

## Foster Family Care

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After Family Care: Before, During, and Beyond.

Barth, R. P.

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This chapter reviews current research about child welfare services, specifically family preservation, foster care, and independent living after foster care. Research has made significant progress in data collection and analysis of service outcomes. In particular, study findings have determined several variables that may be associated with abuse in foster care, including use of kin for foster care, negative conditions in the home, and overcrowded homes. Further research on these variables is necessary to ensure that children in foster care are protected and receive permanent homes. Research should also evaluate the effectiveness of independent living preparation for foster youth, especially family planning and educational attainment. 27 references.

Descriptors:

foster care; research reviews; child welfare research; prevention; family preservation; family services; abusive foster parents; data collection

## PART THREE

# FOSTER FAMILY CARE: BEFORE, DURING, AND BEYOND

*Richard P. Barth*

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of research and practice in child welfare services is the diversity of services that are now available for clients and for study. Prior to permanency planning and the requirement that reasonable efforts be provided to prevent placement, foster and residential care were virtually the only child welfare services for severely troubled families. Now, we have federal legislation and funds behind family support to prevent child abuse, family preservation to prevent placement and expedite reunification, adoption subsidies to prevent foster care drift and limbo, treatment foster care to provide intensive out-of-home services, and independent living services to prevent the worst outcomes of turning unprepared foster children out into the world. A truly comprehensive and prepared research network would be ready to assess not only the individual merits of each of these services but the relationships between them. This brief review and the essays that follow provide a glimpse of this work in progress.

The need for multifaceted and logically progressing child welfare services continues to be great across the United States. The path to a referral for family preservation or foster care begins with a child abuse report. Estimates of child abuse reports now exceed two million per year. In 1976, child abuse reports were made on just 1% of American children and by 1993 that had risen to 4% (USDHHS, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect 1995). Although there are argu-

ments that child abuse reports are being overdone, there is also evidence that children reported for abuse are in need of real protection. In Washington, a follow-up study of more than 11,000 reports to the central registry between 1973 and 1986 determined that the death rate for children with child abuse reports was three times higher than it was for the general population (Sabotta & Davis 1992). These children were reported at a time when entrances into foster care, perhaps the most protective action that child welfare agencies take, were more likely. Even since then, the likelihood that a child abuse report would result in a foster care placement has dropped sharply (Barth et al. 1994a; Barth, in press). Perhaps this drop has occurred in unnecessary placements and is caused by the advent of additional family support and preservation services pursuant to the intentions of permanency planning (if prior to the implementation of the 1993 Family Preservation and Family Support Services bill—Public Law 103-66). More probably we have simply narrowed the entrance into foster care because of ideological commitments to keeping families together and to limiting the expansion of social services spending.

Although we need many answers regarding the success of family support and family preservation services in reducing the harms of abuse and the vagaries of foster care, we have achieved an unprecedented readiness to answer those questions. The long yearning for more and better indicators of child well-being has not been realized, but we do, at long last, have good indicators of child service status. That is, researchers (e.g., Barth et al. 1994a; Goerge, Wulczyn, & Harden 1994; Sabotta & Davis 1992; Schuerman, Rzepnicki, & Littel 1994) using administrative data are increasingly able to determine whether a child has experienced such life events as being reported for abuse, entering foster care, or returning to foster care. (They may not, of course, be able to determine whether that life event was a benefit or hazard to the child.) The burgeoning business of child welfare automation creates an opportunity and responsibility for researchers to use the data on child status and to use it well.

In addition to the growing availability of child welfare status data, we have new and improved methods for analyzing these outcomes. In this section Fraser, Jenson, Kiefer, and Popuang provide a clear and accessible description of a variety of methods for the appropriate analysis of child welfare events—in their case, placement following intensive family preservation services. Recognizing the conditional nature of deciding which analytic method is best, the researchers

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describe samples and data that are most suited to conventional ordinary least squares methods (i.e., regression, discriminant analysis, and logistic regression), "tobit" regression, and event history analysis.

The researchers report that the findings are similar regardless of statistical methods—as determined by a count of the number of statistically significant findings. The findings would be likely to appear even more consistent if comparisons between methods were made on the basis of confidence intervals or curves (Birnbaum 1961; Borenstein, Cohen, & Rothstein, in press; Cohen 1994).

