

WHAT HELPS WHAT HARMS

A COMPILATION FROM THE YOUTH MOVE NATIONAL CHAPTERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RELEASED MAY 7, 2014

IN HONOR OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

#AMPLIFY OUR VOICES



YOUTH MOVE NATIONAL™

WE ARE CHANGE AGENTS "MOTIVATING OTHERS THROUGH VOICES OF EXPERIENCE"

SO WHAT IS 'WHAT HELPS WHAT HARMS'

What Helps What Harms (WHWH) is an initiative for young adults in each of Youth MOVE National's chapters to spend time in facilitated discussions, analyzing their community network, resources, services and environment. Discussions are framed with two simple (yet really deep!) questions. What is helping us? What is harmful to us? These questions are applied to systems, service providers, education settings, homes, etc. Any and all answers received from youth is right - from the simple (how appointments are scheduled) to the complex (how school environments foster bully-free environments). Responses are categorized into themes, as identified by the young adult participants.

FROM LACY'S DESK *Executive Director of Youth MOVE National*

On a technical assistance site visit to New York I was introduced to this project - called WHWH. The project was too awesome not to learn more. After some thought and time looking at the Westchester document - the inspiration to take WHWH to national scale was born.

Our mission to replicate and bring to scale the What Helps What Harms project, was twofold in its purpose.

1. Bring a project that had happened locally, in 100% youth voice, and replicate in a national process. Compiling the findings in each chapter and creating this product of youth voice, locally and nationally; a product to use to challenge and motivate the community to make positive change. It was important to engage the original youth leader, Jessica, in this process and engage all of our chapters. You can use your voice to motivate your community and engage change.
2. Youth MOVE National looks to our chapters to guide our work at the national level. WHWH offered a chance for us to authentically engage youth members say across the country. YMN wanted to know what was happening in our chapter communities and work to compile all together. The end goal is bringing together the voice of youth across the nation.

As Youth MOVE National is always moving forward, we are always thinking about reaching back and engaging previous levels of youth engagement and the younger generation. This process is just like a young adult transitioning from Youth Advocate to Advocate for Youth and eventually to a Supportive Adult. This concept is Generation NEXT™. I could not be prouder of what What Helps What Harms has developed into, by following this concept.

"This is truly a youth driven project and the process is truly amazing." - Lacy Kendrick Burk

A huge shout out to Jessica Grimm, an Advocate for Youth from Westchester, NY. She is an experienced self and peer advocate, youth coordinator and a leader in Bravehearts MOVE New York. We are pumped that she has served as our WHWH Project Director to make the scaling up of this initiative a reality. Jessica has supported each of our Youth MOVE chapters in replicating the process she led in her local county. AND she is spearheading the compilation of your local documents to create a 'national picture' final compilation document, which will be available July 2014.

"I'm going to be a voice for people who do not have a voice, or struggle to find their own." - Jessica Grimm

THE HISTORY OF WHAT HELPS WHAT HARMS

10 years ago (1993), a group of youth who were not being listened to came together and identified the needs of their community, Westchester County. The original document was created in meetings, held by youth, in a local restaurant. The document was brought back to the organization, Family Ties, and sent on to the County Commissioner. In response to this document and presentation, the Commissioner called a conference of the community. At this conference the young adults were able to present each aspect of the document. The document was referenced to as "gold," because of its worth to create change in the community.

The original document covered 4 topics including community, housing, residential and education and covered the county (1 million residents).

In April 2012 Jessica Grimm was given the chance to replicate the process and document. 10 years had passed and issues and needs were different in the County. She approached youth from across the county with the following question:

“This is how the system is designed, but does it work for you?”

Jessica’s experience in 2012 went something like this. Over six weeks, Jessica visited as many youth serving organizations as she could get to in the county. This included organizations for young mothers, homeless shelters, peer to peer support groups, and many other youth forums. At each location Jessica led a discussion that went like this:

“In your experience, what do you feel was working for you?”

