

**Youth Focus Group - Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.)**  
**May 8, 2006**

Question 1: What are the top 5 survival needs of transitioning youth?

- Housing
- Transportation
- Job (job for those with criminal records/convicted felons)
- Knowing how to communicate with the public - professional manner

Question 2: Are you as involved as you'd like to be with your transition plan? What would you like more or less of?

- Many of these youth did not have a worker at this time - many still lived with family - many were not in the transition planning stage even though ages ranged from 17-21.

Question 3: What do you feel most prepared for? Least prepared for?

- Discovering resources (housing, benefits) - least
- I know how I want to be treated - most

Question 4: How do you define success?

- This was a question we did not have time for

Question 5: What do you need most from your worker?

- **Confidentiality**
- Office setting is informal (meant formal?)/impersonal - we don't want to talk in cubicles because someone else could hear conversation
- Relationship
- More training
- Communication - return my phone calls, answer my questions
  - Talk to me like a friend so I am more comfortable
- Work together, not solely worker agenda
- Keep it simple, answer the questions I ask
- Help me - don't make things worse
- Be more open-minded, less judgmental
- Support me even when I make mistakes, not just when I'm going well
- Be available 24/7 - especially for those with mental health issues

- Listen more (common theme)
- Create a place of trust
- Know all the resources in the area/available to me

Question 6: What would you do to improve the system as it stands in order to better prepare youth for IL?

- Increase worker's time management skills
- Too many youth, not enough workers
- Improve confidentiality - workers shouldn't talk about clients with each other
- Improve worker communication skills - its hard to meet a new worker and they don't know how to talk to me
- Constant training for worker whether you are new or a veteran worker
- Teach how to communicate with youth - don't talk down to me, too much misconception of youth
- Alternative housing - youth only emergency shelters

Question 7: Who do you get support from?

- Counselor at Y.O.U.
- Bible/Church
- Family - grandma, parents

Of greatest concern for youth

- Worker's lack of ability to communicate positively with youth
- Misconception of youth in their situations
- Language and volume used by some housing staff toward clients
- Lack of back up plan for if a youth struggles - shelters not helpful
- Supervisors equally as difficult to work with as direct worker as they only remember the bad and give little kudos to accomplishments, even if struggling at the moment