy Definitions

The State Policy Advisory Board drafted a comprehensive policy directing all state offices serving youth and young adults, ages 14 to 26 who are entering, exiting, or navigating state service systems to implement an effective transition planning process. In the beginning of Year Four, the draft policy was reviewed by executive management from the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS). The Director endorsed the project and assigned a liaison from the Policy and Prevention Service division of OCFS as a representative to the Advisory Board. In December of 2012 the DHHS Commissioner requested a draft of the policy work completed, which was delivered early in 2013. The board and the initiative are currently awaiting the response to the policy draft.

Two factors complicated the initiative's efforts in pushing the policy ahead. First, in the summer preceding Year four, the Office of Child and Family Services underwent a major reorganization which integrated Children's Behavioral Health Services (the area overseeing the initiative at the state level) into a newly formed Division of Community Partnerships. The state did not decide where the initiative fit into this new structure until January 2013. Simultaneously, the statewide director of the initiative resigned and the state designated existing staff to fill that role, leaving the policy submitted but lacking someone to follow up and promote it.