

NEW CHANGES BRING NEW PATHS

The PATH organization has embarked on one of the most significant changes in its history. The change will transition PATH from what is now a subsidiary organization, with programs in three states, to an affiliate organization, with three independent state programs, which choose to affiliate.

The Board of Directors of PATH Inc. approved this change at its November 30, 2007 meeting. The approval came about after months of discussion of how PATH can continue to be a creative and dynamic force in the rapidly changing child welfare field. In the PATH tradition, the discussion has been lively and challenging for nearly everyone involved.

PATH North Dakota started the process in June when its Board voted to amend its bylaws to remove reserve powers. By removing the reserve powers, PATH North Dakota became an autonomous nonprofit corporation. The bylaw amendment was approved by the PATH Inc. Board on June 22, 2007. PATH Minnesota and PATH Wisconsin eventually took the same step, by also voting to remove the reserve powers from their bylaws.

In approving the change, the Board realized there was significant work to be done in planning and implementing the transition. A Transition Steering

Committee was formed to guide the process. The steering committee will be making recommendations to the PATH Inc. Board as well as the boards of each of the three state corporations. This group has already met several times and has begun to address the many issues involved in the transition.

The driving force behind the change was to create a state-centered organization, which can be responsive to state and local needs. The concern was that PATH Inc. and the National Support Center had become removed from the day-to-day issues of foster parents and too focused on its own operations.

The primary arguments against the new structure are that it creates too much independence and can lead to affiliates moving into services unrelated to our foster care core. There is also concern that some states will choose to not affiliate, which will lead to three or four totally separate agencies. It is to be seen whether the affiliate approach might provide a

better model for development and support for new types of foster-family based services.

The Transition Steering Committee is working on an affiliation agreement that will outline the nature of the affiliation between the state corporations and the multi-state affiliation. In addition to the affiliation agreement, there will be a service agreement that describes the services to be provided by National Support Center to the states. In approving the Transition Steering Committee, the PATH Inc. Board committed itself to have completed the transition plan and to begin the implementation by the end of the current fiscal year. In other words, the transition will have begun by June 30, 2008.

Copies of the proposed affiliation agreement and the evolving transition plans are available. Please phone or email Mary Shea Kudluboy at 612-259-1602 or mkudluboy@pathinc.org or Mike Peterson at 612-259-1601 or mpeterson@pathinc.org.

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Did You Know?

REACH sponsors chat sessions the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Central Time. Hosted by former PATH Education Manager Mary McGowan, the topics are geared to needs of adoptive families, but foster parents can join the chats, too. Certificates are given for education credit.

To learn more, go to fosterparentnet.org.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Transition is the theme of this issue of PATH Prints. Included are articles about foster children transitioning to adulthood, the La Crosse program transitioning to a new office, and the PATH organization transitioning to a new structure. While we have chosen to highlight transitions in a single issue, transitions are really what we are about every day at PATH. We are in the business of helping kids and families transition to new ways of growing, learning, and living.

We often define our services by their funding sources. We call the programs foster care, adoption, mental health, or family-based. What each of the services really do, though, is assist people through some of life's most difficult changes. We do this by offering the stability and support of a family and the guidance and counsel of trained social workers, foster parents, and therapists.

It is exciting work to help people through transitions. It gives us an opportunity to be involved in some of life's most interesting moments and to make a difference in significant ways. It is also an exciting time to be a part of PATH, as the organization transitions to a new type of structure. We are, in the PATH tradition, doing something new and creative. We are doing this because we believe it will give each state corporation the stability and flexibility to continue to grow in opportunities and service. Ultimately, we hope it will put us in a better position to support kids and families through life's transitions.

We are glad you are a part of the PATH family of support. We wish you well in all of life's transitions.

