Central Region (2) Community Collaborative

2/14/2018

Number of Attendees: **21**
Number of Virtual Attendees: **273**
Attendee Affiliations included MSU FAME, LCC Fostering Stars, MDHHS, DHHS, Samaritas, EMU MAGIC, MI Department of Treasury, Michigan's Children, Michigan State National Foster Institute Leadership Corps, and the Community of Christ

FSM Welcome: Maddy Day, FSM Updates and Overview of Agenda

- Guide through folder contents
- Community Collaboratives happen once per month, allowing partners to network and share resources or knowledge of a lack of resources
- Surveys: we appreciate attendees completing this short evaluation so that we can tell funders why we should continue doing FSM Community Collaboratives
- Feel free to take as many resources as you'd like! FSM has guides about financial aid, higher education, etc. (http://fosteringsuccessmichigan.com/library/fsm-guides) and a transition checklist, and we are able to send those to you
- Certificates are available for those looking for training hours
- Next generation of FSM—we need feedback for guidance. Answer the two questions at the front (1. What is one thing Fostering Success Michigan is currently doing at a statewide level that would be missed if FSM did not exist? 2. What is one thing that FSM is currently doing for students that would be missed if FSM did not exist?). Fill out, collect raffle ticket to potentially win prize: FSM t-shirt and bag or book and flash drive.

FSM Policy Update: Ann Rossi, Education Analyst and Michelle Corey of Michigan's Children

- **Michelle Corey, Vice President for Programs, Michigan's Children:** Gave background on relevant federal policy that recently passed, some of which will rearrange how we spend money for child welfare. What money will we have for foster care? More focus on prevention, which IS important, but we need to serve the kids who are currently in the system. Youths from foster care will have the ability to use Chafee funds up to age 23 (currently 21). Policy will allow use of existing money for 2 additional years. If we want to take advantage of that, we need to put more resources into it. We are still figuring out Medicaid (cut, block granted, etc.). Not passed into law at this point, but there's no reason to believe it won't be. Michigan policy: this will be a year of extraordinary opportunity—term limits and huge potential for change. Every member of house/senate's seats are up, lots will be turned out, and a new governor will be elected. These are great opportunities to be involved in conversations. Elected officials don't know much of anything when they get into office, but come in w/own experiences (no background in child welfare/homelessness/etc...). Asking questions has nothing to do with lobbying, it is citizenry. The governor just introduced the next budget for Michigan. Child welfare

is flat funded, so it won't be affected. Michigan's Children tries to engage in MYOI funding, which needs more. Fostering Futures Scholarship money: utilizing scholarship funding that we can adjust. Still in legislature is a group interested in child welfare/foster care reform. Sometimes things they're interested in doing are things we don't want. This is the first time Michelle has witnessed a group with experience in foster care (foster parents, adopters) wanting to figure out how to engage/improve things. Working on the Quality of Foster Care Act (foster child bill of rights). There exists a foster parent bill of rights, but it doesn't have any teeth, and hasn't been well implemented.

- **Ann Rossi, Education analyst, MDHHS**. She wears two hats: policy for k-12 and ESSA. ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) Replaced No Child Left Behind in 2015. New policy will allow states to change Chafee money for additional two years (23 years of age, instead of 21). Chafee ETV gives option to go up to age 26 (currently 23). Can utilize it till 26, but can't use it for more than 5 years in a row.

**Panel Discussion (Recording Available at
https://www.facebook.com/FosteringSuccessMichigan/)**

Panel members: Bri (WMU Seita Scholar, FSM Student Ambassador), J.Munley (LCC Fostering Stars Coordinator and Coach), Courtnie (Graduate Intern, MSU FAME), and Michelle Walls (Michigan State National Foster Youth Institute Learning Corps (MSNFYILC))

Quick Introductions

Questions for Panel Members:

Michelle, Tell us about your new program, National Foster Youth Institute.
- It is a former foster youth-led organization formed to create community support and raise foster youth voices. We will bring a shadow program to raise awareness. The youths shadow policymakers for a day, asking questions. It really raises awareness. The goal is to have monthly meetings, so add your email address for updates.