“In your experience, what do you feel was not working?”

“If you had a magic wand, what would you do to get those services to be ideal and effective?”

Jessica entered each discussion without an agenda and without topics. She brought only blank legal pads. Most of the time was spent taking notes of everything the youth said. Jessica brought all of the responses (on MANY legal pads) and collected data back to the office and connected all of the notes - identifying co-occurring themes.

Not a surprise, youth in different agencies, venues, etc. were identifying similar things.

At the end of the compilation period, the youth had identified these nine topics:

Mental Health

Violence

Racism

Housing

Education

Residential

Social services

Community

Substance Abuse

Peer Support

Employment

An additional six topics were identified to be discussed in depth at a later time. This is currently (in 2014) occurring in the County.

Child Welfare

Juvenile Justice

LGBTQ

Eating Disorders

Developmental Disabilities

Youth who are Parenting

Under each of these topics three columns appear:

What’s Working

What’s Harmful

What’s Needed

This is a living, ongoing document in Westchester County.

Family Ties supported hosting a Roundtable to which county commissioners, judges, educators, youth, community leaders, local legislatures, and more were invited. The 2012 WHWH document was presented. Each attendee was given this challenge from the youth presenters: Pick a point identified in the document and work with us to see how we can change it.

Not all the needs require money, many require a thought change in accepting and acknowledging youth voice. This makes the challenge initiated by the youth accomplishable by all!

SNEAK PEEK INTO NATIONAL WHAT HELPS WHAT HARMS

Youth MOVE Chapter Participant List *As of May 1, 2014*

SITY on the MOVE (Pennsylvania)

YES Youth MOVE (Florida)

Youth MOVE Maine

Youth MOVE Kentucky

Youth MOVE RiseUp (New York)

Youth MOVE Seminole (Florida)

Youth MOVE West Virginia

And many more Youth MOVE Chapters currently engaged in their local What Helps What Harms Initiative. For a complete list see the National Document, to be completed July 2014.

Reports are coming in each week from our Youth MOVE chapters. These documents are created by the young adults within each chapter community. One of the two primary objectives in the What Helps What Harms process is to leave each Youth MOVE Chapter with a local policy document to drive local change. Just like our chapters, each WHWH document is unique to its community. We consider this one of the greatest strengths of this initiative. As reports are submitted, Youth MOVE National collects all information and works with the chapter to ensure that the themes identified by the community are prioritized correctly. Then all information is sorted and added to the national document. An emphasis is placed on keeping the language as it was presented to us by youth.

So what is this document looking like?

Below are the systems themes that have emerged with the highest priority in the early data collection sites. Following are items that have been identified by all participating groups thus far in the What Helps and What Harms categories.

Systems/Services of Focus

Education

Direct Services

Residential Treatment Services

What Helps?

Clear, direct communication

Professional relationships with well understood boundaries

Know the plan – what’s happening next?

Address Basic Needs: Clothing, Housing, Education, Life Skills within service delivery

What Harms?

Untrained staff

Ignoring the connection of unmet mental health and addiction needs and expecting success

Lack of introduction to services and the process

Plans made for youth, without input

WHAT THE FINAL DOCUMENT WILL CONTAIN

We cannot wait to show you the final result. All Chapters who participated will be acknowledged in the final report. Their individual reports will be available online as well.

The prioritized themes from all data collected will be shared. This compilation is what will direct Youth MOVE National’s policy work moving forward.

Throughout the What Helps What Harms process we have been monitoring participation and collecting demographic data from each chapter. This information will be included in the collective compilation document. Demographic data includes ages of youth participation, systems experience, and how the data was collected.

This document will be used to capture the needs of youth in our chapter network. The information will be a part of the information we use to guide our strategic plan moving forward. The compiled document will direct what national partnerships we spend time and resources on and will direct our policy work moving forward.

Youth MOVE National, May 2014