



CHILD WELFARE
LEAGUE OF AMERICA

guarding
children's
rights
serving
children's
needs

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Child Welfare League of America, Inc.

***IMPROVING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH
FORMERLY
SERVED BY THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM:***

Identifying The Support Network's Strengths And Needs

**Child Welfare League of
America**

July 17, 1998

I. Introduction

Though there are many programs and organizations working to assist youth in foster care, there are clearly identifiable gaps in the services available to those youth, young adults, and older adults who have left the foster care system and no longer have access to formal child welfare services. This project was designed to collect information about the experiences of young/older adults after they leave the system, to identify community-based organizations (CBO's) that provide support and services to this population, and to tap the wisdom of both of these groups in order to identify what's needed to strengthen the service system and to build the capacity of CBO's working with former foster youth.

The Child Welfare League of America initiated activities in April 1998 designed to collect information about organizations that provide services to young and older adults after they have left foster care. These activities included distributing a flyer requesting information about *"Agencies, Organizations, and Groups that provide services/supports to former foster children"* [AGOFFC], and following up with a longer, more detailed survey to flyer respondents. Approximately 3,000 flyers were distributed to CWLA member agencies, conference attendees, and other possible sources of information, and two hundred responses were received. One hundred-eighty-five long surveys were mailed out, and information from 54 returned surveys has been incorporated into this report. In addition to building a foundation of information about local community support for foster youth, the flyers and surveys will be utilized to create a service directory for former foster youth, social workers, and other community based organizations in need of resources for assisting former foster youth.

CWLA also conducted a meeting on this issue at the Annie E. Casey Foundation offices in Baltimore, Maryland. A group of twenty-two people, including several former foster youth, a number of representatives from CBO's working with former foster youth around the country, and representatives from Casey Family Services were brought together with CWLA and AEC Foundation staff for a full day of discussion and networking. This meeting provided participants with a unique opportunity to share information with each other and with child welfare policy makers, funders and advocates about what national and local efforts should be

undertaken to ensure positive outcomes for youth after they leave foster care, as well as to explore their own organizational capacity building needs.

This report summarizes overall findings from both survey responses and proceedings from the meeting, with recommendations for building capacity at the local level and strengthening the overall service system in order to facilitate successful long-term outcomes for foster youth. A follow up questionnaire was sent to meeting participants, and responses will be integrated into the final report for this project. A more detailed analysis of the survey will also be included in the final report.

II. The Experiences of Young/Older Adults After Foster Care

Young/older adults have many experiences that both facilitate and impede their ability to succeed emotionally, educationally, and economically after they leave care. Group discussion at the Baltimore meeting brought out a number of overall themes regarding the post-foster care experience.

The transition from foster care to adult independence brings many unexpected challenges

These challenges come in many different forms; educational, emotional, and economic. Former foster youth report that the transition to independence and self-sufficiency was often very rapid, sometimes unplanned for or unexpected, and resulted in their feeling “dumped” from the system and cut off from resources and support. Faced with the formidable tasks of having to support oneself and continue with educational activities, this sense of being cut off from support represents one of the greatest challenges to the emotional and economic well being of these young adults. Emancipation brings many other unexpected challenges, including time management, difficulty and unwillingness to ask for help or to access community resources, difficulty in accessing medical and dental care, and discovering that many critical skills were not taught in independent living programs or foster care. Young adults also have a great deal of difficulty obtaining and maintaining safe, affordable housing.

Emancipation also brings new opportunities to give back and contribute to programs and communities

Former foster youth express a strong desire for opportunities to volunteer with or to be employed by the agencies that provided services to them while they were in the system. As adults, they feel as though they can contribute their time, experience, and caring to children and youth who are still in care, and are empowered themselves by the opportunity to make such contributions. Three of the meeting participants are current employees of agencies at which they received services while in foster care, and are able to contribute not only their skills, but their ability to relate to youth through shared experiences.

Ongoing relationships with caring adults and peers are critical to successful transitions

Young/older adults who have been in foster care identify relationships with mentors, foster parents, foster care program/group home staff and other caring adults as invaluable supports after leaving care. One former foster youth described her relationships as “building bridges while in care in order to have access to support and resources after leaving care”. Adults with whom they developed close relationships often became informal mentors who provide emotional support and other types of assistance for many years. Foster parents frequently maintain supportive relationships with these young people throughout adulthood, taking a lifetime role as family members. Formal mentoring programs are considered a viable source of support, if time and effort are devoted to developing genuine, mutually rewarding relationships. Former foster youth identified staff of CBO’s, social workers, and group home staff who went “above and beyond the call of duty”, and who invested time and effort into developing genuine caring relationships as important sources of guidance and emotional support.

Former foster youth consider opportunities to maintain relationships with and to network with other former foster youth important to their adult development. The example of the California Youth Connection (CYC), was discussed as an illustration of this. CYC, which operates through chapters in a number of counties in California, provides young people who are still in care as well as those who have left care with opportunities to meet regularly, to network and obtain support from one another, and to participate in advocacy efforts on behalf of all of California’s foster children.

Establishing long-term supportive relationships, or a support network of relationships, is sometimes very challenging. Experiences of abuse and neglect, multiple foster care placements, and the sense of isolation resulting from the emancipation process often create barriers to attachments and the development of healthy relationships. Meeting participants reported that establishing and maintaining good relationships requires a lot of time and effort on the part of both youth and adults, and that sustained relationships often depend on the young adult’s individual initiative, persistence, and courage.

Both young adults and older adults who have been out of care for many years are concerned about the level of preparedness provided by the foster care system through independent living programs and services

Among the many unexpected challenges to successful adulthood, lack of skills and knowledge related to independent living, employment, and housing stand out for former foster youth. Lack of “real life” opportunities to practice independent living skills impedes the transition to self-sufficiency and often precipitates emotional and economic crises in the lives of unprepared young adults. A much stronger emphasis on the development of specific skills, such as job readiness, time management, and budgeting are needed in independent living programs. Former foster youth also identified knowledge deficits in such important areas as career options and requirements, sources of financial aid, knowledge and navigation of community resources, and strategies for self-advocacy. Staff of independent living programs, social workers, and foster parents all need additional training and support to teach and assist youth in developing the skills and knowledge to make it on their own.

Though there are some systemic activities that facilitate the transition to independence, child welfare and human services systems often create barriers to successful emancipation,

Systemic issues, such as limits on savings, low funding for independent living services, scarcity of financial support for college, and child welfare bureaucracies that prevent foster youth from participating in normalizing community experiences (e.g., most foster youth cannot hold a driver’s license), also contribute to increased difficulty during the transitional years. Bureaucracy often operates in such a way that manipulation of the system or bending the rules are the only ways to access services or get necessary tasks accomplished. Foster youth see this as poor role modeling by a system that has parental responsibility for its wards. Former foster youth identified a number of programs and services, such as community collaborations that provide post-emancipation support (e.g. the Bridges program in California), programs that emphasize advocacy (such as the Youth Advocacy Center in New York), and programs that prepare young people for college and provide support in the college environment (such as California’s Educational Opportunities Program) as being particularly helpful and supportive.

III. Strategies and Services to Address the Unmet Needs of Younger and Older Adults Formerly in Foster Care

Participants in the Baltimore meeting discussed a number of strategies for addressing the unmet needs of emancipated foster youth. Responses to the CWLA survey also included identification of and information about the most important services and supports needed by this underserved population.

Housing

The most important needs identified by both meeting participants and survey respondents are those related to housing. This includes access to emergency shelter and temporary housing, as well as longer term transitional housing programs and affordable housing options. Ideas for housing support include specialized respite care to be provided by foster parents for short periods of time, as well as expanded access to emergency shelter. Survey respondents report that former foster youth often experience difficulty in accessing adult homeless shelters and services, and that there should be specialized services for young adults. Participants in the Baltimore meeting identified the summer housing needs of college students as particularly acute.

The Transitional Housing Program for Homeless Youth, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides up to eighteen months of housing and supportive services to homeless youth ages 16-21. There are currently approximately 75 TLP's funded under this program nationally, and many of these programs report serving large numbers of former foster youth. This is the type of program needed to fill the housing gap for emancipated foster youth, and should be more widely available. Other existing programs that provide housing for former foster youth include Job Corps, the U.S. Military Services, transitional housing programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and transitional programs provided by local CBO's specifically for foster youth who have left care. Beyond the transitional period, there is a need for long-term affordable housing options such as expanded access to public and other subsidized housing programs such as the Section 8 rental program.

Educational and Employment Support

Support for achieving educational and employment goals was also rated a high priority by both groups. Services for supporting youth in this area fell on a continuum from during foster care through transition to independence and on into adulthood. Suggested strategies fell into two categories.

