

Changing THE WAY WE care™

Learning Brief: Transition of Care Services

Background

CTWWC aims for children to remain in or return to safe and nurturing families. Together with a focus on family strengthening and gatekeeping to prevent unnecessary separation of children from families, supporting the transition of residential care facilities is key to mobilizing a greater focus on family care among different actors within and outside of any given country. This three-pronged approach also includes strengthening and expanding family-based alternative care and family strengthening/prevention of separation. The transition process is recognized as having three main, non-linear phases or stages: (1) Engagement, (2) Preparation and Onboarding and (3) Active Transition Stage. Each recognizes the unique dynamics at play with transition, which requires change management with donors, volunteers, founders, managers, staff, children, families, communities, care leavers and government.

Transition is the process of changing the model of care or service provided by an organization from a residential care model to a family or community-based model. Transition involves change at all levels of the organization and includes, but is not limited to, the safe reintegration of children.

For the first four years of the CTWWC initiative, teams in Guatemala, Kenya and Moldova engaged residential care facilities and raised awareness about care reform in general, and then about transition specifically. Situational analyses helped provide evidence for the number of residential institutions and profiles of children in care, which informed reintegration strategies and helped develop case management for reunification as a key entry point for transition. Technical support has focused on improving case management practices, especially preparation before, during and after placement in care, reunifying children with biological or extended families, and supporting family-based alternative care options. CTWWC has now accompanied dozens of residential care providers globally in developing and implementing transition plans, that move them from residential models to family- and community-focused models. This accompaniment has included facilitating peer exchanges, training, ongoing mentoring, sharing of tools and resources, documenting the process to share with and inspire others, and sometimes simply listening to the providers' stories of passion for children and their challenges with change. For some, it has neither been feasible nor of interest to transition to a different model. In those cases, the decision is made by institutional leadership or donors to close the facility.

It is very honest and real, the process that we are living with you [or CTWWC]. We are taking steps of greater confidence and learning to take risks in the small changes that are taking place. We are grateful for your patience and for helping us to not let the small flashes of light - that the sisters themselves discover in their social environments, where dreams come true - go out.

- Sister Tere, Mexico

Key learning around transition

Trusting relationships are the foundation

One of the most important lessons learned in CTWWC's engagement in transition processes is that relationships are critical – they matter more than anything else. It is important to take time, energy and concerted effort to establish the trust of key actors considering or engaged in the change process. The CTWWC Situational Analysis Toolkit is designed to promote open communication and

transparent processes to build trust between those promoting transition and residential institution leadership and staff instead of an “us versus them” or a “doing to versus doing *with*” approach. [The Transition Guide](#), developed for CTWWC Guatemala, addresses this issue and provides concrete examples of how it has been done in practice. A [case study](#) written by CTWWC highlighting the transition of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico underlines the role of key relationships in the transition process.

Make time to address the emotions surrounding change

Related to trust, there must also be time and space made for staff to process change. There are emotions and fear associated with change and to ensure buy-in of the process, there must be intentionality in terms of providing staff, leadership or donors and the space to express their concerns, share their commitment and hear their story. CTWWC found this was especially true when supporting faith-based organizations. Given the intense connection between the expression of their charism and how that has been expressed by caring for children, there must be ample time and appropriate facilitation of a grieving process. As one of the Sisters so poignantly mentioned during a recent meeting, “our charism is not practiced or defined by a building but rather what we are called to do to best support the children and families in our community.” The Transition Guide includes content and suggestions for how to support this process and [several case studies](#) also highlight this important element. A summary of this process with the Sisters of Mexico summed up the emotional journey very well: “A transition of services implies real changes in the lives of those who receive care, as well as for those who provide it. However, it was a priority to address these needs through emotional support and spiritual guidance to manage the grieving process. The Sisters were suffering a great loss that could not be eclipsed by an inspiring vision of the future. They needed to grieve for what they had lost in this step of the transition. These Sisters were giving up their method of service that they had implemented for many years, and in some cases, the Sisters believed that it was the only thing they knew how to do.”¹



Figure 1: Drawing of the transition journey. Photo credit: Kelley Bunkers

Transition takes time and is not always linear

An important learning about the transition process is recognizing that it takes time. Moving from one type of a model to another requires not only organizational and administrative changes, but changes in attitudes and practice of the entire staff, leadership and donors. Each person goes through her or his own process and each timeframe is different. As such, the process is or can be a messy back and forth one, and not as linear as we would like it to be. There are often several steps backwards or sideways before the change moves forward again. Transition takes time and patience. It is a process made up of many interconnected pieces that require small or sometimes large adjustments, shifts or changes – everyone comes onboard in their own time. While there are key steps or phases in that process, each experience is unique and as such, the support and accompaniment provided needs to be tailored to the organization.

¹ CTWWC (2022). A Story of Transition of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd in Tijuana, Mexico.

CTWWC has collaborated with many organizations and tried to capture these [unique stories of transition](#) to document the wide-ranging and non-linear paths that organizations take to transition and to showcase what some are working on transitioning to. The case stories provide useful examples of what a transition process might entail, including challenges to be overcome. The drawing above by the Sisters of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd in Guanajuato, Mexico illustrates their vision of the path to transition from a residential institution to a community center. Rocks, cacti and rough terrain represent the challenges of reaching the end goal.

Another important learning from Kenya, Guatemala and Moldova is the importance of including all staff at all levels in the transition process from start to finish. As turnover is a common occurrence in many of these settings, ensuring that there is institutional memory will support continuity of the process if and when people leave. This might require different approaches (e.g., conversations, training, coaching, one-to-one or in groups, etc.) with different team members, but the time and effort are worth it to ensure that the process does not falter or end with the departure of staff. Research by CTWWC and BCN in Kenya (pending publication) found that a significant factor in getting directors and staff on board was their opportunity to talk with families and to see successful reintegration in practice. Sometimes residential care facilities need to start small and learn from accomplishments!

