



Policy for Transformed Lives

Executive Summary

CLASP

Policy solutions that work for low-income people

**Nia West-Bey, Shiva Sethi
& Paige Shortsleeves**

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Are we a service industry? Or a transformational industry? A service industry is kind of like McDonald's. How many burgers can we sell, as efficiently as possible, provide a quality product so people keep coming back. You know, when you have a line at the cashier, how do you move them quickly and efficiently through. And you're really measuring your success by the number of burgers you sell. Or whatever you want to sell. We do a lot of that, out of necessity. We have to bill for services, so we capture time, we bill in increments of 15 minutes. We capture services. Whether it's an individual service, or a family-based service, or a group therapy service, or in Kentucky we do collateral services which are with teachers and so forth. And then we capture all of that and we measure it ... All that's great for service industries. **But how would we have to change if we were in the business of transforming lives?** Cause that's what we really signed up for. ”

- Ron Van Treuren, Louisville



Executive Summary

Across the nation, young adults living in poverty experience serious threats to their mental health. More than one in five young adults ages 18-25 living in poverty report serious psychological distress within the past year.¹ When young adults' mental health needs are unaddressed, their economic stability, independence, and overall wellbeing can be undercut. The prevalence and persistence of mental health challenges in low-income communities underscores why policymakers and advocates need to take aggressive and creative action to better support this population.

To inform efforts to improve public policies, CLASP conducted an in-depth scan and analysis of how selected states and localities are addressing young adult mental health. Our findings, analysis, and recommendations are contained in this three-part brief series: *Policy for Transformed Lives*. The first brief, *State and Local Efforts to Support Young Adult Mental Health*, summarizes our methodology, provides an overview of the policy context in four states and three localities, and profiles innovative policy and practice efforts in each place. The second brief, *Barriers to Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Young Adults*, describes cross-cutting challenges and barriers to effectively supporting this population. The third brief, *State Opportunities for Young Adult Mental Health Policy and Systems Change*, describes transformational action steps for policy makers. This executive summary provides an overview of the topline findings from the three briefs.

Methodology and State/Local Context

Policy for Transformed Lives features four states (Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon) and three localities (Los Angeles, CA, Louisville, KY, New York, NY) that are diverse in several ways; each represents a different region of the country, demographic composition, and approach to young adult mental health. We focused our conversations on young adults ages 18-25 and youth ages 16-17 on the cusp of the transition to adulthood. Young people at these ages often have reduced access to critical services while simultaneously navigating a major developmental transition. In each location we conducted interviews with stakeholders from a range of sectors including health, mental health, human services, and youth-focused systems. Each of the selected states and localities offers important lessons and examples.

Cross-Cutting Barriers and Challenges

Several barriers to providing mental health services to youth and young adults were consistent across the states and localities in our scan. These challenges are intersectional, persistent, and endemic. Each of these challenges represents an opportunity for advocates and policymakers to work together to improve mental health services for youth across the country:

- **Medicaid pays for “health care;” Health care is narrowly defined:** Medicaid providers told us that the program's low reimbursement rates and narrow definition of 'medical necessity' limit their ability to provide preventative and non-traditional care.
- **Workforce and reimbursement:** Stakeholders described numerous staffing and reimbursement issues, including geographic variation in the supply of qualified providers,

lack of diversity and culturally relevant supports, high staff turnover rates, systemic underpayment, and devaluing of community health and peer support staff.

- ***Almost no one is good at investing in prevention:*** Stakeholders reported limited investment in preventative services despite recognition of the importance of getting “upstream” of mental health challenges.
- ***Cross-sector collaboration:*** We found challenges to strong collaboration across a broad swath of stakeholders, particularly between adult- and child-serving systems
- ***Justice system as entry point to services:*** The criminalization of mental health challenges was a consistent theme. Particularly for youth of color, the justice system is often the entry point to mental health services even though the system can be traumatic and often exacerbates mental health challenges instead of treating them.
- ***Meeting the needs of a diverse population:*** Disparities in access by race, geographic region, language, and immigration status pervade the delivery of mental health services. Lack of culturally or linguistically appropriate services, fear of retribution for use of government programs, and stigma all contribute to these disparities.

