Illinois Permanency Innovations Initiative Newsletter September 2015

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

PII Sustainability Update

TARGET, PII Illinois' intervention, will be continued in the same program delivering it for the PII Project. Keeping the focus on improving placement stability for youth and families, the Department's System of Care (SOC) program will now be known as Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS).

The program is changing names to align more closely with the nationwide definition of "systems of care", and will be accompanying a shift in program policy. In addition to TARGET, the new policies encourage a widening in the population of at-risk youth being served, beginning with any youth in care with 2 more moves in the previous year. It is expected that this policy change will add over 1,600 youth to the population eligible for services. Included in that number is nearly 700 adolescents who experience the greatest barriers to placement stability and permanence, our target population for PII.

This enhancement will include new therapists and training for supervisors of TARGET Therapists. The continued coaching and training will be supported by the five Illinois TARGET Trainers (see page 4 to meet IL TARGET Trainer, Pam Miller) along with the team at Advanced Trauma Solutions.

This program enhancement is a significant step toward improving permanency statewide. As one of the leading causes of long-term foster care, placement stability is key to DCFS youth's future success.

IN THIS ISSUE

Youth TARGET Success Stories

A TARGET Therapist and a youth's foster parent share stories of why they believe in the future of Illinois youth and the benefits of TARGET

Page 2-3

PII Implementation in Illinois

The status of TARGET implementation throughout Illinois.

Page 3

Faces of PII

A TARGET Trainer shares her experiences with PII and TARGET

Page 4

[1]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

PII Stories: A Youth's Growth

As told to PII Therapist Lindsay Ott, by a PII Graduate Foster Parent

Brittanie has shown exceptional growth since she has been with us for the last 3 ½ years. When she first arrived she was a very angry and an emotionally fragile little girl. She struggled with how to deal with her emotions in an appropriate manner. While she was in our care she started going to a program called TARGET. This program helped Brittanie learn how to handle her stress and bad emotions and pin pointed the triggers so she could deal with them appropriately. She completed this program on 8/13/14. Brittanie is also very talented in the arts. She uses it to deal with feelings and stressful emotions. Brittanie takes classes at school and improves daily on her own to master different skills. She aspires to become a graphic designer, and share her art with people. Brittanie has created a very special bond between herself and my three children. Brittanie has grown into a very smart young lady who makes good choices in life and is extremely talented with her art. I am very proud of her and blessed to call her my daughter.

TARGET's Real Life Value

Lisa Liebentritt, M.Ed.

I have been a TARGET therapist since February 2014. At the beginning of this year I started working with a 16 year-old young man who was having difficulty focusing in school, which would lead to small fights. He said that when people said "dumb" things he would get so mad that he couldn't think of anything else. As he progressed through the TARGET program he began to become aware of his role in how he felt and began to use the FREEDOM skills (core self-regulation skills taught in TARGET) to stay focused on his goals, which were passing his classes and seeing what he needed to complete in order to be able to enroll in the military after high school. He said he thought the skills were easy to use and he noticed when he used the skills it helped him to not let the others "get to him". He thought the skills were so useful that he asked me to make extra copies of some of the worksheets so he could hand them out to his friends and share what he had learned.

When I asked him what he thought of the program he said it was, "reliable, helpful, and usable". As the sessions were coming closer to graduation, his school year was also coming to an end and he gave me an example of how he used the FREEDOM skills in his own life:

He said that during his first two years of high school he would get study guides at the end of the semester but would become so overwhelmed by the amount of pages he would look at them and then throw them away. This year as he would get study guide after study guide he would start to become overwhelmed but then he started to remember the tools he had learned and completed a FREEDOM exercise. As he did his FREEDOM exercise he was able to come up with options to complete his work without becoming overwhelmed and he was able to complete all of his assignments and all of his study guides.

Then he showed me his report card and he had passed all of his classes. He said it was the first time in his high school life that he has ever passed all of his classes. I asked him what he thought the difference was and he credited TARGET, and my help, with giving him the skills to be able to, "tune out others when they were being dumb." This helped him to stay focused and complete his schoolwork. As he said this, he was beaming with pride.

This is what is so powerful about the TARGET program. It gives us as therapists the ability to teach our clients how to empower themselves and increase their roles in their own futures. It gives our clients ownership of their lives which in turn increases their sense of pride, self-worth, and personal control. Being a part of this growth has been a powerful experience for all involved.

Implementation Updates

TARGET Agencies and Therapists

⇒ 6 active TARGET therapists located statewide have cases.

⇒ 11 youth are still receiving TARGET as part of PII .