Question for the panel: how does this domain (Supportive Relationships/Community Connections) influence your work and life?
- Community Collaboratives have been a part of my life recently as a graduating student. I have a job fair coming up which will give me practice with interviews and more insight into what's out there to be a part of. Supportive relationships help me in life because they help me move when I'm stuck. Having family, friends, supportive adults gets me through.
- I wouldn't be where I am without supportive adults. I am graduating in a few months and want to engage with community partners to figure out how their work can be improved upon.

- Coming from a community college, there are challenges that 4 year institutions don't have. Housing: students come and go quickly. The more they're engaged at the college, the higher their success rate is going to be. We encourage our students to apply for campus jobs: 1) they will keep them involved with the school 2) they will keep them engaged with learning 3) they will allow networking with campus staff. We are also trying to get students to job shadow, and we try to encourage them to take part in any student activity. When they feel that campus is home, their success rates will start to sky rocket.
- We've been developing social and networking capital. Try to learn how things are done in areas you want to go into. Support is motivating us when we are down. People keep you strong and they can be rocks.

We know the social capital piece is missing because of multiple moves. Being in college is a perfect time to capitalize on social connections. Students need supportive adults, coaches, peers, etc…

What challenges have you encountered related to this domain, and how have you resolved them?
- I've had some challenges. I'm better now. As I aged out, adjusting to a new world, we weren't exposed to a lot of things in the world. The challenge was learning things. This was resolved by being courageous and not worrying about talking to people. I'm willing to be here and talk to you on the phone when others are not. I found people like that.
- I'm a mentor. I have seven mentees. I have trouble having patience to wait for them to trust me. It's been hard, but I remind myself you don't trust people off the bat, unconditionally. Patience, as hard as it is, is helping me resolve community connections for my mentees.
- On the program side from a coaching aspect, consistency. Coaches are only there for a year (before they graduate). The turnover and lack of consistency is an issue. Understanding students coming in are coming from different points. Some lack experience. Consistency is important.
- I want to echo both. For us at the community college, to have consistency can be difficult. What I've noticed a lot is the idea of advocating for self. This comes with time, trust, and consistency.

Questions from audience:

How would a community group let youth know they're available as a resource?
- 'Do we provide those opportunities'? Yes. We have a career fair on Tuesday. Google is coming march 9: 1,000 people will be taking over the campus. There's always something going on at one of our campuses. Look at the materials. Look at all the organizations that they could be a part of.
- I agree, MSU always has career fairs. Student level needs to be courageous. It is important for students to put themselves out there, sit on panels, get out of their own bubbles, silos, and see what's out there.

- I have a 2 part answer: if you're an organization marketing yourself as an ally or supporter, contact a campus support program. My approach? I have a hard time speaking with people I've never met before. My approach is 'how can I help you?' Being open minded and intentional on what I'm presenting.
- How to get foster youth engaged... It can be difficult if they're not looking. If you have resources and cross paths with people, they have no choice but to encounter you (like advisors). We have a lot of things that are trying to get our attention. At MSU they are always writing things on the ground, so you can't miss it.

All of you pointed to being relevant where students are at. There's so much competition for our students' time and our time. If we can make these resources fit into their schedules, they will use them. It takes a personal connection, more than once to show them. Be consistent. Meaningful connections are important.

Is there an updated resource to share?
- Yes, the FSM website has many resources. Our Network Map is very helpful. Don't hesitate to reach out.

Questions for students:

What is one thing you wish professors or supportive adults did while assisting you with this domain?
- Showing up more than once, consistently. I also wish they knew that when they met me I might not be at the level they assume I'm at. Be intentional about checking, meeting them where they are.
- Little things count, like seeing us more than once. Foster youths can feel isolated. Small things like remembering things, can solidify relationships.

In work we have, it can feel like a checklist. This is a good reminder we can't just check it off once, we have to check again. Not 'if I asked a question', it's 'if I asked the right question'. Understanding that it may take a while for a student to master trust. Little things count. This is really important. We kind of assume that when a student comes to a college they are making lots of connections, that when they are in a community they are a part of the community. I call these nurture gaps. Not just going to ask about a test as a professor, ask about how you are, how you're feeling.