The authors' recommendations about the cautious use of newer methods of analysis are reasonable and important. Although they present a more systematic comparison of the methods than we have previously seen, we encourage others to confirm their results using different statistical methods and different types of software (we have noticed, by the way, that SAS and SPSS compute degrees of freedom differently for some statistics). Of somewhat more concern is the rather disheartening message in their essay resulting from the combined assertions that "one primary consideration [in choosing the appropriate method] is the availability of statistical software" and by their use of BMDP and SHAZAM to run the procedures. These outcomes suggest the unavailability of procedures to run appropriate analyses. The opposite may be more true. All these procedures are now available in the widely used PC versions of SPSS and SAS. With a sizable amount of memory and a fast chip, all these procedures can be computed readily even when the entire statewide population of children in foster care or family preservation is included.

The Zuravin, Benedict, and Somerfield study speaks to a very current area of child welfare services speculation—the quality of foster care. Popular media reports of horrid foster care conditions and the death of children in foster care haunt child welfare workers who, like some members of the fourth estate and the public, wonder whether foster care is as protective as once thought.

This essay does not estimate the likelihood that a child in foster care will be abused, but the number of abuse incidents in the Zuravin, Benedict, and Somerfield article provides some sense that confirmed abuse is not ubiquitous. The confirmed child abuse incidents must be understood in context—the sixty-six incidents occurred over a five-year study period, and most (92%) involved only one type of maltreatment and one child (89%); about one-third of the perpetrators were not the foster parent.

The overall ability of the investigators to predict abuse was not substantial, indicating that there is no easy way to triage protective child welfare worker visits to children in foster care. There were, however, some correlates to abuse in care that deserve noting, including: regular care vs. kinship care homes; homes with one or more negative conditions (e.g., foster parent health), and crowded homes. This last item is a little-discussed issue in child welfare services that deserves more attention (cf. Zuravin 1991). Scholars in the area of family functioning have long understood that family size has powerful compromising influences on child well-being (Heer 1985). Blake's (1992) seminal study found that "children in small families are obviously a class apart" (p. 165). Rossi and Rossi's elegant (1990) study found that "family size is a highly significant predictor of educational attainment and emotional closeness between parents and children." Yet, children continue to be placed into large kin and nonkinship foster homes and adoptive homes where they have little likelihood of achieving maximum educational or emotional benefits. That this may also make them more vulnerable to abuse by other children in the homes contributes to the need to rethink our failure to cap the maximum size of foster homes and to make placement decisions with family size firmly in mind.

The finding of less abuse in kinship foster care is positive given the concern about the quality of kinship foster care, yet this is offset somewhat by the finding of concerns about homes with problems indicated in the relicensing process (problems which kin homes may have but which may not be recognized in many states because of lower licensing standards). These data on child abuse reports are critical but limited indicators of the quality of caring in foster care. Foster care has a triple mandate to: (1) above all, be protective, (2) facilitate permanency through reunification or adoption or guardianship, and (3) to enhance a child's development. We have growing evidence about the capacity of states (Goerge, Wulczyn, & Harden 1994), counties (Barth et al. 1994b), and agencies (Wulczyn, essay 10 in this volume) to achieve permanency for children in foster care and to protect them from harm following reunification, but there is little systematic information about the capacity of different kinds of out-of-home services to support children's developmental needs. Still more rigorous studies on the quality of foster care are needed to help us understand the merits of kinship, nonkinship, and specialized foster care and group care for children.

### Life After Foster Care

Our general understanding of what happens to youth who leave foster care has resulted in important federal and state efforts to enhance services to prepare youth for independent living. This understanding was premised as much on sound studies of former foster youth (e.g., Festinger 1983; Jones & Moses 1984) as it was on studies showing a high concentration of former foster youth among samples of young adults or adults who were homeless or incarcerated or otherwise outside the mainstream. Since the passage of the Independent Living Initiative in 1986, independent living programs have emerged as an integral part of every state's efforts to assist their older foster and probation youth to leave care with skills and dignity. Several second-generation studies are endeavoring to determine the character and effectiveness of these services. The most important of these studies is Ronna Gook's and is presented in this volume (essay 8). The study was national in scope and sampled youth who left foster care two and a half to four years earlier. One of many striking findings showed that 60% of the young women in the study group had given birth to at least one child—compared to 24% in the general population—and that these women had considerably worse outcomes at the point of their interviews. These findings can hardly be surprising nor are they tolerable. First, many of the youth in foster care have been sexually abused—we estimate that about one in six youths from ages fourteen to eighteen who are in protective custody are placed there because they were sexually abused, and a higher percentage almost certainly were sexually abused although their primary placement reason was neglect or abuse (Barth et al. 1994b). Second, there is a strong relationship between adolescent pregnancy and sexual abuse even among teenagers outside foster care (Boyer & Fine 1990; Rainey, Stevens-Simon, & Kaplan 1995). Third, abused women who do become pregnant are more likely to have problems with their pregnancies and to engage in behavior that predicts poor birth outcomes (Stevens-Simon & McAnarney 1994). Although there is some evidence that children in foster care are less sexually active than children under court order living at home (Polit, Morton, & White 1989), they are still far more sexually active than youth in the general population.