1) Information and Assistance

- Resource/drop in centers assistance/information hotline
- Community Resource Bank services
- Resource Directories for courses
- Services and Programs
- Special Scholarship Programs
- Tutoring
- Consistent access to educational records
- "911" telephone
- Intensive remedial educational
- Independent Living "refresher"
- Education about the job market
- Internet resources and access
- Long term educational guidance/support
- Enhanced, creative GED programs

2) System and Networking Support

- Community and employer education regarding the employment and educational needs of former foster youth and youth in general
- Increased opportunities for the development of mentoring relationships in education and employment settings
- Community partnerships between public and private agencies, post-secondary educational institutions, and the business community to support education and employment and avoid duplication of services.
- Local employer networks supported by CBO's to create increased employment opportunities

It was noted by both meeting participants and survey respondents that many young adults leaving the child welfare system are not prepared for the diverse demands of the modern workplace. Service providers emphasize the need for employment readiness training, workplace experience at as young an age as possible, continuing opportunities for skill development, and ongoing education regarding workplace expectations and environments.

Providers also identified employment preparation as a difficult service to provide because employment readiness is not easily learned in a counseling or classroom setting; it requires real-life opportunities and ongoing support into adulthood.

Support Services

A number of support services were identified through group discussion and through the surveys as priority needs. Support services identified by the survey include assistance in accessing resources, mentoring, advocacy, positive peer support, and case management. Interestingly, many survey respondents identified support services as being the easiest to provide to former foster youth, while others identified them as being among the most difficult. Factors that facilitate the provision of support services include existing strong relationships between youth and staff that promote a commitment to continuing program participation, as well as the ability of programs to provide these types of services at minimal cost to clients who have left the system. Another factor contributing to continued support services is youths' familiarity with and/or awareness of available services, which makes the services more accessible. Program staff also report that young people may be more receptive to participation in program services once they have left the system because their participation becomes voluntary. Survey respondents report that many young adults become transient during the transitional years, which makes providing support services, or even just getting in touch to offer support, more difficult.

Support service strategies discussed in the Baltimore meeting emphasized access to community resources and peer support. There was strong support for centralized assistance in accessing community resources, such as hotlines, internet directories, published directories, and drop-in centers, as well as identification of formal and informal mentors as important sources of information about and connection to community resources. Participants saw establishing contact and networking with other former foster youth as a significant source of lifelong support, as well as an opportunity to "give something back" to the system and to other people. Ready access to support groups addressing issues specific to the foster care experience was suggested as an effective strategy for long-term support. Both service providers and former foster youth identified opportunities to advocate to community members, policy makers, and government representatives on

behalf of themselves and others as contributing to an increased sense of self-efficacy and to concrete positive changes in the service system.

Other important needs

Other areas of concrete need identified by the survey respondents and meeting participants included access to health and dental services, emergency food supplies, and transportation resources. Access to these resources may be limited, and barriers are created by cost, lack of knowledge regarding alternative resources, and geographic factors, e.g., there is no public transportation in many rural areas.

IV. How do Community Based Organizations Support and Serve Young/Older Adults After Foster Care?

The organizations and programs represented in the Baltimore meeting and by the survey responses represent a wide variety of community-based services and supports. Many agencies that provide residential care, independent living, or other services for older foster youth have recognized the need for continuing services and developed resources to support formal aftercare and other program activities for former foster youth. Alternatively, many child welfare programs provide informal continuing support to youth who have emancipated from care, as well as assistance in accessing other community resources.

Organizations represented at the Baltimore meeting and by the surveys provide a range of services including housing, counseling, comprehensive support services, advocacy, peer support, volunteer opportunities, and employment assistance. The responses from 54 surveys are summarized in the chart below. It is important to note that half of the organizations responding at this time provide only informal services to former foster youth.

Services Provided by Community-Based Organizations to Younger and Older Adults Who Have Been in Foster Care	Percentage of Respondents Providing Each Service
Advocacy	69.8%

Formal Aftercare Program	51.2%
Case Management	74.4%
Counseling	74.4%
Crisis Intervention	58.1%
Non-financial Educational Assistance	65.1%
Financial Educational Assistance	41.9%
Emergency Financial Assistance	34.9%
Emergency Shelter	27.9%
Employment Assistance	62.8%
Employment Preparation	67.4%
Family Planning	27.9%
Financial Assistance for On-going Living Expenses	32.6%
Housing or Housing Assistance	58.1%
Legal Services/Education	16.3%
Mentoring Services	39.5%
Non-financial Assistance	51.2%
Parenting Education/Support	55.8%
Peer Support/Counseling	53.5%
Support in Accessing Community Resources	81.4%
Vocational Training/Education	32.6%

Many of the CBO's are providing services that meet the highest priority needs of this population, but it is obvious that there is a terrible shortage of both funding and program resources to meet the needs of former foster youth. Most of the respondents are community-based non-profit youth organizations, many of whom are traditional child welfare agencies providing services to youth in foster care or federally funded transitional living programs. A small number of for-profit agencies provide employment related training and placement. Several programs represent unique attempts to bring together multiple resources in a community to address the needs of former foster youth, such as United Friends of the Children: the Bridges Program, which has developed a large transitional housing capacity in addition to comprehensive support services. Other innovative programs bring former foster youth together for mutual support, resource networking, and advocacy, such as the National Association of Former Foster Children of America (NAFFCCA), the California Youth Connection, and the Orangewood Children's Foundation, which has established a volunteer peer counseling program. These three organizations are particularly innovative, in that they

rely heavily on youth involvement and youth leadership for management, program development, and program implementation. The volunteer program at Orangewood and NAFCCA were both founded by adults who grew up in the foster care system.

V. Characteristics of Youth and Adults Served by CBO's

CWLA and the Annie E. Casey Foundation were also interested in identifying characteristics of the population served by these organizations. The majority of organizations responding to the survey provide services to youth between the ages of 17 and 21 years of age. Of the agencies who responded, 26.2% provide services to youth younger than 16 years of age and 42.9% provide services to youth older than 22 years. This information suggests that limited supports are available to youth as they begin to transition out of the formal foster care system, but taper off as they approach the age of 21 years. It appears that youth who are younger than the age of 16 years are not eligible for many of the services offered by the community based organizations who responded to the survey.

Fifty-two percent of the CBO's surveyed serve youth who emancipated from foster care at 16 years, and 76.2% served youth who emancipated or aged out at 18. Sixty-seven percent served youth who were homeless at the time they accessed services. Sixty-four percent served youth who had requested/accessed support as an adult. One organization indicated that they serve non-system youth, i.e., youth who were not in foster care, who qualify for services. Many organizations indicated that they provide formal or informal services to youth who have been formerly involved with their agency. Other agencies specifically target runaway and homeless youth, youth in crisis, youth with mental health and/or substance abuse issues, or pregnant/parenting youth.

CBO's take referrals from a number of sources. The majority of agencies (82.9%) serve youth who had previously received services from the agency and request or are referred for services after leaving care. Sixty-four percent take self-referrals and referrals from other community-based service providers. Fifty-four percent accept referrals from public community agencies. Fifty-one percent serve youth referred by a friend, family member or other concerned adult, and fifty-nine percent receive referrals from other former foster youth. Relationships that have been established and maintained by youth who have left care greatly facilitate their ability to

access services and support. According to feedback from the respondents, these relationships often link youth to informal support networks and facilitate access to formal support services. Finally, thirty-nine percent get referrals from homeless shelters and twenty-nine percent from hotline/community information services.

During the last year, the agencies (n = 54) who responded to the survey served 3164 individuals. It is likely that this number underrepresents the number of individuals served because some agencies did not answer the question. Additionally, some of the agencies providing informal services did not have this information readily available. Additional information regarding the number and characteristics of youth and adults served by CBO's will be outlined in the final report.

VI. What do these organizations need in order to maintain, improve, and expand the services they provide?

Survey respondents and meeting participants identified a number of specific resources needed to strengthen organizations serving former foster youth. Not surprisingly, increased funding, as well as diversified funding, were at the top of the list. Most CBO's already manage multiple funding streams, but experience difficulty developing financial resources to support formal aftercare and other services to emancipated youth. The second most requested resource is opportunities to network with agencies providing similar services. Other capacity building resources identified by many of the CBO's include training for staff and volunteers, public education, training for administrators, and technical assistance. Increased information about program models, community partnerships, and program development how-to's were also identified as strategies for building capacity. Discussion during the meeting in Baltimore briefly addressed the idea of forming a national network or organization of CBO's serving former foster youth, but the discussion was cut off due to time limitations. Meeting participants have been asked to fill out a follow-up questionnaire that asks for opinions about such a network as well as other strategies for strengthening CBO's working with former foster youth. Participants were also asked to provide suggestions on how former foster youth can be contacted and offered opportunities to give and receive support.

