

Gathering Information on the Needs of Young people Transitioning Out of State Care

By Carly Tanur

Research into after care services for children exiting care being undertaken by Mamelani Projects

The Children's Act of South Africa calls on Child and Youth Care Centers and Cluster Foster Schemes to offer transitional support to youth leaving care – but what does this “transitional support” look like? What is in place to support young people as they prepare to transition out of state care? What is in place to support them once they have left care? What can we learn from the experiences of young people who have left state care?

These are some of the questions we will be posing to gather information on the experiences and challenges faced by young people at this important crossroad in their lives. We would like to explore these issues with key stakeholders and partners in an effort to improve the support that is provided to young people who leave state care at 18. We are hoping that through this process we will be able to consolidate lessons learnt about the gaps in services for this target group. It is of utmost importance that support is offered during this transitional time. This area of work is essential for practitioners in the child and youth care sector who continue to invest time and resources into caring for marginalised and vulnerable children. These practitioners must be aware of what preparation process and support

structures are necessary for young people to be able to cope once they have left their care.

Mamelani has, through its experience of working with young people transitioning out of residential care in the last 5 years, developed an approach to working with young people transitioning out of state care. With support from DSD, we have also been exploring the relevance of this model for youth who have grown up in foster care. With support from the DG Murray Trust, we are now seeking broader engagement with key stakeholders in the sector to gather experiences of youth leaving care more broadly, invite comments on potential components of transitional support programmes, and gain greater insight into the needs and support structures for young people transitioning out of state care.

This process will gather information in collaboration with government departments, partner organisations such as the NACCW, Child and Youth Care Centres and young people themselves. We will be facilitating a series of focus groups as well as conducting a survey to gather information.

We invite you, as child and youth care workers to help us create a realistic

and rich description of the realities that young people in/transitioning out of care face based on the current limited nature of the networks of support that exist for them and the limited opportunities that this provides. This information will be used to inform Department policy on the needs of young people leaving care, as well as to help organisations working in this field to improve their programmes.

To participate in this process, we are inviting interested CYCCs to complete an online survey – please find link below: <http://peoplesurveys.com/S.aspx?ID=3748>.

A final report will be compiled by April 2013, which will be available to the public. We invite Child and Youth Care Centres, youth development organisations, youth practitioners and young people who have grown up in state care to be in contact with us if you are interested in participating in the process. Please contact us on 021 448 2725 / contact@mamelani.org.za.

To read more about Mamelani's work with youth transitioning out of state care, please visit www.mamelani.org.za or read a recent journal article published in *Child Care in Practice* in the UK: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13575279.2012.713851> ▲