



Connie Beck, Director  
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

## news release

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Sept. 13, 2017

### Expanded services helping youth transition to independence

Local young people are about to have improved access to services and supports with the opening of the Transition-Age Youth (TAY) Division's new location on M Street in Downtown Eureka.

The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services TAY Division's offices are now readily accessible and near public transportation. The new space is approximately three times the size of the program's former facility.

"We're finally getting some breathing room," said Humboldt County Transition-Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC) Social Worker Leah Lamattina. "I think this will really increase the usefulness of TAY services for young people."

The TAY Division serves youth and young adults ages 16 to 26. The program was established in 2008 to help young people progress toward independence, and serves transition-age youth with lived experience in foster care, behavioral health, homelessness, alcohol and drug treatment and/or the juvenile justice system.

According to Lamattina, transition-age youth are often hindered by past abuse, mental health problems and substance use disorders. Most have to piece together financial, social, academic, mental health and employment without traditional family supports.

The TAY Division provides counseling services, as well as employment training and the Independent Living Skills program, which includes everything from budgeting, job-retention skills, high school graduation incentives and college campus tours.

Also under the program's umbrella is HCTAYC, an advocacy wing working on policy change and providing training to young people, staff and community partners. HCTAYC is built on the principle that changes to the existing foster

care system require the involvement of the true experts—the young people who have been impacted by it. Key to their work is the participation of the 11-member Youth Advisory Board (YAB). Frequently, the office simply serves as a refuge where young people can relax and chat with friends.

“The world can seem like a scary place when you’re a kid and it feels like nobody is on your side,” said participant and YAB member Elijah Beiser. “The TAY center is a place where I felt like I could belong, where my success really mattered and that made all the difference when I needed it most.”

With young people coming through the facility all day, the TAY Division requires solid communication and organization. Until now, space has been in very short supply. “It’s been challenging to coordinate. There can be anywhere up to 120 TAY youth,” Lamattina said. The new space allows for a larger meeting room for workshops and get-togethers. There is a kitchen, a produce garden, and participants have access to the neighboring laundromat. It’s making a transition from a program facility to more of a home with an emphasis on community.

TAY Division staff are inviting the public to their Open House on Tuesday, Sept. 19, from 2 to 5 p.m. A tour, program information and opportunity to meet staff and youth leaders will be available. The TAY Division is located at 433 M St., Eureka (between Fourth and Fifth streets).



TAY Division staff gather outside their new location at 433 M St., Eureka.

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