Many of the other strategies identified by the two groups were related to broader issues of policy, systems improvement, and program development. These strategies fall into two categories.

Broad Strategies for Strengthening Agencies and Programs

- Develop increased funding for services and
- Provide assistance to CBO's to build awareness of community resources
- Involve the private sector to provide supports for this population
- Disseminate information about successful models
- Formalize a network of former foster care youth and young people currently in care
- Develop volunteer and other alternatives for creative service delivery (i.e.: work study, tutoring, AmeriCorps, youth leadership programs)
- Get public and private support for models and strengths-based approaches
- Develop financial and other supports to create and maintain incentives for employers
- Spread the word about methods of youth involvement and positive youth development strategies as part of child welfare policy and practice
- Build capacity for effective coordination and collaboration among service providers to ensure a safety net for youth after they leave care
- "Keep Doors Open" - make sure there are supports and services available to all youth and adults who have left care and need assistance
- Keep case files open for a period of time after emancipation (e.g., New York requires that case files be kept open for six months after emancipation)
- Develop outreach programs to contact young and older adults formerly in care for purposes of follow up, assistance, and opportunities to contribute
- Increase the level of youth involvement at all levels of program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Examples include developing positions on agency boards and local community boards and commissions, including youth in strategic planning processes in

- the organization, and directing purposeful effort toward creating meaningful youth involvement in agency processes
- Service delivery during transition should emphasize the development of multiple connections to people and resources for learning, for help, and for support
- Develop child care resources for this population

Broad Strategies for Improving Systems and Policies

- There should be centralized youth/adult leadership on a national level to facilitate effective advocacy and development of funding
- Need to have a vision for policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels
- Young adults need to be spokespersons and advocates for change
- Identify allies and opponents in our work and develop strategies for addressing each
- Develop a national organization to serve and support youth currently in care and younger/older adults formerly in care
- Provide training on how to represent constituency
- Increase federal and state appropriations for services and the development of performance standards
- Address issue of privatization of services and its impact on the service delivery system
- CBO's and public child welfare departments take responsibility for community education about the needs of individuals currently and formerly in foster care
- Allocating resources for "getting the word out" about services that are available - advertising and outreach to potential clients
- Networking and collaborating with other service providers in the community to learn about the ways in which they serve former foster care youth
- Develop policies and programs for emergency/respite care for former foster care young/older adults using former foster parents as resources
- Include foster parents in training and information sharing regarding resources in the community and accessing them
- Ensure that youth issues are brought to policy and program discussions related to welfare reform, child welfare reform, juvenile justice, and adult support systems.

VII. Conclusion

Consistent and powerful themes developed from the information obtained from written surveys and discussions with young and older adults who were formerly in foster care and CBO's providing services to them. First, transition issues-- while similar for all youth "leaving the nest"--are unique and challenging. Planning, preparation, and concrete and supportive resources and services are critical needs that are not adequately addressed by the child welfare system and the larger community. Second, after care connections and relationships with agencies staff members, foster families, mentors, and youth in and out of care are primary components of the safety net that promotes a successful transition. Third, programs that target their services to former foster youth are limited. That is, they are not available in all parts of the country, and even when present, the community-based organizations do not have adequate and comprehensive resources to meet the needs. Fourth, the CBO's shared many capacity building needs including the need for increased and flexible funding, networking, training, technical assistance, and consultation. Finally, recommendations for developing and strengthening policies, programs, and systems highlighted the fact that much work needs to be done on the local, state, and national level to improve the outcomes for former foster youth.



Child Welfare League of America, Inc.

SURVEY FINDINGS

***Survey of Agencies, Organizations, and Groups Providing
Services and Support to Youth
Who Have Emancipated from or Dropped Out of the
Foster Care System***

**Child Welfare League of
America**

August, 1998

Survey of Agencies, Organizations, and Groups Providing Services and Support to Youth who have Emancipated from or Dropped Out of the Foster Care System

SURVEY FINDINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from the Child Welfare League of America's recent survey of agencies, organizations, and groups providing services and support to youth who have emancipated from or dropped out of the foster care system. The survey was designed to answer three primary research questions. They are:

- ◆ Who are the agencies, organizations, and groups that provide services and supports to adults or emancipated youth who have been in the foster care system for any part of their childhood or to those youth in the system who are transitioning out of care? Furthermore, what are the primary characteristics of these agencies, groups, and organizations?
- ◆ What services are being provided by these agencies, organizations, or other groups to young people who have aged out or dropped out of the foster care system? Additionally, what gaps in services or supports exist for these young people, which if filled, would promote their positive development and help ensure a safe, healthy, productive transition to adulthood?
- ◆ What is the current capacity of, and what are the capacity-building needs of the agencies, organizations, and groups that support these youth after they have left care?

The survey findings are organized according to these research questions. This report presents a summary of findings, based on the results of a detailed analysis of the responses of **84** community-based agencies. It highlights significant findings that are important in promoting positive long-term outcomes for former foster youth.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND GROUPS PROVIDING AFTERCARE SERVICES

A. Location

AGENCIES REPRESENTING ALL REGIONS OF THE U.S. RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY (FIGURE 1).

- Of the **84** agencies that responded to the survey, the largest percentage (**36%**) are located in the Mid-Atlantic Region, and the fewest are in the North Atlantic (**7%**). (See Attachment A for a regional map.)
- Nearly one-quarter (**24%**) are located in the Western region of the U.S.
- California, Pennsylvania, and New York had the largest number of agencies responding to the survey. Seventeen agencies in California, 13 in Pennsylvania, and 10 in New York completed the survey.

Community-Based Organizations by Region

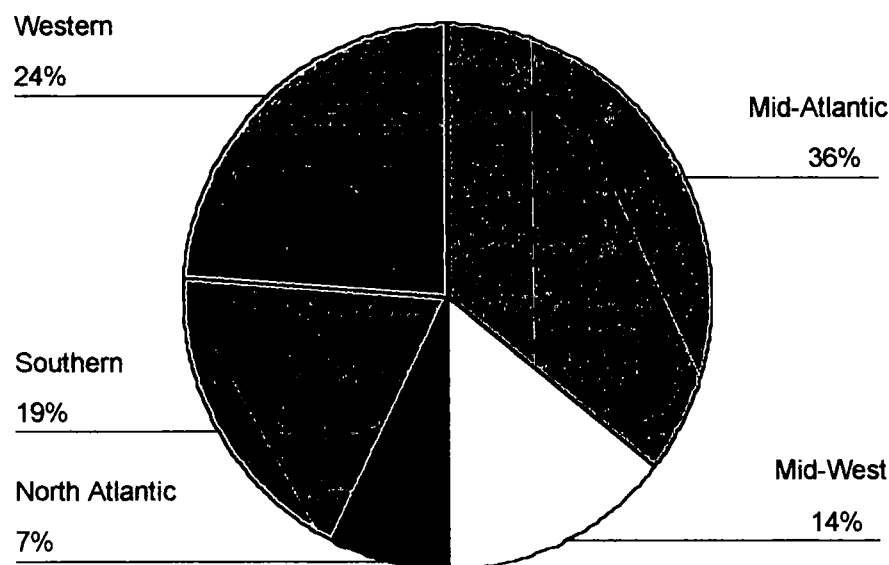


Figure 1

B. Types of Aftercare Services

A LARGE MAJORITY (80%) OF AGENCIES PROVIDE FORMAL AFTERCARE SERVICES TO YOUTH WHO HAVE EMANCIPATED FROM OR AGED OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM (FIGURE 2).

- 67 (80%) of the agencies that responded to the survey provide formal aftercare services. Formal aftercare services are defined as having one or more of the following characteristics:
 - * A written program description, procedures, and policies;
 - * Designated staff/volunteer time or staff positions;
 - * Designated funding to support services to this population;
 - * An organizational or program structure specifically intended to serve and/or support this population.
- 17 (20%) of the agencies only provide informal aftercare services. Informal services typically do not have funding earmarked for former foster youth and may be provided based on relationships maintained between staff and youth.

