



PATH: Policy and Systems Change Framework

Policy Advancing Transformation and Healing (PATH): A Young Adult Mental Health Policy and Systems Change Initiative

Why?

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 year¹. 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 these communities underscores why policymakers and advocates need to take aggressive and creative action to better support this population.

What is PATH?

PATH offers state and local agencies and system leaders in mental health and aligned sectors an opportunity to partner with experts around the country to advance policies that support transformation and healing for transition-age youth (ages 16-17) and young adults (ages 18-24).

PATH's goals:

The Center for Law and Social Policy aims to increase access to quality mental health services for youth and young adults by addressing the systemic and policy barriers impacting youth and young adults.

PATH Technical Assistance (TA) Partners:

Prince George's County, Maryland

Utah

Our 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**

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>

The framework also identifies essential systems change strategies:

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

The findings in our [Policy for Transformed Lives](#) are evidence of the need to move young adult mental health systems 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.

Guiding Framework: Youth/Young Adult Mental Health