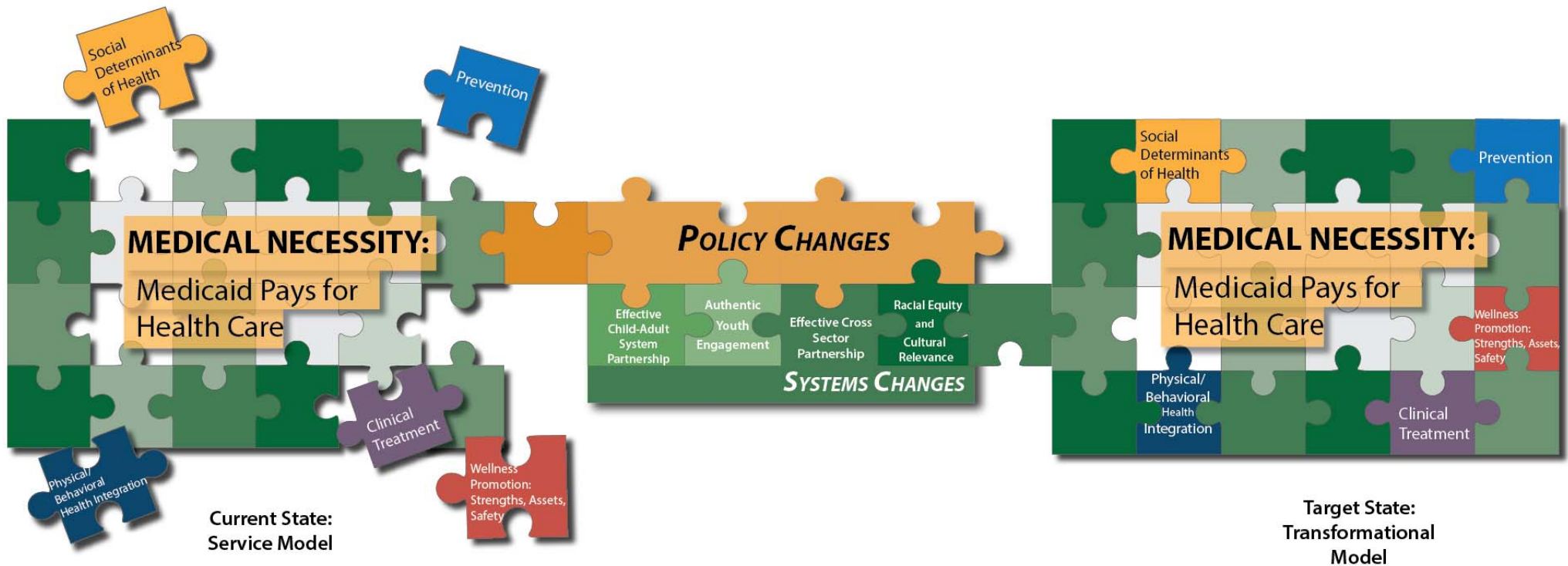
Opportunities and Next Steps

Systemic change in young adult mental health that centers youth and young adults requires bold action. We have identified several opportunities for states to shift their approach to youth and young adult mental health away from a service-oriented model and toward a transformational model previewed in the diagram on the next page.



Opportunities and Next Steps

Guiding Framework: Youth/Young Adult Mental Health



Transformational Goal: Push the boundaries of how healthcare is defined to include innovative frameworks that are critical to supporting youth/young adults with low incomes.

The proposed framework argues for policy change that expands the boundaries of health care to include Medicaid support for:

- Integrated Physical and Behavioral Health
- Social Determinants of Health
- Prevention
- Wellness Promotion focused on Strengths, Assets, and Safety

The framework also identifies essential systems change strategies:

- Authentic Youth Engagement
- Effective Cross-Sector Partnerships
- Effective Adult-Child System Partnerships
- Racial Equity and Culturally Responsive Lens

The findings in ***Policy for Transformed Lives*** are evidence of the need to move our young adult mental health system from a service model to a transformational model. States have an exciting opportunity to identify and pursue policy changes that can make this shift by pushing the boundaries of the definition of health care and better serving youth and young adults.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1. Interview Participants