What resources have you come across?
- The issue of trauma in students' lives. Going through the system, being pulled from home. Those traumatic experiences can hinder relationships. Every student who has experienced foster care has experienced trauma. This makes me step back and realize what's going on and why. I need to do the same work they're doing. When I first started I called everyone, made connections. Tried to navigate resources myself. If I don't know, they don't know. I'll prompt them to ask the right questions. I make them call, but I'm there. Its helped move the bar from 'this is what I need' to 'this is what we're going to do'

- I agree. We always tell students 'do this', but we might not even have experience doing it. A lot of times we hear so much negative, they hear it too. I love putting it out there and saying 'no, no, this is what I get to see'. Seeing that passion has been motivating. Utilizing the students and seeing them grow.

I want to talk about 'do with, not for'. This is a mantra in coach training. It teaches us to walk the road ahead, but it's important to have students do it. I'm always surprised to see what students can accomplish when they do something they love. It's a pause for us as supportive adults to stop and say 'what's our role in this?' **J. what are some resources you've found around being trauma-informed?**
- I became interested by asking myself 'why is there this behavior that I can't account for?' What I decided to do was to get certified in childhood trauma, realizing that students were going through trauma. These behaviors could be triggered by random things. Being a 'bad kid' could be just a response to trauma in someone's own life. Adverse Childhood Experiences is a checklist. The more items are checked off, the more prevalent behaviors will be. I want LCC to be more trauma-informed. Resilience is an asset, an ability to adapt. What might look like maladaptive behaviors may be adaptive for that student who had to teach him or herself to survive. This really is a societal problem, so one of the greatest things I've read in the studies is 'if it's predictable, it's preventable'.

I think that trauma triggers often come up in relationships and connections. As supportive adults, we have to think about where the behaviors are coming from: what's underneath or behind the behaviors. This starts with 'why is this not connecting? What do I know about this student that may be part of the story?'

Facebook question: what are some suggestions for students who have had fatigue, stress? What are ways you've found to help you to deal with stress and fatigue in college and life?
- You must want to address problems. Look for counselling centers, things in the community like that. You may not want to go, you may have a negative perspective, but you must find in yourself the ability to break out of that.
- I would add that listening is a way to support. Assisting is another way—'I'll go with you'. Sit with them and normalize those feelings, so they can recognize what they're going through.

Another part about being courageous. Also seeing them, namely that for them 'this is a time to be brave'. Part of that is doing things with them.

Can you describe your experiences working with different cultural backgrounds and what resources you used?
- I'm relatively new. I'd say that when engaging with different cultures, it's the difference between cultural competency and cultural humility. I'm not going to pretend to know everything about them. Different needs arise, and we have to figure out how to accommodate them. Be open minded, humble.

- I will echo that. I'm not going to assume to know much about their cultural background. Build trust with them before getting too far. They may have had traumatic experiences. Know what resources we have on campus. Global human services, the Trio program, the diversity office... Knowing what resources are available, what students might need. Immersion events bring students together to do something fun. Bringing them together is important.

Magic wand question: what would be one community connection for your students and why?
- This might come out a little weird. An educational activity from the community (sears driving school come to teach driver's training). There is no information about cars, car loans, driving, getting car fixed. 'Here are these discounted classes, its important you know this'.
- We're so tech-bound, and those skills are so important that we forget to teach about doing laundry, life skills. Get involved with students to see what they're passionate about. Get policymakers involved so they can see that.
- My magic wand would be for every student to have one healthy, stable, knowledgeable adult who will walk the journey with them and be there for skill building.
- One thing I think youth can benefit from is help with finances. You need someone to help while you're doing it. It's very predictable: someone who's 18 will go apply for an apartment and be denied. They don't know what credit is. We can improve their lives and prevent ruining things, because it is hard to recover when we fail.

We are doing a better job at identifying lapses in care. We need a person who can help students find their spark. At some point, students lose their sparks and think 'why find my spark, I need to work to survive'.