Types of Aftercare Services Offered

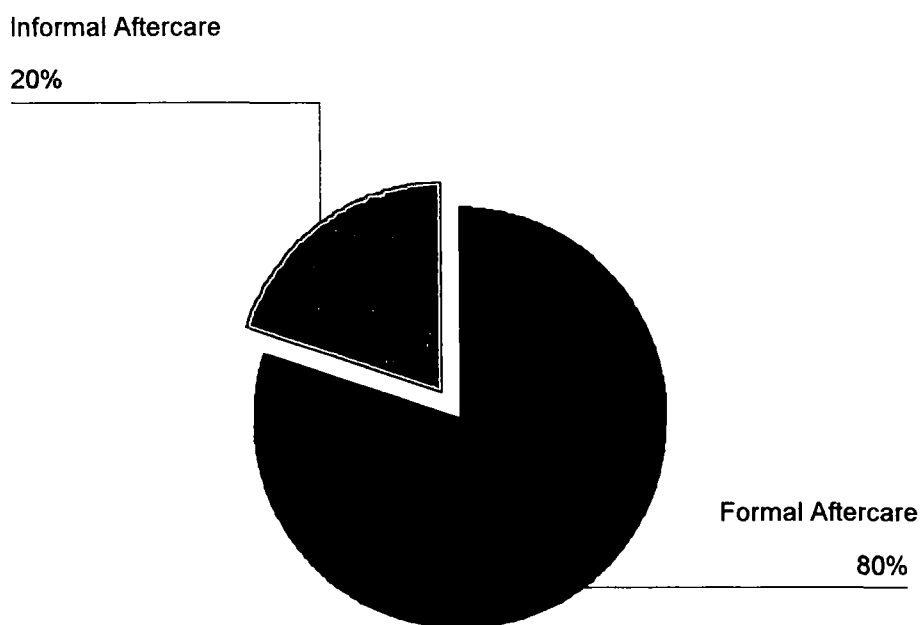


Figure 2

C. Ages of Youth/Adults Served

MOST OF THE 67 AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE FORMAL AFTERCARE SERVICES ASSIST YOUTH AGES 17-20. FEWER SERVE YOUTH UNDER THE AGE OF 16 OR AGE 22 AND OLDER (FIGURE 3).

- Nearly all (**94%**) of the agencies that responded to the survey serve youth who are 18 years of age.
- In contrast, only **36%** serve youth who are 22 and older, indicating that comparatively little long-term assistance is available to former foster youth.
- Only one-quarter (**25%**) provide formal aftercare services to youth under the age of 16. This finding suggests that there may be a gap in services for youth in early adolescence who are in need of transitional assistance and supports.
- **5,094** youth received formal aftercare services in 1997. This finding is based on the responses of the 67 agencies that provide formal aftercare services.
- Although each agency served approximately **28** youth (median) in 1997, they vary widely with a range of **2 to 805** youth served.

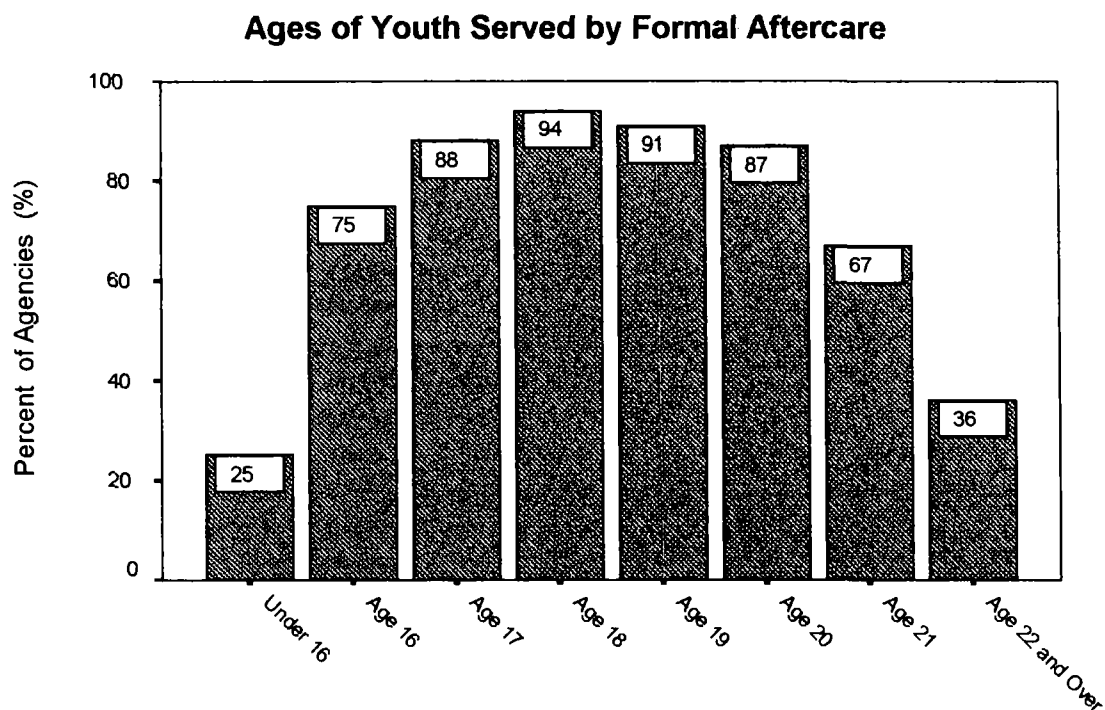


Figure 3

D. Referral Sources for Youth/Adults

MOST YOUTH AND ADULTS WHO RECEIVE FORMAL AFTERCARE SERVICES ARE CURRENT OR FORMER CLIENTS OF THE AGENCY (FIGURE 4).

- Most agencies (86%) provide services to youth who are still in care or who request and are referred for services before leaving care. This finding indicates that there may be a lack of services and support for youth who are no longer connected with the foster care system.
- Less than one-third of agencies serve youth who are referred by homeless shelters and other homeless services providers (31%). Given the disproportionate number of shelter residents who are former foster youth, expanded efforts may be needed to cultivate relationships between child welfare organizations and housing providers.
- Approximately half of the agencies serve youth who are referred by other former foster care youth (53%) and friends or family members (48%), revealing the importance of informal social support networks in helping youth access needed services.
- Agencies also indicated in the “other” category that they receive referrals from schools and foster parents. This link is important in that both schools and foster parents are crucial to providing youth with the knowledge, skills, and support necessary for a successful transition to adulthood.

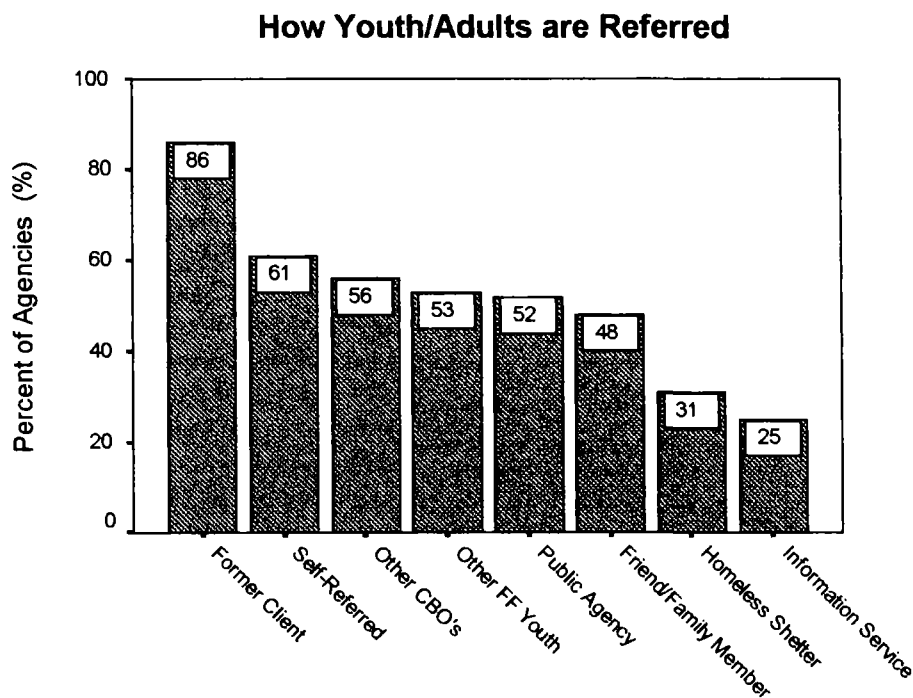


Figure 4

E. Outreach to Youth/Adults

MOST AGENCIES GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT THEIR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES BY PROVIDING WRITTEN INFORMATION TO POTENTIAL REFERRAL SOURCES (FIGURE 5).

- The majority of agencies reach the youth in their programs through written information provided to potential referral sources (79%), although a large percentage (63%) also make presentations to these same sources.
- Most agencies (74%) also rely heavily on getting the word out through word of mouth. This finding reveals the importance of informal support networks, such as foster youth, friends, and family members in the provision of aftercare services to youth. Supporting this, 60% of the agencies make presentations to youth in foster care to distribute information about their programs.
- Agencies indicated that they also rely on self-referrals, referrals from agency workers, youth awareness of services while in care, and training seminars to disseminate information about their programs.
- One agency indicated that they are careful not to advertise too much due to their limited number of placement and program slots. To prevent long waiting lists, they are selective about the approaches they use to get the word out about their programs.