Oregon

Mandy	Davis	Director of Trauma Informed Oregon
Nicole	Corbin	Adult Behavioral Health Services Manager, Oregon Health Authority
Martin	Rafferty	CEO and Founder of Youth Era
Jammie	Farish	COO of Youth Era
Tia	Barnes	Creative Director of Youth Era
Jean	Lasater	Young Adult Services Coordinator, Department of Human Services
Nancy	Allen	Manager of Department of Human Services Child Welfare Treatment Services Unit
Matthew	Rasmussen	Young Adults Transitions Coordinator, Department of Human Services
Paula	Bauer	Behavioral Health Program Administrator at OR Youth Authority
Kate	O'Donnell	School Mental Health Specialist, Oregon Health Authority
Sarah	Knipper	School Health Economist and Epidemiologist, Oregon Health Authority
Bill	Hansell	Youth Development Policy Analyst, Oregon Youth Development Council
Cord	Bueker	Workforce Policy Analyst, Oregon Youth Development Council
Andy	Smith	Policy Analyst for Health and Human Services and Veterans
Carly	Hood-Ronick	Social Determinants of Health Manager, Oregon Primary Care Association
Cherryl	Ramirez	Executive Director of Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs
Leann	Johnson	Director of the Office of Equity and Inclusion, Oregon Health Authority
Lea Ann	Holder	Tribal Liaison Consultant for Trauma Informed Oregon
Samantha	Shepherd	Executive Director of CCO Oregon

Holly	Heiberg	Government Relations Director at Oregon Health Authority
Michael	Morris	Interim Behavioral Health Director at Oregon Health Authority
David	Simnitt	Interim Medicaid Director, Oregon Health Authority
Lea	Forsman	Medicaid Behavioral Health Policy Analyst

New Mexico

Kari	Armijo	Deputy Director of Medical Assistance Division
Sally	Wait	Medicaid Behavioral Health Manager
Wayne	Lindstrom	Director of Behavioral Health Services Division, CEO Behavioral Health Collaborative
Bryce	Pittenger	Children, Youth, and Families Department Director of Behavioral Health Services
Maya	McKnight	Children, Youth and Families Department Chafee Manager at the Youth Services Bureau
Kristin	Jones	General Manager at Children Youth and Families Division Systems of Care
Michael	Hock	Behavioral Health Manager at Children, Youth and Families Department
Josiah	Reyes	Youth Move New Mexico
Gerri	Bachicha	Juvenile Detention Alternatives Administrator
Tom	Hall	Mental Health Administrator at Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention
Ralph	Espinoza	Juvenile Detention Facilities Behavioral Health Director
Diana	Lopez	Vice President of Behavioral Health Services, Youth Development Inc.
Concha	Cordova	Vice President of Education, Employment, and Training, Youth Development Inc.
Natalie	Rivera	Behavioral Health Planning Council Manager
Grace	Philips	General Counsel for New Mexico Association of Counties
Steve	Kopelman	Executive Director of New Mexico Association of Counties

Jessica	Espinoza Jensen	Grant and Capacity Building Strategist, New Mexico Health Equity Partnership
Michael	Ruble	Project Director of Healthy Transitions New Mexico
Carol	Moss	Mental Health Epidemiologist, State of New Mexico
Jacalyn	Dougherty	Suicide Prevention Coordinator, State of New Mexico
Hank	Hughes	Executive Director of New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness
Craig	Pierce	CEO of Southwest Family Guidance Center

Maryland

Randi	Walters	Deputy Secretary of Programs, State of Maryland
Thomas	Merrick	Deputy Director of Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Services at Behavioral Health Administration
Ann	Geddes	Director of Public Policy, Maryland Coalition for Families
Lauren	Grimes	Director of Network and Peer Services, ON Our Own Maryland
Rebecca	Gaston Jones	Executive Director of the Social Services Administration
Nick	Moroney	Director of the Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit
Eliza	Steele	Juvenile Justice Monitor
Margi	Joshi	Juvenile Justice Monitor
Ingrid	Lofgren	Director of Homeless Youth Initiative, Homeless Persons Representation Project
Carolynnette	Scott	Disability and Youth Services Coordinator
Blair	Franklin	Executive Director of Youth Empowered Society
Karen	Williams	CEO of Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers
Shannon	Hall	Executive Director of Community Behavioral Health Associations of Maryland
Hilary	Phillips	Director of Planning, State of Maryland

Kris	Wright	Trainer Consultant, Evidence-Based Practice Center, University of Maryland School of Medicine
Linda	Raines	CEO of Mental Health Association of Maryland
Barbara	Bazron	Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health

