



# Illinois Permanency Innovations Initiative Newsletter April, 2015

## ILLINOIS TRAUMA-FOCUSED MODEL FOR REDUCING LONG-TERM FOSTER CARE

### Calling all PII Champions!

This quarterly newsletter serves as an avenue to disseminate information to PII Champions throughout Illinois related to the federal Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII) and Illinois' implementation of a trauma-focused model for reducing long-term foster care. This issue contains an overview of the PII study and Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET) intervention, implementation and evaluation updates, and youth success stories to date.

#### What is PII?

The PII is a multi-site federal demonstration project designed to measure the effectiveness of strategies to improve permanency outcomes among foster care children who have the most serious barriers to permanency. There are five PII Grantees across the country, funded by the Children's Bureau, a part of the Administration for Children and Families.<sup>1</sup>

#### Illinois Research Question

Do foster youth ages 11 to 16 placed in traditional, relative, and specialized foster homes who, upon reaching the two-year anniversary of entering care, are experiencing mental health symptoms and/or have had at least two placement changes, have increased permanency rates within 3 years of entry if they receive TARGET services compared with similar youth who receive treatment as usual?

#### What is TARGET?

- Trauma Affect Regulation Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET) is a strength-based approach to education and therapy when youth and families have experienced trauma.
- Provides psycho-education about the impact trauma has on cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and relational processes.
- Teaches clients to identify their own stress triggers so that they can better regulate emotions and behaviors and make and achieve positive goals for themselves.
- Provides skills training and aids to help individuals remember to use TARGET skills in the moment when they experience stress/triggers.

#### Evaluation Design

For youth receiving TARGET we track:

- Improvements in youth management of emotions and behaviors (affect regulation).
- Increased youth and parent/guardian contact and enhanced relationship.
- Foster parents report of improved skills and understanding of youths' emotions and behavior.

## IN THIS ISSUE



### PII Implementation in Illinois

The status of TARGET implementation throughout Illinois.

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### Youth TARGET Success Stories

A TARGET therapist and several youth share their feedback on how the TARGET intervention helped improve their lives.

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<sup>1</sup>The Illinois Trauma Focus Model for Reducing Long Term Foster Care is funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant number 90-CT-0156

