Young Adult and Family Center

Founded by Kim Norman, MD \(^1\), in 2004, the Young Adult and Family Center (YAFC) is dedicated to innovation in the creation of mental health services, clinical research, health education, outreach, and public policy advocacy for the benefit of adolescents and young adults ages 12-24, and their families. The YAFC is among the first academically based psychiatry programs in the nation dedicated to advancing the understanding and care of transitional-aged youth.

YAFC:

- operates mental health clinics within UCSF?hs Langley Porter Psychiatric Hospital & Clinics
- is embedded in UCSF?hs Department of Pediatrics Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine Clinic
- initiates school-based interventions (high school and college) for mental health awareness and suicide prevention
- pioneers e-therapeutics using technology (such as interactive web sites, webcam therapies, text messaging, etc) to disseminate health information, promote healthy behavioral change, destigmatize mental illness, and make health care more accessible to adolescents young adults and their families

Our mission

YAFC seeks to destigmatize mental illness, and improve the mental health of adolescents, young adults and families in all communities, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable. We are dedicated to making mental health care available to every adolescent and family in need of services, to training the next generation of health care professionals committed to helping adolescents and their families, and to advancing the knowledge base of best clinical practices.

Our ABCs are:

- **A ? Access.** We seek to make quality care accessible to everyone who needs it.
- **B ? Brand.** We seek to create a brand recognized by young people, families, pediatricians, teachers, family court judges and other child advocates.
- **C ? Capability.** We seek to train the next generation of clinicians and advance the knowledge base of best practices in the field of adolescent and young adult mental health.
Clinical services

YAFC offers comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessments as well as ongoing individual, group and family treatments for adolescents, young adults and their families. Current services offered include:

- Adolescent Assessment Clinic [2]
- Bridge Clinic [3]
- Consultation-liaison with the UCSF Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine [4]
- Intensive Family Therapy Clinic [5]
- Next Mission [6]
- Telemedicine Project [7]

Patients and their families may also be referred to other programs offered in either Adult Services [8] or Child and Adolescent Services [9] in the Department of Psychiatry.

Grit Generation

At UCSF, we find that grit is the essential element that allows young people to persist in the face of obstacles. Grit comes through passion, perseverance and stamina. The mission of Grit Generation [10] is to create an on-line mentorship program to help young adults discover their own grit. We strongly believe grit is proactively cultivated in adolescents and young adults through education, character development, citizenship, good health, and a strong connection to the environment.

Grit Generation [10] draws from our own research at UCSF's Young Adult and Family Center, as well as from other outstanding and rigorous research that exists in our field. We create highly readable, engaging and accessible content to directly appeal to young adults. We give young people practical exercises to cultivate wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.

Collaboration and community partnerships

In accordance with our mission to increase access to psychiatric care, and reduce the stigma associated with obtaining mental health services, YAFC partners with the UCSF Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine [4]. By providing easily accessed mental health care
integrated with medical services, we reduce stigma and break down barriers to receiving care. In addition, by having Adolescent Medicine faculty and staff participate in the mental health evaluations of adolescents and young adults, we are able to conduct comprehensive assessments and treat the whole person.

The Young Adult and Family Center actively collaborates with public and private organizations, agencies, and foundations, as well as individual philanthropists and advocates, dedicated to improving the healthcare of adolescents and young adults. We are currently working with the Edgewood Children and Family Center, the Salvation Army, and the San Francisco Department of Health. We collaborate with organizations serving adolescents and young adults by offering expert clinical consultation, staff training, public education, partnership in program development, and public policy advocacy.

The need for youth and family mental health services

Mental illness in adolescents (ages 12-24) and transitional aged youth (ages 16-24) is a widespread problem that is poorly understood and understudied. The number of young people and their families who are affected by mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders is enormous. It is estimated that as many as one in five children and adolescents has a mental health disorder that causes distress and impairs functioning.

- In the past twelve months, 28 percent of high school students suffered at least one episode of major depression; over 14 percent thought seriously about committing suicide, and 7 percent made a serious attempt.
- 15 percent of teenagers suffer anxiety that is serious enough to interfere with their self-esteem, social functioning and school performance.
- Five percent of teenagers have a life-threatening eating disorder.
- 19 percent of teenagers are binge drinkers; one in eight teenagers admits to driving a car while intoxicated in the past thirty days.
- 75 percent of all mental illness is present during adolescence, yet only one out of three young people in need gets treatment.
- Five to ten years typically pass before an adolescent afflicted by anxiety or depression seeks help for their suffering and usually only after developing a comorbid condition such as substance abuse or after failing out of school.

Mental illness strikes young people regardless of their socioeconomic class, education, or family structure, and years often go by before they receive treatment. The consequences are devastating. School failure, substance abuse, self-destructive behavior, criminal activity and homelessness are common. Intact, affluent families can struggle for years to find the right doctor or clinic to care for their troubled teenager or young adult, but it is even harder for young people who do not have a strong support system to get quality mental health care. Eighteen year-olds aging out of foster care and young veterans returning home from war are especially at risk. We can change the lives of these vulnerable young people if we intervene in time.