Los Angeles

Robert	Byrd	Mental Health Clinical District Chief
Gita	Murthy Cugley	Southern California Grantmakers Los Angeles County Child Welfare Collaborative Consultant
Jonathan	Sherin	Director of Mental Health
Helen	Berberian	Deputy Director of Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services
Nicole	Davis Tinkham	Interim Public Defender, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office
Jenny	Brown	Acting Chief Deputy, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office
Winston	Peters	Assistant Public Defender, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office
Ruben	Marquez	Assistant Public Defender, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office
Ramon	Quintana	Division Chief, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office
Michael	Suzuki	Division Chief, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office
Phil	Ansell	Director of County Homeless Initiative
Leticia	Colchado	Principal Analyst of Homeless Initiative
Tina	Estedabadi	Youth Coordinated Entry Services Coordinator
Mary	Romero	Clinical Program Manager, Homeless Services Authority
Jaclyn	Grant	Youth Coordinated Entry Services Coordinator, Homeless Services Authority
Will	Lehman	Youth Coordinated Entry System Manager, Homeless Services Authority
Raji	Shivshanker	Youth Coordinated Entry System Lead, Homeless Services

Authority

Alfred (AJ)	McCloud	Regional Program Coordinator, Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD)
Robert	Sainz	Assistant General Manager, City of Los Angeles
Christina	Miller	President and CEO of Mental Health America of Los Angeles
Terri	Boykins	Deputy Director of Transition Age Youth System of Care
Elizabeth	Cohen	Associate Center Director, Office of Child Protection
Katheryn	Anderson	Center Director, Office of Child Protection
Wendy	Smith	Chair, LA County Commission for Children and Families

Louisville

Eric	Friedlander	Chief Resiliency Officer, City of Louisville
Sarah	Moyer	Director of Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness
Ursula	Mullins	Director of Louisville Metro Youth Detention Services
Eva	Stone	Director of Health Services
Michelle	Sircy	Counselor Specialist, Jefferson County Public Schools
Rashawna	Mullaney	Lead Psychologist, Jefferson County Public Schools
Natalie	Harris	Executive Director of the Coalition for the Homeless
Rebecca	DeJarnatt	Coordinator of Youth Development
Cindy	Read	Deputy Director of KentuckianaWorks
Joseph E.	Smith	CEO of Kentucky Primary Care Association
Rebecca	Hollenbach	Policy Analyst, Center for Health Equity
Kate	Tilton	TAYLRD State Level Project Director
Brandy	Kelly-Pryor	Director of the Center for Health Equity
Katy	Hopkins	Director of the Cardinal Success Program
Rashaad	Abdur-Rahman	Director of Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods

Ron Van Treuren
Division Director of Children and Family Services at Centerstone Kentucky

New York City

Eric Brettschnieder
Administration for Children's Services Deputy Commissioner

Jenny Havens
Bellevue Hospital's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Director

Angel Mendoza
Agency Director, Administration for Children's Services

Jamie Madden
Assistant Commissioner, Administration for Children's Services

Valerie Camarano
Assistant Commissioner of Juvenile Justice Behavioral Health Services

Scott Bloom
Director of School Mental Health Services

Angela Diaz
Director of Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center

Sascha DuBrul
Recovery Specialist and Trainer for OnTrackNY and ACT

Kimberley Williams
President and CEO of the Mental Health Association of New York City

Angela Mora Vargas
Supervisor of Family Resource Centers

Marcia Werchol
Assistant Vice President, Family Court Mental Health Services

Michael Duncanson
Senior Director of Planning and Operations at Family Court Mental Health Services NYC

Jason Hansman
Director for Logistics, Operations, and Administrative Support, Department of Homeless Services

Eduardo Laboy
**Senior Research Analyst
 NYC Department of Youth and Community Development**

Lisa Furst
Assistant Vice President, Center for Policy, Advocacy and Education at Mental Health Association of New York City

Michigan

Carrie	Tarry	Director of the Division of Child and Adolescent Health
Kim	Batsche-McKenzie	Manager for Programs for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance
Jackie	Panich	Executive Assistant, State of Michigan
Michelle	Hill	Juvenile Diversion Analyst, State of Michigan
Sheri	Falvay	Director of the Division of Mental Health Services for Children and Family
Jasmine	Boatwright	Youth Involvement Coordinator, Youth United
Crystal	Palmer	Director of Children's Initiatives, Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority
Robert	Sheehan	CEO of Michigan Association of Community Mental Health
Eric	Hufnagel	Executive Director, Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness
Melinda	Fandel	Juvenile Justice Specialist, State of Michigan
Lauren	Kazee	Mental Health Consultant, State of Michigan
Kristen	Harrington	Executive Director, Youth Solutions

Endnotes

¹ Nia West-Bey and Stephanie Flores, Everybody Got their Go Throughs: Young Adults on the Frontline of Mental Health, CLASP, 2017. <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/08/Everybody-Got-Their-Go-Throughs-Young-Adults-on-the-Frontlines-of-Mental-Health.pdf>.