Family planning is one of the least discussed of all child welfare services, but there is a chance for a breakthrough with foster youth. These

youth are already participating in skill-based programs that include content on a variety of interpersonal and occupational skills. The least we can add to that mix is some serious training on how to avoid unwanted sexual involvement, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. Further, we can help them to assess their family-planning needs and better understand the linkages between them and clinical family-planning services. Many foster youth do not have a close relationship with a primary care physician or a link to a family-planning clinic. Every youth should leave foster care with knowledge of family-planning services and how to obtain them.

Cook's findings clearly suggest that skills in family planning are not the only skills provided through conventional Independent Living Skills Programs. The more that skill areas were increased, the better the outcomes. Yet training in the areas of education, family planning, and socialization did not significantly increase outcomes in their related areas. The last of these three was likely to have been unmeasurable, but the indicators of low high school graduation rates and early pregnancies are easy to interpret and hard to accept.

The closest of these to significance was educational attainment, which had a coefficient indicating that there is at least a modest relationship between educational "skill training" and achievement. The larger report (Cook 1990) suggests that this skill training was very modest. Given the evidence that academic skills can be accelerated by several months for every month of tutoring, support, and educational advocacy for foster children (Ayasse 1995), Cook's findings suggest that the educational interventions that are provided for foster youth are probably too little and too late. Independent living skills programs generally do not enroll students until they reach age sixteen. This may be sufficient to teach them such skills as job and apartment searching but is clearly insufficient for preparing them to graduate from high school. In Cook's study, only 54% of foster youth completed high school in contrast with 78% of youth in the general public; among foster youth given educational tutoring, support, and advocacy the graduation rate has been 70%. We should accept no less.

This finding has major implications for service development for our current generation of children in foster care who, given recent trends, are more likely than the children assessed in any previous study to have entered foster care at a very young age, to have been exposed to pre- and postnatal conditions that threaten their cognitive capacity, and to be living with kinship foster parents with very modest educational

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attainment. These youth are no less and probably more likely than the youth in other long-term studies of foster youth to need early and prolonged educational services. They are also likely to need the kind of assistance provided in states like Minnesota, which offers substantial scholarship support to foster youth entering higher education.

### Research Needs

The ad hoc comparison groups used in Cook's study are simply the best that have been done, but even these fall far short of what needs to be done. Given the consistent findings of lower educational achievement (e.g., Barth 1990; Citizens' Committee 1984; Cook 1990) and greater vulnerability to homelessness among former foster youth, controlled studies that contrast independent living services with enhanced education and transitional living arrangements are needed. We also need support for research in the Scandinavian tradition (e.g., Bohman & Sigvardson 1990; Kety et al. 1994), which uses administrative data to identify populations of youth who did and did not enter foster care and did and did not get adopted from foster care. Such research compares outcomes for youth over long periods of time on such indicators as incarceration, driving records, mental health hospitalization, participation in substance abuse treatment, military induction, and higher education. Directed federal and foundation support to construct such research from the basic building blocks of SACWIS (State Automated Child Welfare Information System), and the multistate data archive initiatives, could yield geometric improvement in researchers' ability to answer many fundamental questions about the results of child welfare services by the end of the next decade. In the interim, we cannot wait to learn more about the poor educational and family-planning outcomes for foster youth. We have enough consistent information to insist that we act now to prevent them.

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## Independent Living Services

**Independent Living Services: The Views of former foster youth:** The purpose of the study was to explore what former foster youth think of the independent living services they received while in care. Participants of focus groups were young adults who participated in weekly classes offered by the Missouri Division of services while in foster care for at least six months.

*Results: Overall, participants thought that the services were helpful for several reasons.*

- Reduced stigma and isolation\*\*
- Instruction in financial matters and skills\*\*
- Helpful skills classes including apartment hunting, birth control, cooking, changing tires, building relationships, and finding community resources.
- Independent-living specialists were helpful
- In majority of cases, foster parents were helpful.