Mike Peterson, CEO



PATH CEO
Mike Peterson

THE ROELOFS TRANSITIONAL HOME

It is important for every person to have support during a time of transition. Tom and Mary Roelofs recognize the importance of providing a caring and nurturing environment that is tailored to women and children going through a time of change. The Roelofs Transitional Home gives these families the opportunity to establish a fresh beginning and prepare for their next steps.

The Roelofs Transitional Home serves mothers of any age and their children; birth through school age, boys or girls. Referrals are made to the program through PATH by the county social worker and/or other licensed professional who is qualified to direct treatment and is familiar with the placement's needs. The program is offered at the home located on the same property as Tom and Mary; it is licensed under a foster residence setting license. The Roelofs advertise, hire and train their own staff to manage the home. This program is unique and different from family foster care. The intent is to prepare

mothers to transition into independence with their children. At the same time, these women are giving the county necessary information to determine whether or not they are able to meet all of the needs of their children.

Mothers participating in The Roelofs Transitional Home are given opportunities to strengthen parenting techniques and continue their school education. The home gives both mother and child a safe and nurturing environment in which they can learn and grow while preparing for independent living situations.

This home gives children and mothers the opportunity to transition from an old way of doing things and identity new ways that are healthier. Taking on new challenges and experiences help to bring forth new ideas that give strength when change is needed. The Roelofs' home gives these individuals the tools to deal with the difficult and confusing times that brought them to this program. This transitional home is a chance for change.



FOSTER YOUTH GIVEN HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY IN TIMES OF TRANSITION

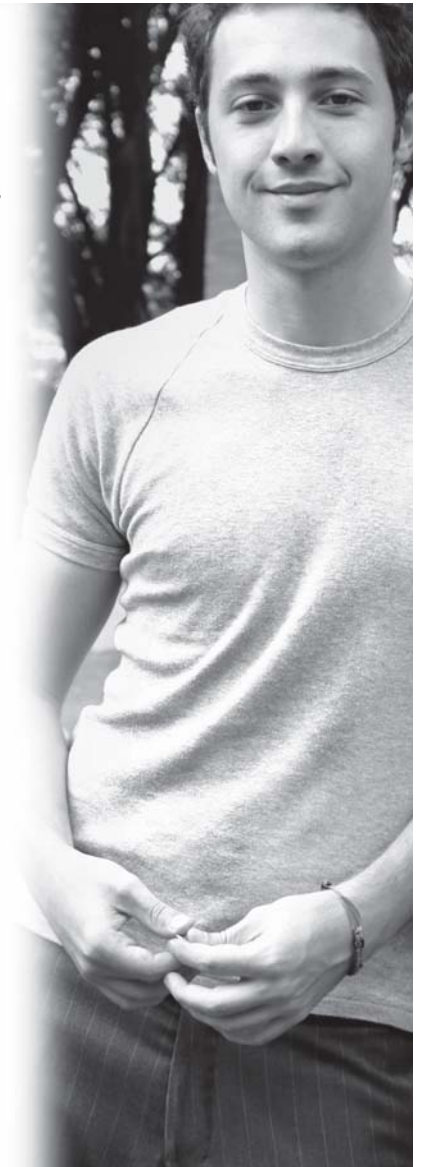
The Education and Training Voucher Program is one of three programs offered by the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. This program is available to PATH North Dakota youth who have been discharged from foster care on their 18th birthday or continue to be in foster care past their 18th birthday. This program is aided by federal funding that provides postsecondary education and training vouchers (ETV) to eligible youth. It helps them to begin, continue and/or complete their educational and vocational goals. Below is a story from a former foster youth:

“ETV funds have had a profound effect on the last four years of my college experience. They allowed me to concentrate on academics and not worry about finances. One of the biggest stresses for students seems to be meeting financial requirements while managing time to study and attend classes. Applying for the funds took minimal time and was the most valuable form of financial aid available to me. I’m on my way to graduating from NDSU with honors. The ETV staff was resourceful, prompt and available for questions and other communication. It is the single most helpful program imaginable for eligible students.”

