

## **The Healthy Transition Act of 2008**

### **Introduced by Senator Smith, Senator Dodd and Representative Stark**

In a June 2008, the GAO released to Congress a report entitled "Young Adults with Serious Mental Illness: Some States and Federal Agencies are Taking Steps to Address Their Transition Challenges," in which they found that at least 2.4 million young adults aged 18 through 26 had a serious mental illness in 2006. GAO also found that this population has lower levels of education on average than other younger adults and that they have more barriers to employment than their peers. The GAO report also exposed the problems that these young adults face in finding services that help their transition to adulthood because available mental health, employment, housing and other services are not always suited to meet the needs of young adults with mental health needs. Often, these individuals are so discouraged by the program fragmentation that they choose not to receive these services and suffer disruption in their mental health care.

**The Healthy Transition Act of 2008 is modeled on the promising demonstration program, Partnerships for Youth in Transition. The bill has three main sections:**

(1) **Planning Grants to States** – This section would establish planning grants for states to develop statewide coordination plans to assist adolescents and young adults with a serious mental health disorder to acquire the skills and resources they need to make a healthy transition to adulthood. These grants would last two years and would enable states to actively plan for how they will leverage state and federal funds to ensure services are targeted and supportive for young adults who are transitioning to the adult mental health system. Particular attention is given to youth and young adults who are in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as individuals who have a plan under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This section is authorized at \$6 million for fiscal years 2009-2013.

(2) **Implementation Grants to States** – This section would establish a grant program to help states to implement the plan they have created under the "Planning Grants" section or to states that have an equivalent plan approved by SAMHSA. Use of funds under the program encourage the facilitation of a youth ombudsman, peer support programs, access to independent living and life support skills, development of an infrastructure to support access to health, mental health, employment, education and housing supports, as well as facilitating the training of providers to serve the needs of transition-age young adults. This grant program encourages increasing matching requirements by states in out years of the grant cycle. This section is authorized at \$6 million for fiscal years 2009-2010, \$15 million for fiscal year 2011, \$20 million for fiscal year 2012 and \$25 million for fiscal year 2013.

(3) **Committee of Federal Partners** – This section would establish a committee that will coordinate service programs that assist adolescents and young adults with mental illness at the federal level and provide technical assistance to states as they implement their plans. They also will report to Congress on their activities. This section is authorized at \$1 million in fiscal year 2009 and such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years 2010-2013.