*Negative aspects included:*

- Viewed obligations that had to be met in order to receive stipend as intrusive and excessive
- DFS (division of family services) caseworkers were not helpful

*Conclusion:*

Recommended that state and local child welfare agencies develop low-cost means for youth to meet one another such as conferences, picnics, etc. to get to know others in foster care. Also concluded that many of the qualities that people valued about this independent-living program could be part of regular service to all foster youth.

**\*\*Key Results of Study**

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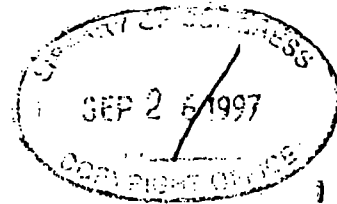
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## ARTICLE

*J. Curtis McMillen,  
Gregory B. Rideout, Rachel  
H. Fisher, & Jayne Tucker*

## Independent-Living Services: The Views of Former Foster Youth

### ABSTRACT

Former consumers of independent-living programs for youth in out-of-home care present their views of the services they received. The youth found that skills classes and stipends for independent living were helpful, that instruction in managing a budget was particularly valuable, and that the services lessened the stigmatization and isolation of being in care. Foster parents and specialized independent-living workers eased the transition out of care, but regular public child welfare caseworkers were not helpful in this regard. The young people report that being in care was difficult to tolerate and that the transition out of care was often abrupt and difficult to manage.

*J. Curtis McMillen is assistant professor, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri. Gregory B. Rideout is social worker, Youth In Need, St. Charles, Missouri. Rachel H. Fisher is research assistant, George Warren Brown School of Social Work. Jayne Tucker is program development specialist, Division of Family Services, Jefferson City, Missouri.*

In the past decade, public and private child welfare agencies have developed programs to help older youth move from out-of-home care to more independent living situations (Barth, 1986; DeWoody, Ceja, & Sylvester, 1993; Westat, 1986). All states now provide independent-living-skills training classes, typically consisting of training in both hard skills (money management, cooking, etc.) and soft skills (such as building a social support network). An older youth leaving care today may also have received various other services, including subsidized apartment living, mentoring programs, trust funds, college tuition programs, conferences, camps, and after-care programs. Evaluations of these efforts are now being published (e.g., Bonham & Ash, 1988; Mallon, in press; McMillan & Tucker, in press; Mech & Rycroft, 1995; Scannapieco, Schagrin, & Scannapieco, 1995; Westat, 1991). Few of these evaluations, however, attempt to identify the components of the independent-

living programs that are most beneficial to those leaving care.

Determining what works and what does not work is important not only to the youth receiving these services, but to their funders as well. With current congressional and state budget constraints, funding for these programs may be streamlined. Identifying the most essential components of independent-living programs may become a necessity for every state.

The purpose of this study is to explore what former foster youth now living in the community think of the independent-living services they received while in care. In focus groups, former foster youth were asked to describe the services that were most helpful in teaching them how to live independently and to identify who was most helpful in their transition to independent living. In the following sections, the focus groups and the themes that emerged from them are described and the practice implications of these results are discussed.

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## Methods

Qualitative focus groups (e.g., Krueger, 1988; Morgan, 1988, 1993), long a part of the evaluation of programs and services in the for-profit world, have gained popularity in evaluation research in the social service sector in the past several years (Patton, 1990). Focus groups enable social service organizations to receive extensive consumer feedback on specific questions of interest. Qualitative methods are particularly appropriate for the evaluation of independent-living programs because traditional program-evaluation methods of these services face severe limitations. Experimental designs are not feasible because of the varied nature of the interventions available and the difficulties involved in forming adequate comparison groups. It is unethical to withhold services thought to be valuable, which rules out no-treatment comparison groups. Delayed-treatment comparison groups are ineffective because the outcomes of interest occur several years later, when youth are living on their own. Finally, representative follow-up surveys of former foster youth have proven costly and have yielded low return rates (see Westat, 1991). Youth who leave care are exceptionally mobile (Barth, 1990; Festinger, 1983; Stein & Carey, 1986; Triseliotis, 1978; Westat, 1991), and it is very difficult to locate them.