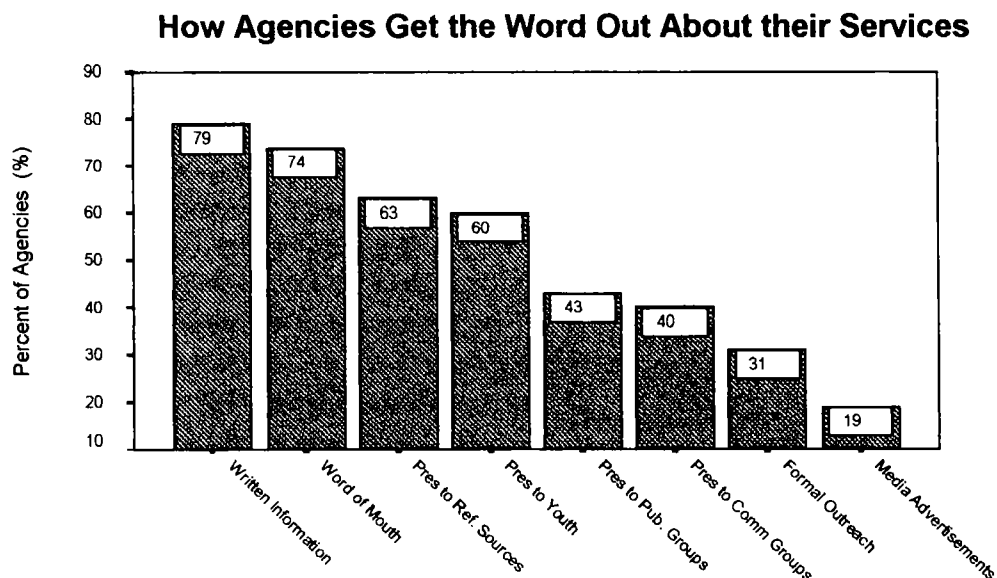


Figure 5

F. Funding Sources

TITLE IV-E FEDERAL INDEPENDENT LIVING FUNDS AND PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS ARE THE LARGEST SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR FORMAL AFTERCARE SERVICES (FIGURE 6).

- Nearly half of all agencies (**48%**) fund their post-emancipation/ aftercare services from Title IV-E Independent Living funds. Agencies also access federal funds through the HUD Transitional Living Program funds (**19%**) and Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Funds (**15%**).
- Private contributions (**48%**) and private grants from foundations or corporations (**34%**) were also reported as important sources of funding.
- Agencies also rely on volunteer services, United Way funds, and city funds to finance aftercare services.

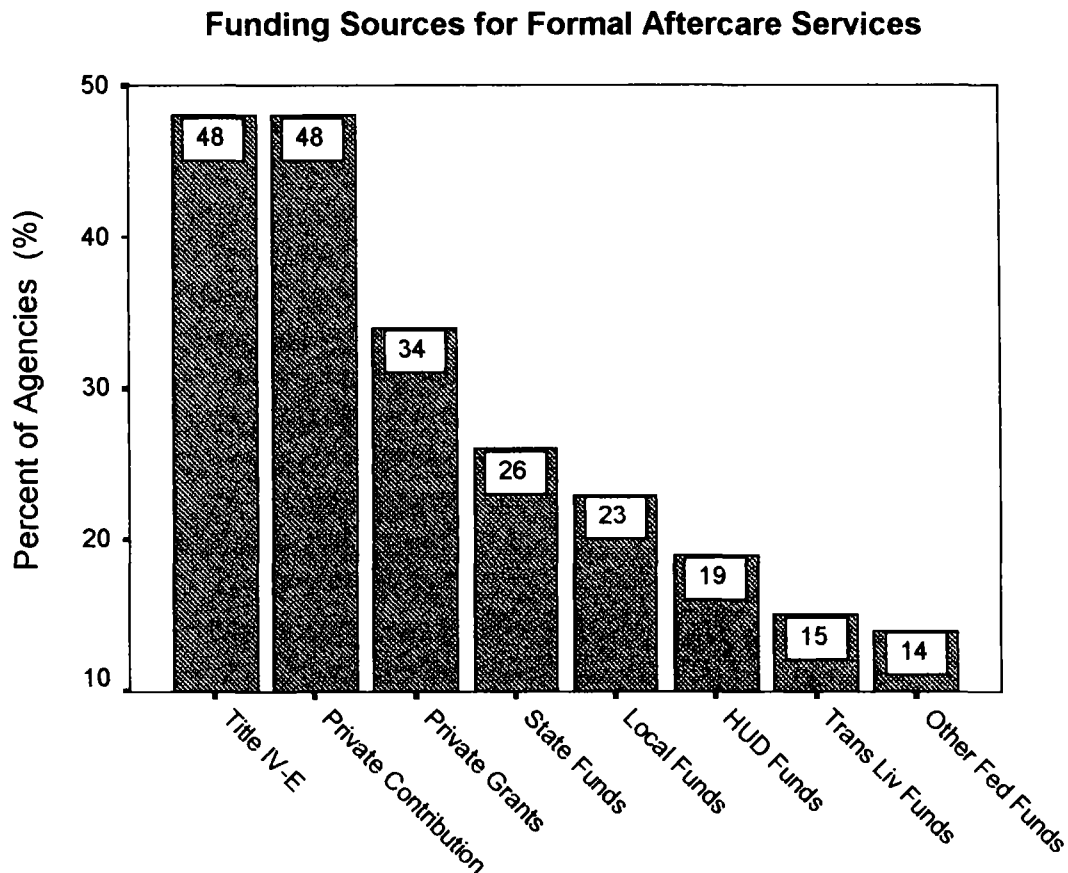


Figure 6

G. Service Delivery Staff

MOST AGENCIES USE FULL-TIME DEDICATED STAFF TO DELIVER POST-EMANCIPATION/AFTERCARE SERVICES (FIGURE 7).

- Over half of the agencies (57%) use full-time dedicated staff persons to deliver their formal aftercare services, while almost one-third (30%) use part-time dedicated staff.
- 42% of the agencies indicated that they use a portion of the time of staff who are work in other areas to deliver formal aftercare services.
- Over one-third (37%) rely on volunteers to provide aftercare services to youth/adults.
- Educational advisors were also listed by some agencies as “other” resources for service delivery.

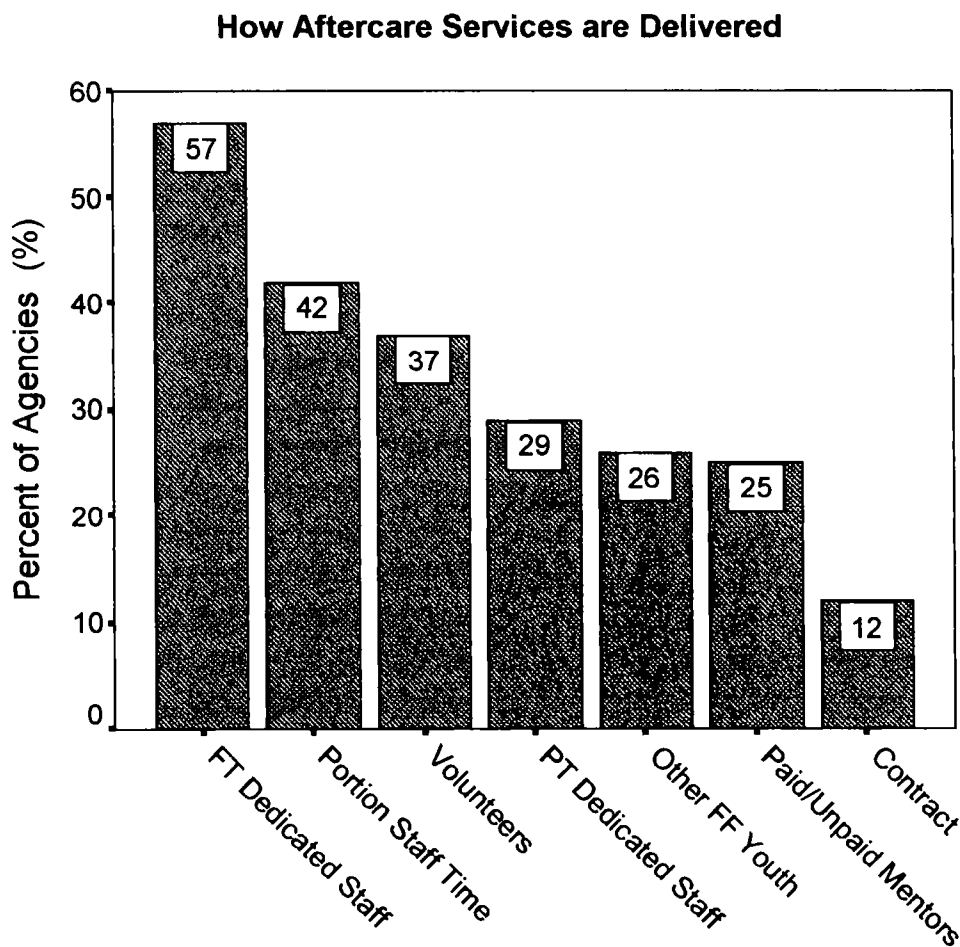


Figure 7

III. SERVICES PROVIDED BY AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND GROUPS WITH AFTERCARE PROGRAMS

A. Types of Formal Aftercare Services and Support

67 (80%) OF THE AGENCIES REPORTED OFFERING FORMAL AFTERCARE SERVICES (FIGURE 8).