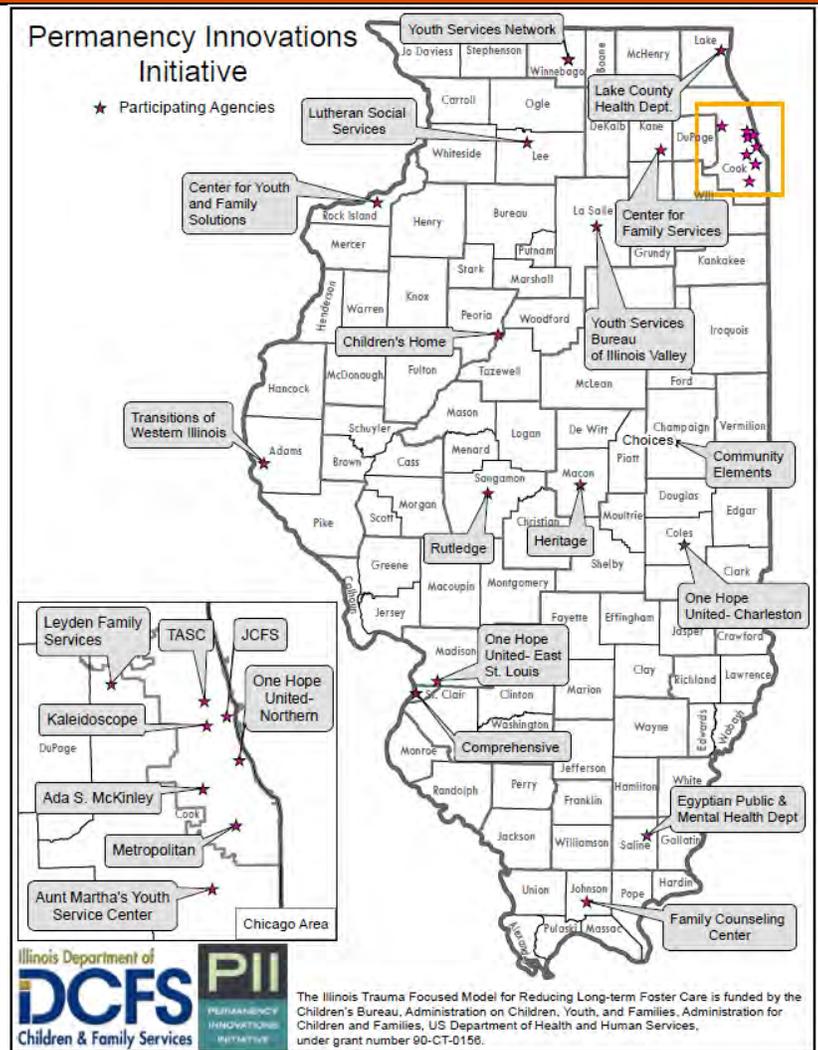
# Implementation

## TARGET Agencies and Therapists

- ⇒ There are currently 25 active TARGET therapists located statewide at 23 System of Care (SOC) provider agencies (see Illinois map for full list of participating agencies)
- ⇒ Therapists participate in ongoing fidelity monitoring with the intervention purveyors, Advanced Trauma Solutions.
- ⇒ PII team members provide ongoing case consultation, outreach support, and administrative supervision.

## Case Enrollment

- ⇒ 529 youth have been randomized to date: 273 treatment and 256 control. 462 of these youth are in the final evaluation.
- ⇒ 40 youth have graduated TARGET and graduation surveys indicate high satisfaction rates (see page 3).
- ⇒ 80 youth are currently receiving TARGET services, with 11 treatment cases pending



Source: Northwestern MHSPF 3/31/2015

## Implementation Driver's Assessment Survey Results

Grounded in the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) framework of organizational and systemic factors that facilitate successful implementation, driver assessment measures track progress in building implementation infrastructure capacity.

The Illinois PII team administered the assessment in February, 2014 to 17 respondents. The measures addressed the following eight domains that have been the focus of training and technical assistance provided to PII grantees to strengthen implementation capacity: staff recruitment and selection, training, coaching, performance assessment, decision support data systems, facilitative administration, systems intervention, and leadership.

- ⇒ Of the four competency drivers, training is reportedly the most developed at this point.
- ⇒ Most respondents believe that coaching is important to the outcome of TARGET, and that significant progress has been made in the development of supports that facilitate staff coaching
- ⇒ Most respondents report that the leadership structures, processes, and protocols that support facilitative administration within the project are largely in place.
- ⇒ Systems interventions and strategies that enable leaders and staff to address external issues that impact their ability to provide TARGET services are largely in place.
- ⇒ PII Staff have developed an action plan to strengthen the communication to champions in the field; hence this newsletter!
- ⇒ A second Implementation Drivers Assessment was carried out in March, 2015 to determine the effectiveness of the action plan and provide opportunities for further refinement. The results and subsequent action plan of this assessment will be shared in the next newsletter.

## CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEYS

When youth, caregivers, and biological parents graduate from TARGET they complete a client satisfaction survey. Responses range from 5=Strongly agree, to 1=Strongly disagree. To date, 29 youth, 17 caregivers, and 1 bio parent have submitted the survey.

## FAST FACTS

# 98%

Of the youth and caregivers who completed satisfaction surveys *agree to strongly agree* they are satisfied with TARGET services.

# 87%

Of the youth and caregivers who completed satisfaction surveys *agree to strongly agree* that since they began TARGET they are handling stressful life experiences more effectively.

# 96%

Of the youth who completed satisfaction surveys *agree to strongly agree* that using the FREEDOM skills helps them “feel better about myself, get along better in their relationships, and achieve their goals”.



*Mario inspired game board created by an Illinois TARGET therapist to support a high-functioning autistic youth's individual learning of the TARGET model.*

## Adapting TARGET to Client's Style

*Written by: Stephanie Heath, TARGET Therapist -Community Elements*

In the 13 years I have been practicing social work, I've always wanted to learn a trauma-based model. In May 2013, I had just that opportunity to learn Trauma Affect Regulation Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET). The first client I received was a 13-year-old male with a diagnosis of high functioning Autism. I was told that my client struggled to focus and it would be difficult to teach him a structured therapy. Prior to the first session, I was a bundle of nerves and could tell that I was going to have to bring my creative side to TARGET in order for my client to have an enriching experience.

While getting to know my client I discovered that video games and technology were going to be the key to my client's successful graduation. Sometimes as social workers, it is easy to go to work and focus on just making it to the end of the day and hope that you do a little good along the way. Then there are those clients that come along that touch our hearts, surprise us, and truly remind us of why we chose to be social workers. My client challenged me and helped me to become more creative with my therapy techniques just to make sure he would be able to learn TARGET. The great thing about TARGET is that it's easily adaptable and allows the therapist to develop their own unique style.