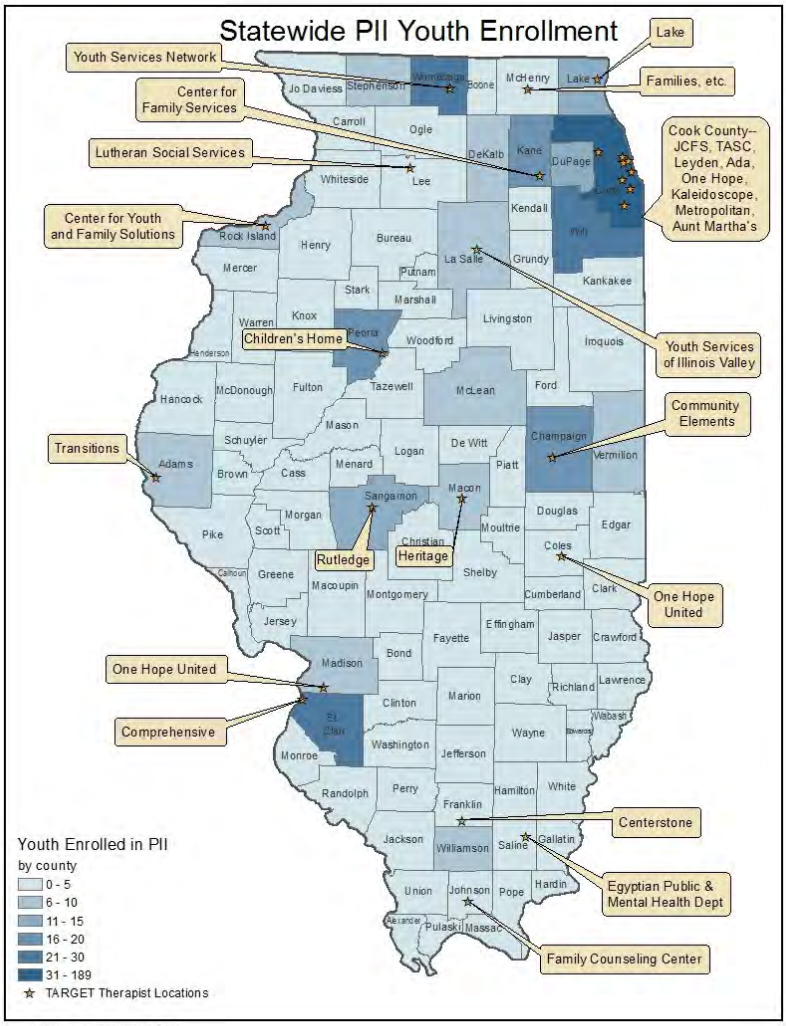
Final Case Enrollment

⇒ 529 youth have been randomized: 273 treatment and 256 control. 462 of these youth are in the final evaluation.

⇒ 72 youth have graduated TARGET and graduation surveys indicate high satisfaction rates.

⇒ There are 6 cases remaining for interviews, data collection for evaluation is expected to end on October 31, 2015.

⇒ 25 new therapists were trained to finish PII and begin sustainability in IPS.



Source: Northwestern MHSPP

Implementation Driver's Assessment Survey 2.0

In March, 2015 fourteen respondents participated in the Illinois PII Project's second Implementation Drivers Assessment. 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.

Results from the first assessment were used to inform actions that would improve PII. With PII coming to a close in Fall 2015, this years assessment will be used to improve the sustainability efforts of the Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) services program. The following is an overview of those results:

⇒ The majority of domains show increases from 2014 to 2015.

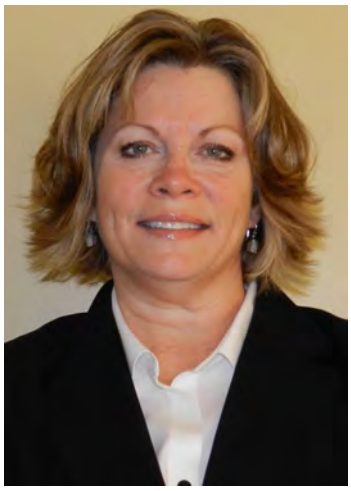
⇒ As in past surveys, training was considered the most developed driver. This will be expanded with a new Level 1 therapist training and a supervisor training in September, 2015.

⇒ Results from 2015 indicate that decision support data systems, the use of information from a variety of sources to inform decision making, have improved.

⇒ Lessons from improving decision support data systems in PII have been used to plan for IPS outcomes measurement. This includes data collection infrastructure, analysis plans, and using findings to inform policy and procedure.

⇒ Moving into 2016, DCFS has stable administrative leadership and a solid strategic plan for improving service delivery systems.

Faces of PII: TARGET Trainer Pam Miller



Over the course of my career I have worked with diverse populations including alcohol/drug populations, Intact families, and specialized foster care populations. In 2008, I began working with Chicago State University training DCFS and POS agencies statewide on trauma. My work with TARGET started in August 2013.

What did you see in TARGET that made you interested in becoming a trainer?

I am trained in a number of eclectic treatment models. Some models work with a small subset individuals, some of the time. TARGET has shown high effectiveness with a broad spectrum of clients. Clients and therapists learn so much about themselves and how to recognize and regulate their emotions.

How has TARGET changed your professional or clinical lens?

After learning TARGET, you tend to apply the principles and techniques into the lens that you use on a daily basis, whether personal or professional. Once you are able to recognize your own feelings, thoughts, goals, options through this lens, you can then teach others how TARGET can assist them.

Why is it important for youth, especially the particular population PII reaches, to receive services like TARGET?

Many kids in the foster care system are unable to regulate their emotions and behaviors as a result of their early childhood trauma exposure. Their ability to regulate their emotions and be in the moment is a key component in the ability to form attachments and maintain relationships. Not only the clients, but their caregivers are an essential part of the TARGET therapy. When the caregiver can recognize their alarms through TARGET training, they are more able to respond to the child in a way that repairs and maintains the attachment.

I love TARGET and it has certainly become a "way of life" for me.

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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 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!