

New Trauma Services for Transition-Age Youth

Camille Chase, LMSW

Director of Community-Based Peer Support and Counseling at Lifeworks

To better serve transition-age youth with complex trauma histories, LifeWorks has launched a SAMHSA-funded program called Community-Based Peer Support and Counseling (CBPSC). This program utilizes Peer Support Staff to connect with youth who have been hard to reach through traditional counseling. Peer Supporters engage the youth through their shared lived experiences and meet them quite literally "where they are", by meeting them in the community. We go to their schools, community centers, homes, coffee shops, or wherever they prefer to meet. Once they have built some trust, youth are introduced to a counselor who offers Community-Based Counseling that can be short-term or longer-term as needed. Any youth aged 16-21 with a history of trauma or abuse is eligible and services are free. CBPSC began services with youth living in LifeWorks' various housing programs, as well as some street-dependent youth. Soon after, we began taking referrals from some of the local high schools. In May, we will begin providing services through the Sandra Joy Anderson Community Health and Wellness Center at Huston-Tillotson and other targeted locations.

After referring two students to CBPSC, Renee Brown, LCSW, a licensed mental health professional with Austin ISD, shared the following statement:

"The program is unique because it meets the client where she is, both physically by being flexible in meeting anywhere the client prefers as well as emotionally by having both a therapist and a peer mentor available. For those clients who are not completely open to meeting with a therapist, having the peer mentor there makes it a much more relatable and non-intimidating experience. Clients get way more than the traditional once a week therapy; they build a real support system in being able to access the [LifeWorks] youth center and have their therapist and mentor meet them in their own community."

If you would like to refer a youth to our program who has little or no family support, needs a Community-Based approach, is motivated towards recovery (from substance use or mental health challenges), or is mistrustful of professionals, please contact Camille Clark, Program Director for Community-Based Peer Support and Counseling at 512-735-2152 or Camille.clark@lifeworksaustin.org. Alternatively, the client may contact LifeWorks directly at 512-735-2100 and request intake for the program.