With my client, I utilized Mario Brothers in almost every session, whether it was

through colorful pictures, a video game family tree, or creating a Mario level on poster board with large gold coins to attach for the exercise. I related TARGET terms to Mario to motivate my client to speak about his own examples and keep him engaged in the sessions. As social workers, it is our job to take whatever information the client shares with us and relate concepts in their own language. Therapy should be fun!

My client enjoyed TARGET and wanted to see what I would bring to the table each week. As a social worker, I have definitely grown not only in my own creativity but in allowing the client to teach me. My client coined the term “skills for life” to describe the important FREEDOM skills he was learning. My client was incredibly insightful and has improved by using these TARGET skills in the foster home and at school. My client's grades have improved as he continues to work on his goals from TARGET and continues to make a contribution in this world.

My client has been looking forward to his graduation ceremony from the TARGET program since day one. He even asked for a graduation trophy because that would be more meaningful to him than a certificate. It is clients like this that remind you to appreciate the little celebrations in life because to him, his graduation from TARGET means the world.

## A Youth's TARGET Story

*Written by: A youth TARGET Graduate*

Hi my name is Diamond. I am a 17 year old transgender young lady. I am a senior in high school. The program, TARGET, is an excellent program for anyone to be in. It helped me understand people's thoughts about who I am. It helped me learn that everything that makes me upset, doesn't need a reaction. It helped me become a better young woman.



## A Youth's Successes with TARGET

*Written by: Reginald Owens, TARGET Therapist –Ada S. McKinley*

As a TARGET Therapist, helping TARGET clients understand their own behavior and teaching them how to self-regulate has been a learning experience for me and a very rewarding experience. One of my clients is a transgender youth.

Diamond is a 17 year old African American high school student. She has had at least two different placements in foster care. Diamond stated that her future plans are to graduate from high school, go to college, and study psychology.

Diamond is very reserved but she has been one of my best clients. She has been listening to and learning the material. I have challenged Diamond to use the material in her daily life, and to make a contribution to her friends and family by exhibiting her new learned behavior. She has responded by stating that she remembers and uses the material sometimes, and for me that means a lot. Diamond has graduated from the TARGET program, and my wish for her is to complete all of her future plans.

### OTHER PII GRANTEE PROJECTS



### Kansas Intensive Permanency Project (KIPP)

The University of Kansas, in partnership with the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and two private providers that comprise Kansas' statewide foster care network, is working to accelerate stable permanency for families of children with serious emotional disturbance (SED) by delivering intensive home-based parent training and support services shortly after children have been removed from their homes.

## PII Evaluation Update

Illinois continues to partner with Westat, the federal PII evaluators. We completed an initial testing phase in May, 2013 followed by a close review of a small sample, which indicated no harmful effects. Full OMB clearance was granted and the evaluation phase began in August, 2013. Case enrollment ended on February 28, 2015. Westat continues to

complete pre- and post intervention interviews for focus youth, caregivers, and biological parents enrolled in the study. Cross-site evaluation data is expected to be available to grantees by early 2016.

# Sustainability Efforts



[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/pii\\_approach\\_report\\_final\\_508\\_5514.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/pii_approach_report_final_508_5514.pdf)

Illinois DCFS has collaborated with Advanced Trauma Solutions to train four Illinois trainers who will support the sustainability of TARGET statewide post-PII. These trainers will be responsible for the continued training and fidelity monitoring of future Illinois TARGET therapists.

The PII team is working with the federal PII-Technical Assistance Project Contractor (PII-TTAP) to develop a sustainability plan. As we receive evaluation data, the current TARGET implementation model will need to be adapted to fit the population who will most benefit from the services.

In an effort to hear as many voices as possible, the PII Team has invited DCFS Operations, private agencies, and administrators statewide to participate in planning. A target population of 12-19 year olds has been identified with further criteria still in development.

This is an ongoing effort and your comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated! If you would like to share your thoughts, please contact Jen Marett at [j-marett@northwestern.edu](mailto:j-marett@northwestern.edu)



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## We Want to Hear From You!

If you would like additional information about the PII project in Illinois, would like to join a workgroup committee, or have any suggestions for future newsletters and dissemination activities, please contact Charlie Krause at [charles.j.krause@illinois.gov](mailto:charles.j.krause@illinois.gov) to share your thoughts and feedback. Please continue to spread the word about PII to your colleagues and networks.

Thank you for all you do to support our children and families!