- Support in accessing community resources (79%), case management (73%), and employment preparation (73%) were the 3 most common services provided by agencies.
- In contrast, less than a quarter of the agencies provide emergency shelter (22%), a service greatly needed by former foster youth who are disproportionately represented among the homeless population.
- In addition to the services listed below, agencies reported providing child care, life skills development, leadership opportunities, outreach, and transportation.

Services Provided by Community-Based Organizations	Percentage of Respondents
Advocacy	69%
Formal Aftercare Program	55%
Case Management	73%
Counseling	67%
Crisis Intervention	58%
Non-financial Educational Assistance	64%
Financial Educational Assistance	45%
Emergency Financial Assistance	33%
Emergency Shelter	22%
Employment Assistance	61%
Employment Preparation	73%
Family Planning	31%
Financial Assistance for On-going Living Expenses	36%
Housing or Housing Assistance	60%
Legal Services/Education	24%
Mentoring Services	39%
Non-financial Assistance	46%
Parenting Education/Support	58%
Peer Support/Counseling	52%
Support in Accessing Community Resources	79%
Vocational Training/Education	36%

Figure 8

B. Most Needed Services and Supports

HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES ARE THE MOST NEEDED SERVICES FOR YOUTH/ADULTS WHO HAVE EMANCIPATED FROM OR DROPPED OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM (FIGURE 9).

- Given the high rates of homelessness and unemployment among former foster youth, it is not surprising that the majority of agencies reported that housing (67%) and employment services (57%) are the most needed aftercare services.
- Half of the agencies (50%) indicated that support services are some of the most needed services for youth who have left care. Support services include mentoring, assistance in accessing resources, advocacy, and positive peer support.
- Family support, health care, emergency shelter/assistance, and transportation were also identified by agencies as needed aftercare services.

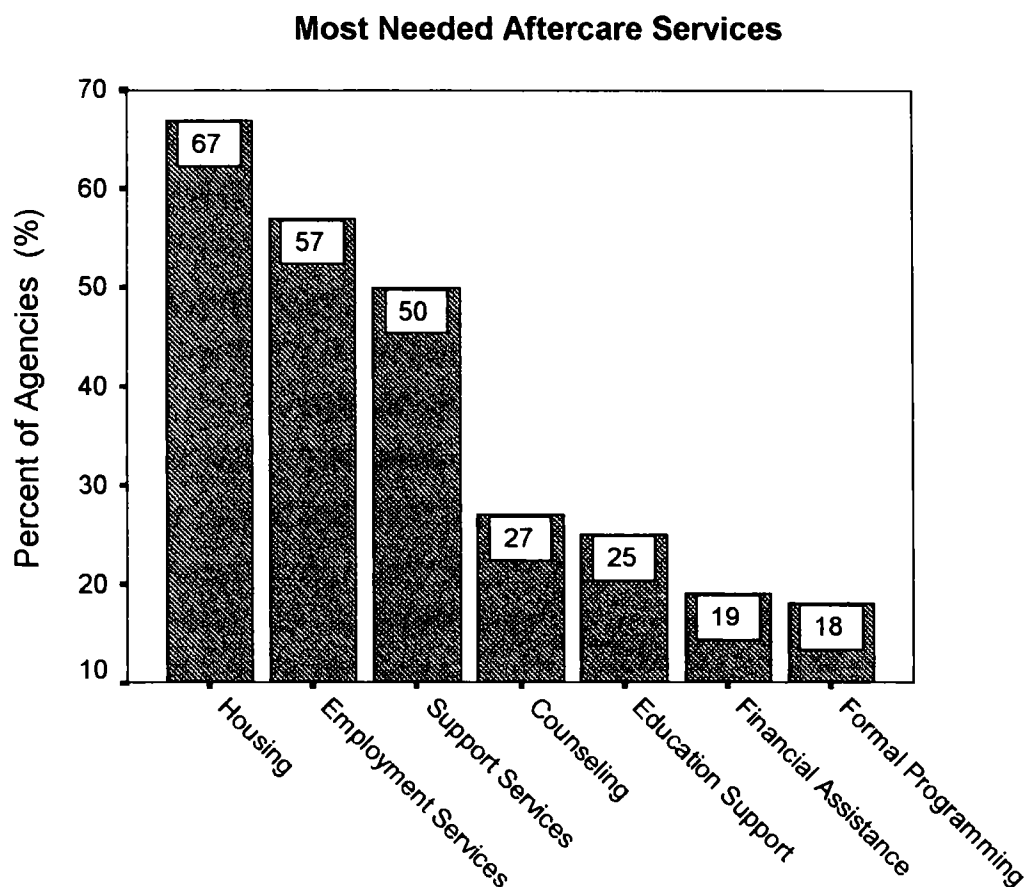


Figure 9

C. Most Difficult Services to Provide

HOUSING WAS BY FAR THE MOST DIFFICULT AFTERCARE SERVICE FOR AGENCIES TO PROVIDE (FIGURE 10).

- Over half of the agencies (57%) indicated that housing is the most difficult aftercare service to provide. Housing was also reported to be one of the most needed services, suggesting that housing may be a gap in service provision for youth/adults who have emancipated from or dropped out of the foster care system. Given that lack of housing can be a barrier to successful employment, it is critical to develop strategies to effectively address the housing needs of youth who have been in foster care.
- Employment services, counseling, financial assistance, support services, and education employment were also identified as services that are difficult to provide for former foster youth. This finding is significant given the importance of these types of services in mitigating poverty and promoting self-sufficiency.
- In addition to the services illustrated below, agencies also indicated that formal programming, family support, emergency shelter/assistance, and transportation are difficult to provide. All of these, but formal programming, were also identified as some of the most needed services.

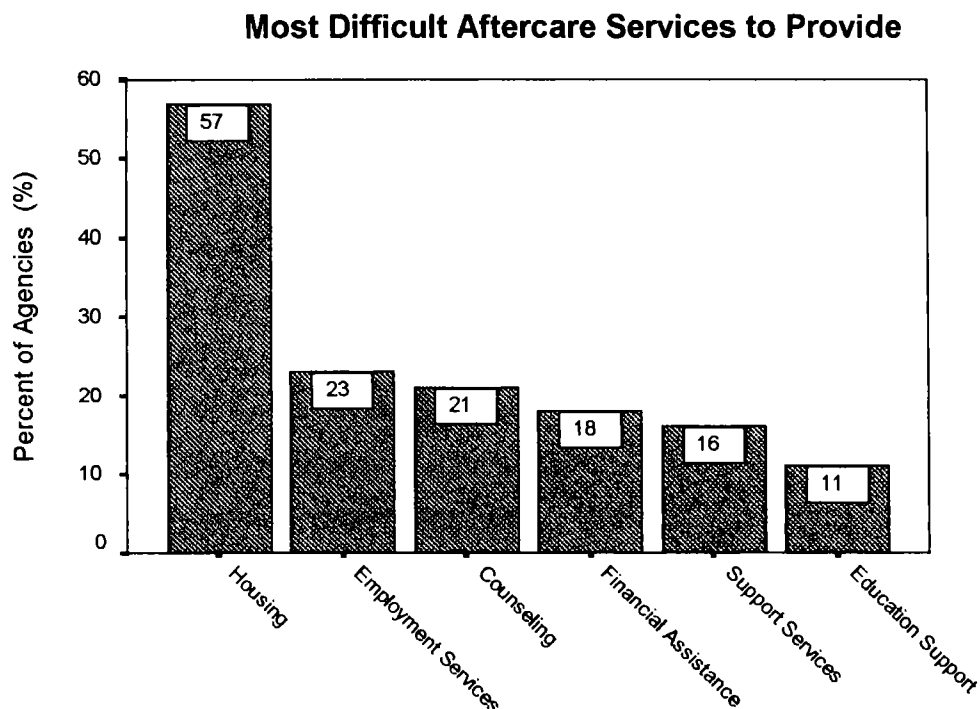


Figure 10

D. Easiest Services to Provide

SUPPORT SERVICES WERE IDENTIFIED AS THE EASIEST SERVICES TO PROVIDE TO FORMER FOSTER YOUTH (FIGURE 11).

