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ODMHSAS Receives Federal Grant to Aid Youth and Young Adults

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) has been awarded a \$5 million, five-year federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to fund treatment and other community-based services for Oklahoma youth and young adults experiencing behavioral health challenges. The grant will support the Oklahoma Healthy Transitions Initiative (OHTI), a program utilizing community-based partnerships, services and young adult perspectives to help transition-age youth realize improvements in areas such as education, employment, housing and mental health.

Youth and young adults experiencing mental health and substance use disorders may encounter more difficult transitions to adulthood than their peers. Many of these young people may be detached from family and community, may not be employed or in educational or training programs, may be homeless or couch surfing, may be involved with the justice system, and may need behavioral health treatment services.

Unfortunately, these young people are among the least likely to seek help and may “fall through the cracks” and not receive the services and supports they need to become productive and healthy adults.

According to Carrie Slatton-Hodges, commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, it is imperative that appropriate outreach and engagement processes are developed and implemented to create access to effective behavioral health interventions and supports.

“Not all young people have strong family support, or the same opportunities that many of us take for granted,” said Slatton-Hodges. “By helping these individuals as they enter adulthood, ensuring that they are engaged with appropriate treatment services and provided transitional support that otherwise might not be there, we can prevent negative consequences later and help them to lead healthy and productive lives.”

The goal is to provide developmentally and culturally appropriate services and assistance to better address serious behavioral health disorders among youth 16 – 25 years of age.

The grant will fund such things as awareness, screening and detection, outreach and engagement, treatment, coordination of care and links to community supports. It is all part of the award-winning Oklahoma Systems of Care program, a statewide collaborative network involving members of local communities, organizations, agencies, facilities, centers and groups that serve the needs of children, youth and young adults.

For more information, visit the ODMHSAS website at: [Transition Aged Youth \(oklahoma.gov\)](https://www.oklahoma.gov/odmhsas/transition-aged-youth).

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