
Career Transition Program for Teens**With Emotional Disabilities is Recruiting**

Parents of high school students with emotional disabilities learned about a local program that is recruiting young people at the May meeting of the NAMI MC support group for parents of children and adolescents with mental illness. Birgit Rutledge and John Peyer of St. Luke's House, Inc.'s spoke about the Career Transition Program (CTP), which provides mental health, career and vocational resources to help high school students ages 16-24 with emotional disabilities make a successful transition to college, vocational training, jobs or other goals. CTP is a joint project of St. Luke's House and the Transition Unit of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

The program is voluntary and CTP staff put an emphasis on helping the students to achieve independence and prepare for adult life. Career Transition Specialists work with students to access to one or more of the following services:

- Help in identifying transition, career and/or educational goals;
- Career education and career development;
- College or vocational education development and placement;
- Job development and placement;
- Family support services;
- Identification and linkage with community resources.

The Specialists offer the students one-on-one attention and help them identify appropriate and interesting jobs and fill out complicated job applications. This hands-on approach helps when students are resistant to job-hunting or lack confidence about the job search and application process. Rutledge and Peyer gave the example of driving a student who was interested in electronic games to a Best Buy store to look at the games and on the way talking about what was involved in getting a job at this type of store. They also assist students with finding appropriate colleges and filling out confusing financial aid forms.

CTP is part of a research study funded by the Social Security Administration to learn how youth can improve their education and employment outcomes and become independent adults who do not rely on benefit programs such as SSI. The study is being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and is currently in the first of four years of funding.

St. Luke's House is currently looking for more students to participate in the CTP program. Youth must be 16-24 years old and have a mental health disability, which is defined as an 06 code and/or a mental health diagnosis from a psychiatrist or therapist. Over four years 440 students will be chosen randomly to participate in the full CTP program and 440 students (the control group) will receive technical assistance services (i.e. referrals) only. Participating youth who receive SSI are eligible for waivers that allow them to work and earn money in CTP while retaining their SSI benefits.

For more information about the Career Transition Program, call St. Luke's House, Inc. at 301-493-4200, x303 or e-mail ctpinfo@stlukeshouse.com.