- Nearly half (45%) of the agencies reported that support services are the most manageable or easiest for them to provide to youth. These services were also identified as some of the most needed for former foster youth.
- Counseling, employment services, education support, financial assistance, and housing were also listed by agencies as some of the easiest services to provide. That they were also identified as some of the most needed and difficult services to provide indicates that they are those that are receiving the greatest attention from agencies serving former foster youth. *(It is also important to note that five times as many agencies reported that housing was difficult to provide than easy to provide.)*
- In addition to the services illustrated in Figure 11, formal programming and emergency shelter/assistance were listed as other services that are easy to provide.

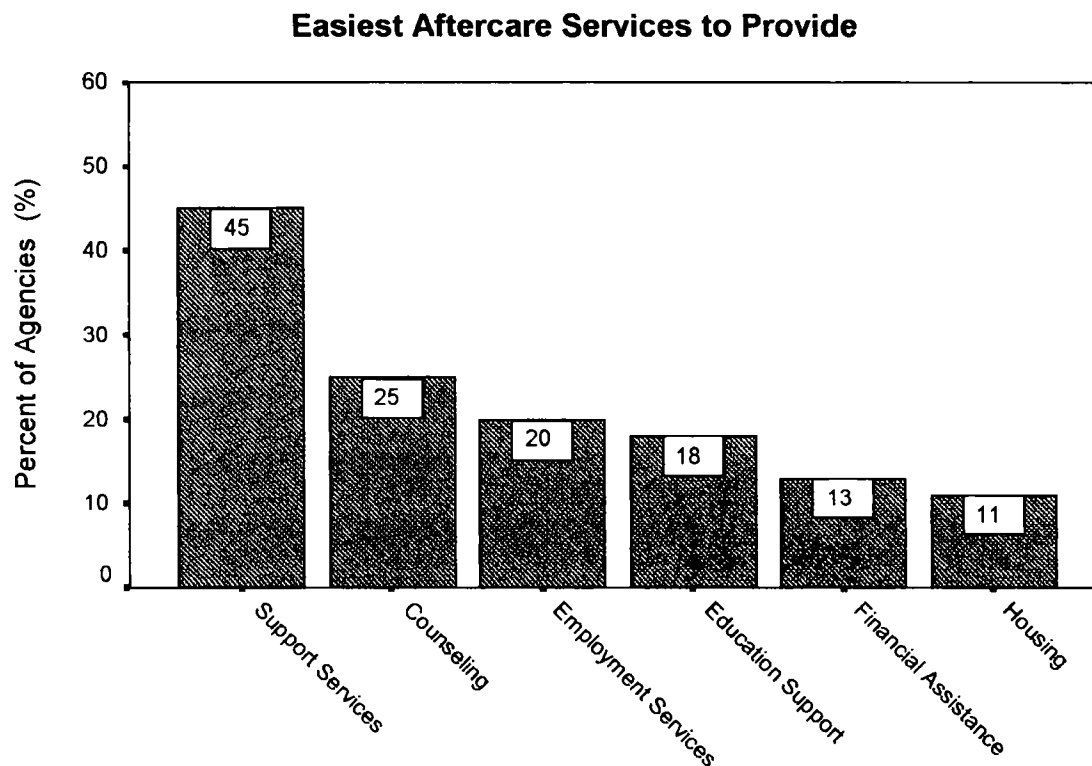


Figure 11

IV. CURRENT CAPACITY AND CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS OF AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND GROUPS PROVIDING AFTERCARE SERVICES

A. Follow-Up Information

THE MAJORITY OF AGENCIES OBTAIN FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION ON YOUTH AFTER SERVICES HAVE ENDED (FIGURE 12).

- Most agencies (**66%**) indicated that they obtain follow-up information even after service delivery ends. However, over one-third (**35%**) do not obtain any follow-up information, suggesting that follow-up is a capacity-building need for many agencies.
- Of the agencies that conduct follow-up, nearly all (**96%**) collect information on the status and location of youth.
- In addition to the items listed below, agencies reported collecting follow-up information on the financial status, marital status, involvement with the legal system, child care, and goals of youth/adults. Some agencies also obtain feedback from the youth in order to evaluate their programs.

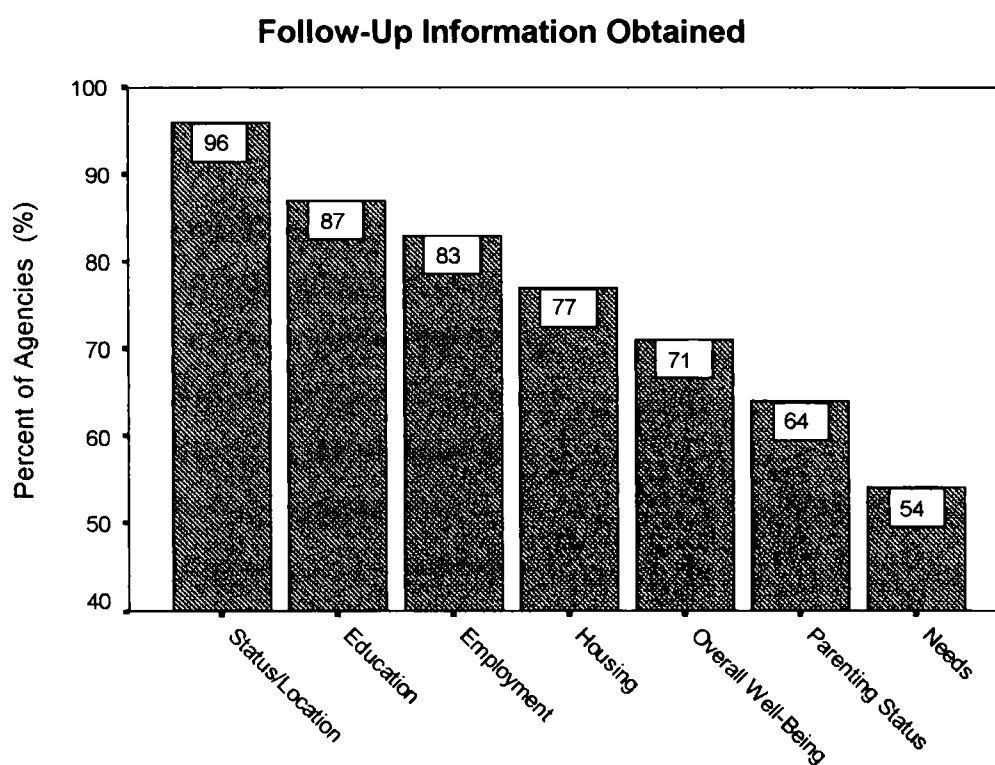


Figure 12

B. Follow-Up Intervals

MOST AGENCIES CONDUCT FOLLOW-UP WITHIN 2 TO 6 MONTHS OF THE END OF SERVICES (FIGURE 13).

- 71% of agencies conduct follow-up within a period of 2-6 months following services.
- In contrast, 25% of the agencies conduct follow-up from 7 months up to a year after services have ended, and 25% a year or more after service delivery. This finding reveals that comparatively few organizations are maintaining formal and documented long-term contact with former foster youth.