A conducive environment makes the difference

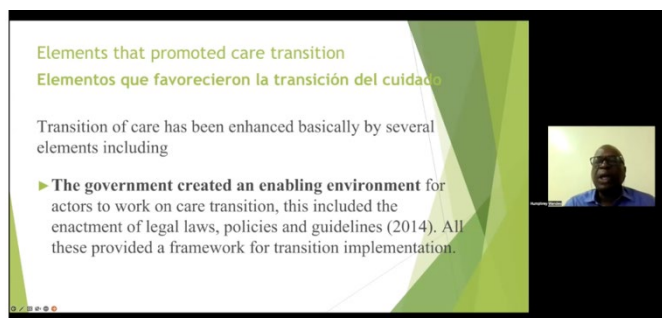


Figure 2: Mr. Wandeo a Children's Officer in Kisumu, Kenya, presents on how the Government of Kenya created a conducive environment for transition. Credit: Transforming Children's Care Global Collaborative Platform, October 22, 2022

care reform strategy launched in Kenya earlier this year, so the topic is becoming much more familiar in the vernacular of those engaged in children's care. In Moldova, there has not necessarily been an environment that is conducive to transition, as it has been complicated by differing mandates, a workforce that is not interested in other roles and a history of focusing more on deinstitutionalization rather than transition of services. Regional work in Latin America exemplifies the importance of government's influence. A recently passed law in Peru has motivated residential institution directors and government to learn about transition together, resulting in a series of virtual and [in-person trainings](#) by a team that included CTWWC team members.

Initial findings from the study in Kenya also found that the director's positive attitude and openness towards the concept of transition matters a great deal. Whether or not the director perceives transition to be good relates directly to whether they perceive family care to be in the best interest of children, conceptually. The same study also found that having a plan in place that includes a

CTWWC recognizes that change is difficult. Transition requires a shift in mindset, practice and attitude across the organization and amongst many actors with different vantage points. As such, an important lesson is the critical role of conducive environments in the success of a transition process starting or not, continuing or stopping, succeeding or failing. In Kenya, CTWWC found that having government support behind transition was a motivating factor in many cases. There is a role for government mandate, even in contexts where most residential care facilities are private. Transition is a core component of the

For directors to buy-in to transition, they generally need to have a positive disposition towards all three of these aspects. This means being convinced that transition is good idea conceptually, practically, and, for their future, programmatically.

clear vision of what the future will look like helps foster more buy-in and trust of the process and allays fears related to the “what next?”

Champions make the difference

CTWWC developed and piloted a “champion-ness” framework, and several of the champions were engaged in transition. In Guatemala, Kenya and Peru, CTWWC facilitated sharing amongst and between peers, including government, practitioners and women religious. CTWWC witnessed the positive influence that people have when they hear information about transition from people in similar positions as theirs. Whether it be a government in the East and Southern Africa Regional Learning Platform, or a Retreat for Women Religious in Guatemala, the power of peer sharing is palpable. The study in Kenya, found that peer to peer exchanges of directors and staff of residential institutions had a notably positive influence on directors’ attitudes and decisions to transition, as compared to other factors like sharing the evidence or trainings. While the peer-to-peer model was praised as extremely important, providing technical support around the “how to” of transition was also appreciated as it addressed uncertainties and insecurities of the process. The same study also found that the involvement of people with lived experience (PWLE) of care in awareness raising and advocacy can help change minds when the real challenges facing young people after leaving care come to light. CTWWC has encouraged, when possible and appropriate, the engagement of professionals who are people with lived experience i.e., as children they lived in residential care, in key engagements so that if they want to share from the perspective of a PWLE they are empowered to do so. On several occasions, their stories have been extremely motivating. For example,



Figure 3: Sister Ana Berta, Tijuana, Mexico, on how her own community of women religious must embrace and define what their vision of the future.

Peter Kamau was part of a [recent webinar](#) hosted by the Collaborative Platform, where he shared his experience as a professional supporting transition and as a PWLE.

Share, exchange, discuss

What feels like a foundational learning for CTWWC this past year is

affirmation that momentum is generated when information, stories and experiences are shared. There has been a notable shift in the interest and engagement of individuals and organizations in the sector around the topic of transition in the last year. The development of the [Transforming Children’s Care Collaborative Platform](#) has been instrumental in bringing people together, sharing tools, and promoting opportunities like webinars, case studies and discussions on the topic of transition. The Transitioning Residential Care Working Group under that platform has over 100 members from all over the globe, representing a wide range of organizations – large, small, secular, faith-based, new and established. CTWWC has been part of this effort by: engaging in the working groups and bringing new actors in; hosting a Spanish-language sub-group; and [presenting, moderating](#) and designing several webinars covering the topic of transition. We work to bring our partners to these as they highlight their own journeys. This shift in wanting to share and looking for opportunities to learn from others feels special and seems to be taking us to the next level.

©2022 Catholic Relief Services. All Rights Reserved. This material may not be reproduced, displayed, modified or distributed without the express prior written permission of copyright holder. For permission, write to info@ctwwc.org. The photographs in this publication are used for illustrative purposes only; they do not imply any particular health, orphanhood or residential care status on the part of any person who appears in the photographs.

This product is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Global Communities and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Need to know more? Contact Changing the Way We Care at info@ctwwc.org or visit changingthewaywecare.org.