Thanks ETV, Tom

Stories like this demonstrate the beneficial and helpful nature of the ETV Program as it helps to make the transition out of foster care and into the world of living independently easier. ETV Program helps to pay for a number of costs such as: tuition, fees, books, housing and other expenses. We all know how expensive college can be and the opportunity can seem nonexistent but the ETV Program gives back this hope.

For more information or to check on eligibility for the ETV Program, contact: Stephanie Dahl at the Fargo, ND PATH office at 1-800-766-9321 or Kelly Mitchell at the Turtle Mountain, ND PATH office at 1-800-303-4961.



NEW SPACES OFFER MORE OPTIONS

The PATH Wisconsin La Crosse office was recently awarded the Preferred County Contract for providing family services in La Crosse County including our Parent Support Program. This contract was based upon the significant results PATH Wisconsin has achieved with families.

The new contract between PATH La Crosse and the county is estimated to serve 100-200% more youth in the first year alone. To accommodate the increase in families, they moved to a new space that is centrally located and allows clients more options to receive care.

A grant from the La Crosse Community Foundation gave the opportunity to set up a kitchen that houses a refrigerator, oven, dishes, silverware and glassware. This gives families the ability to share a meal together and learn about food safety, preparation, and nutrition.

The growth and need of Family Interaction Programs continues to be fulfilled through the wonderful opportunities that the PATH La Crosse office offers in a welcoming and comfortable environment.

PATH OFFICE UPDATES

PATH MINNESOTA, INC.

- Minnesota's adoption program is exceeding expectations for the first five months of the fiscal year under the direction of Pam Skon.
- Kendra Lund was hired as the Social Work Supervisor in the Fergus Falls office and was instrumental in establishing the new Moorhead office, hosting a successful foster parent training and an appreciation dinner.
- The new office now open in Moorhead is staffed by Tara Fitzgerald, formerly of the Crookston office, and Bob Guertin, who was recently hired as a Bridge Builders Transition Coach. The office now has a practitioner, Carol Olson, who provides Child Therapeutic Services and Supports in the Crookston/Grand Forks area. The Crookston office was closed and the staff moved to the new Moorhead office.
- Andrew Kiel of the Metro office passed the LICSW exam.
- Pam Skon and her staff in the Bemidji office have been busy licensing nine homes in the past three months.
- The new PATH Minnesota, Inc. and Crisis Nursery serving Wright County office, held a very successful open house event and the Crisis Nursery was the recipient of a substantial unsolicited donation.
- The PATH Minnesota Inc. administrative staff has been instrumental in adoption con-

tracts and involved in the state's outreach and marketing plan.

- Rochester continues to be busy with recruiting and licensing new foster and adoptive homes. The adoption activity has been busy this past quarter.
- Jaime Swift, PATH Social Worker, provided CPR/first aide training on January 19th. PATH Rochester will be setting up another date for additional people who are on the waiting list since Jaime is only allowed to train ten people at a time.
- The next targeted training is non-violent crisis intervention which will probably occur in March.
- Rochester implemented a new phone/message system in November. The system allows us to remind foster/adoptive parents of upcoming meetings, trainings, or cancellations by sending out a message to a group of people at one time. The Rochester Team would like to thank Amy and Andrew for the information. This has helped with attendance and saves on staff time.
- A meeting was held in January with Laura Koski to develop an outreach plan for the Rochester office. This was a helpful and positive meeting that generated some new ideas. A good discussion was held on possible collaborations and fund raising areas to explore. Foster parent retention was also explored with the suggestion of identifying families to mentor new families once they receive a new placement. The continued recruitment plan was also discussed.

- The Rochester Team has identified six foster homes that would be appropriate to provide shelter care. The team will have discussions with those families in the near future.

PATH NORTH DAKOTA, INC.