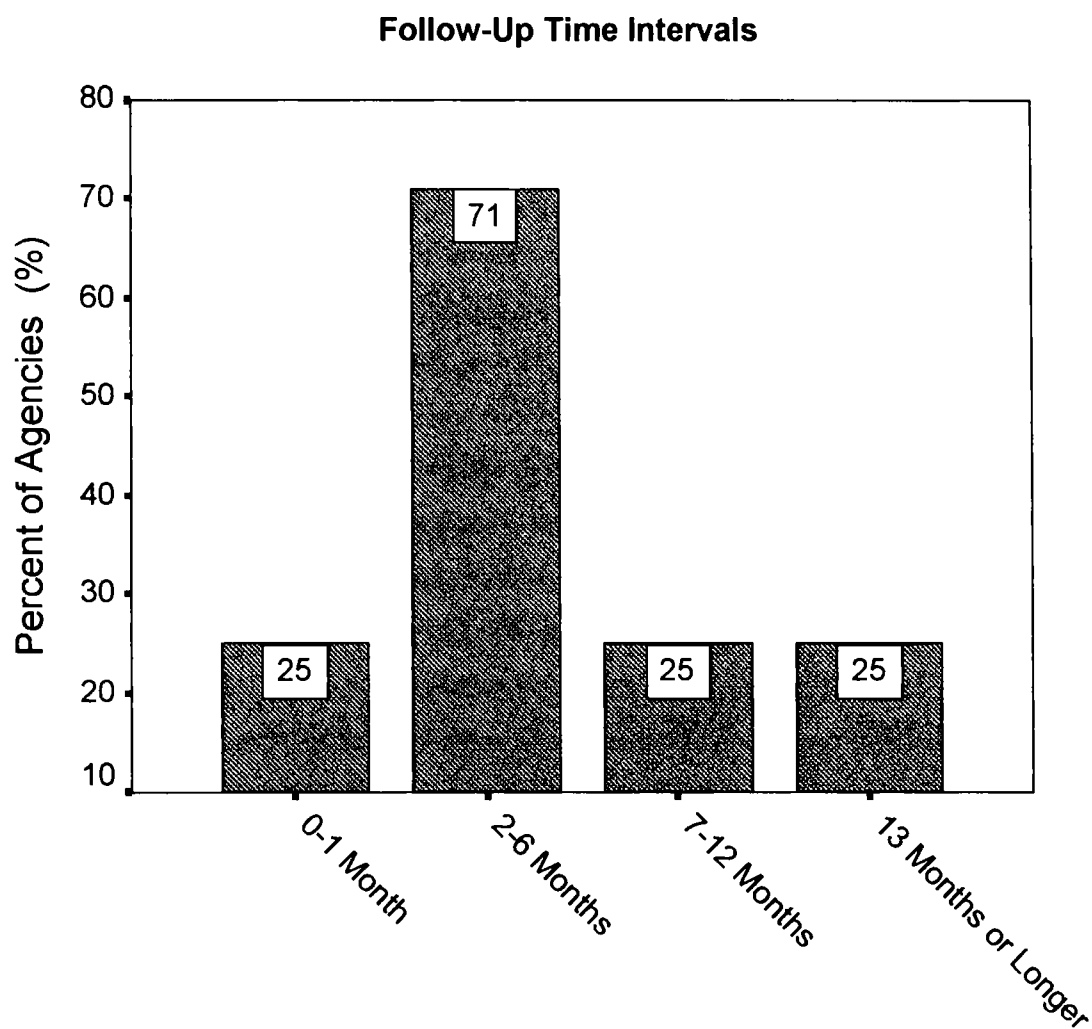


Figure 13

C. Capacity-Building Needs

FUNDING IS THE GREATEST CAPACITY-BUILDING NEED AGENCIES HAVE IN ORDER TO MORE EFFECTIVELY REACH AND SERVE YOUTH/ADULTS WHO HAVE LEFT FOSTER CARE (FIGURE 14).

- The large majority (74%) of agencies reported that funding is their primary need for expanding their capacity for aftercare services. Similarly, information on possible sources of funding was also identified as a need by nearly half of the agencies (48%).
- Networking with other organizations (57%), information (53%), and staff training (52%) are also important needs that should be considered in building agency capacity for aftercare programs. Networking is particularly important for creating a safety net for former foster youth.
- Expansion of existing programs, partnerships, foster parent training, and improved policies were also identified by agencies as capacity-building needs.

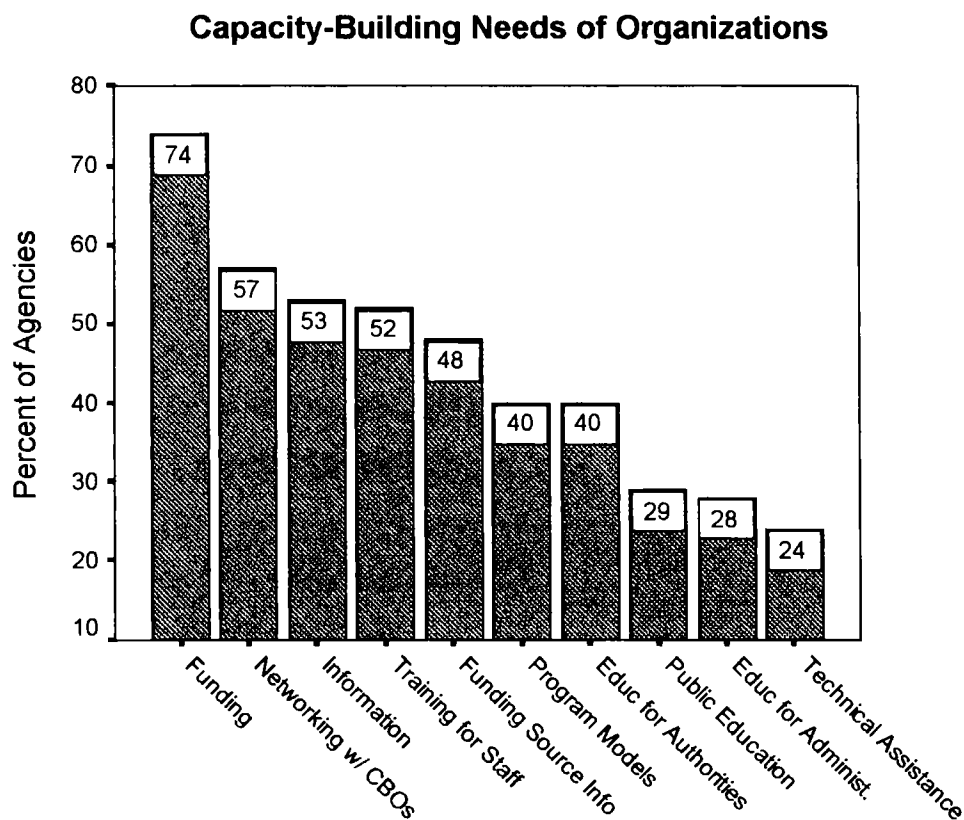


Figure 14

V. CONCLUSION

The survey of agencies, organizations, and groups providing services and support to youth who have emancipated from or dropped out of the foster care system resulted in several major findings that are important to consider in developing effective strategies for serving former foster youth. Some of the most significant are:

- ◆ **Gaps in service may exist for youth under the age of 16 and age 22 and older** - Comparatively few agencies serve youth in these two age categories. In addition, the survey results indicated that the large majority of agencies serve youth who are still in care or request services before they leave care. Given this, youth age 22 and older who are no longer in care may be overlooked in service provision. Similarly, youth under the age of 16 who have dropped out of foster care may not be eligible to receive services from many organizations.
- ◆ **Former foster youth may be underserved in terms of their housing needs** - Housing was identified as the most needed aftercare service in the survey. It was also reported to be the most difficult service to provide. In addition, emergency shelter was offered by fewer agencies than any other service described in the survey. Given the disproportionate numbers of former foster youth among the homeless population, these findings suggest that it is imperative to address the housing needs of youth who have emancipated from or dropped out of the foster care system. Adequate, stable housing is critical to their employability and self-sufficiency.
- ◆ **Expanded employment services are needed for foster care youth** - After housing, employment services were reported to be the most needed and the most difficult to provide. Although 73% of agencies indicated that they provide employment preparation, only 61% provide employment assistance, and 36% vocational training and education. These results suggest that additional efforts are needed to promote employability and employment among former foster youth. Employment is a key component of improving economic opportunity for youth who have been in foster care.
- ◆ **Informal social support networks are an effective means of reaching youth** - The majority of agencies rely on informal social support networks such as former foster youth, friends, and family members for their referrals and for getting the word out about their services. Helping foster care youth develop and maintain informal networks is important in promoting their access to information and services, particularly given the limited institutional supports available to them.
- ◆ **Funding is the number one capacity-building need** - Although most agencies reported using a variety of funding streams and sources to finance their aftercare services, funding was identified as the greatest need for developing and expanding aftercare services.

- ◆ **Networking is an important capacity-building need for many agencies** - Networking with other similar community-based organizations was identified as the second greatest capacity-building need, after funding. Networking is critical for building a safety net for youth who have emancipated from or dropped out of the foster care system. Collaboration among agencies is also important for building community and systemic capacity to adequately serve former foster youth.
- ◆ **Follow-up is an area for increased capacity-building** - The majority of agencies indicated that they do not provide long-term follow-up to former foster youth. Sustained follow-up for a year or more may be important in providing youth with the continuity and support they need during their transition to adulthood.

These findings emphasize that further services and supports are needed to help former foster youth make a successful transition to adulthood.