- Angie Reinke (DJS) and Christy Fischer (DBGR) facilitated Sexual Offender Training at the Doublewood Inn in Fargo on August 1st for PATH staff. We will be scheduling a follow-up training for PATH foster parents.
- The North Dakota Department of Human Services increased the Independent Living contract for Region V (Fargo office) 18.6% for fiscal year October 2007 through September 2008.
- Three South East Region PATH foster parents were recently recognized at the North Dakota Foster Parent Association Conference for their incredible commitment to kids and families. Bruce and Naomi Harner – ND Foster Parents of the Year; Jason and Dana Mitzel – ND Adoptive Family of the Year; and Bob and Vicki Thu – ND Special Needs Adoptive Family of the Year. Congratulations and THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO.
- On Saturday, November 17th, Fargo celebrated National Adoption Day at the Cass County Court House. That morning, six youth experienced permanence through adoption. What a wonderful event!
- The South East Region continues to devote time and energy into recruitment activities to increase

PATH OFFICE UPDATES

resources for youth and families. During the summer months, we participated in several parades and booths in the surrounding communities. In October, we distributed PATH Trick or Treat bags in Jamestown and recruitment posters to over 300 businesses in the Fargo area. In November and December, we distributed bulletin inserts focusing on the need for foster parents to over 80 churches. We are in the process of running radio ads (December 15 – February 15) and TV ads throughout January. As always, we continue to take advantage of speaking engagements and community events to get the word out about our need for foster parents.

- Southwest North Dakota PATH is piloting a new foster parent monthly progress report that combines foster parent and social worker input which is sent to legal custodians monthly. Training was provided for all the foster parents on “Observing, Assessing and Reporting” in preparation of reporting in a more objective manner. In March 2008 we will request feedback from legal custodians regarding the new reporting process.
- North Dakota has begun to implement a structured visitation program called “PATHways to Parenting”. The focus of the visitation program is utilizing visitation as a supportive learning model for parents. Significant emphasis is also placed on assisting foster parents in understanding and responding to the regressive behavior often

displayed by foster youth pre and post visit.

- Casey Family Services provided financial support for Native American Foster Youth Educational Groups facilitated by Sam Robertson and Mark Little Owl for Treatment Foster Care children and their PATH foster parents in Fargo. The purpose of the group is to help the children build their self esteem by talking and learning about who they are and what they can do in a world that for them may require living in two separate cultures. Participation in these groups was outstanding.

PATH WISCONSIN, INC.

- The Treatment Foster Care program added several new families this fall and had several families return to providing care after a break to allow us to place a record number of children in our homes. Additionally, the children in our homes are doing well and we have had many great discharge outcomes and few disruptions.
- The summer family and staff picnic and the holiday bowling party were well attended and everyone enjoyed the chance to see each other and have fun together.
- The Family Connections program in Madison received excellent reviews this fall from our contractor. The Family to Family Mentoring program was further developed to allow for leveled care to families to facilitate a gradual and supported

transition to the ending of the intervention.

- Referrals to the Milwaukee Mental Health Clinic picked up nicely this fall. We began serving a variety of contractors as well as providing Medicaid reimbursed mental health services. We are working on entering our clinicians into the Medicaid HMO provider networks to increase the number of clients we can serve in this area.
- The Milwaukee office has also begun to be utilized by the Treatment Foster Care program. We have hosted share and support groups, training for staff and foster families as well as having begun receiving self-referrals inquiries by families interested in becoming foster parents. We are beginning to see our goal of obtaining a community presence in Milwaukee actualized.
- The Bridge Builders group continues to meet once a month to work on independent life skills. In December four youth made “tie” fleece blankets.
- Received \$6,250 from the La Crosse Community Foundation for a kitchen in our new office La Crosse.
- PATH WI received a grant of \$2,000 from Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation for La Crosse programs.
- Secured a new office location for our programs in La Crosse which is located in downtown La Crosse and will be more accessible to our clients. The office is scheduled to move on January 3, 2008.

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