Focus groups also offer some advantages over qualitative interviews with individuals. First, the format allows for group interaction and discussion. Members can and will openly disagree, offer alternative views, and make suggestions

regarding why the views are different. Thus the group yields information that researchers' planned questions may not elicit from an individual (Morgan, 1988). Second, focus groups are relatively inexpensive to conduct. Focus group interviewing and transcription time is less than the time needed for individual qualitative interviewing and

**"Focus groups offer advantages over qualitative interviews with individuals because they allow for group interaction and discussion."**

transcribing. Focus groups have two disadvantages: Some groups may limit the expression of alternative views, and the small sample size makes it difficult to recruit groups that are representative of the population of interest.

The focus groups in this study were led by the first and fourth authors. The fourth author did not participate in one of the groups because she had been involved in providing services to some of the participants when they were in out-of-home care. A questioning route was developed with the following emphases:

- What services helped you learn to live on your own?
- What did you find helpful in the programs?
- Who helped you learn how to live on your own?

Some impressions formed from earlier groups were checked

with the later groups. All of the sessions lasted 90 minutes, were audiotaped, and transcribed with identifying information removed.

Themes were identified through careful reading of the transcripts. The first three authors read the transcripts and independently identified themes that emerged from them. They then met to discuss the themes. Only those themes that were agreed upon by all three readers were included.

## Participants

Participants were young adults who had participated in independent-living-skills classes offered by the Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS) while living in out-of-home care, had left out-of-home care, and had been released from DFS's custody. Participants were recruited by DFS employees in charge of independent-living services for their geographic areas. Participants were paid \$10 plus travel mileage and were served a dinner for participating. Twenty-five young adults participated in a total of four focus groups, each held in a different geographical area of the state. Because Missouri encompasses both large urban and rural areas, two of the groups were held in urban areas (St. Louis and Kansas City) and two were held in smaller towns. Twenty-four of the participants were female, 16 White, 4 African American, 1 Hispanic, and 4 mixed race. Age range of participants was 18–23 years, with a mean age of 20.79 ( $SD = 1.45$ ). The respondents had been out of care for a mean of 2.11 years ( $SD = 1.61$ ).

All participants attended weekly independent-living-skills classes for at least six months while in care. The content of the classes dif-

ferred slightly by geographic location. All geographic areas presented content in 23 required areas. However, the specific curriculum and the methods used to teach it differed by areas of the state and by instructor. The classes were run by independent-living specialists who were full-time state employees and by workers under contract to provide the services. In addition to the skills classes, various other services were available to the youth, depending on the region of the state from which they received care. Other independent-living services included subsidized independent-living arrangements (in dormitories or apartments), wilderness ropes courses, teen conferences, seminars on specific topics, youth advisory boards, after-care groups, and paid opportunities to help teach independent-living skills to other youth in care.

The sample was biased in many ways. First, young men obviously were underrepresented. Second, the recruitment method was such that those who had fostered relationships with the independent-living specialists were most likely to be recruited. Workers knew how to contact only those young people who had stayed in touch with them. It does not appear that the sample was "creamed," as the participants were experiencing a wide variety of living situations at the time of the interviews. These were young people, however, who thought highly of their independent-living service specialists. Third, the lack of representativeness of the sample limits the generalizability of results. Readers should be especially cautious in generalizing results to other programs in other states.

## Results

Nine themes emerged from the focus groups (see Table 1). The themes and some relevant comments from focus-group members are presented below. Themes related to the helpful aspects of independent-living programming, sources of help in the transition out of care, and views of the in-care experience.

### Helpful Aspects of Independent-Living Programming

Several aspects of independent-living programming were identified as helpful. Overall, the skills groups were seen as helpful. Financial-skills training was deemed important, as were stipends for independent living. Perhaps the most dominant theme throughout the groups was the value the consumers found in meeting others like them.

#### Reduces stigma and isolation.

A prominent theme, discussed independently in each of the four

groups, was the importance of meeting other young people in similar situations. The youth felt that the skills classes and other activities reduced the isolation and stigma of being in alternative care. The seminars, camps, conferences, and reunions were noted to be particularly helpful in this regard.

*I don't know how to explain it. When you first go into foster care, you feel so alone. And the more seminars and the more groups, camps, seminars, the more people you meet, the stronger you feel. But there are more people out there like you. And that makes you feel better knowing that you're not in it alone. And so the more people you meet, I think the better. For me, it made me feel better, knowing that there's even more people out there. [Pause] I never would have gotten any of this before. Without the program. If the program didn't exist, none of the seminars or camps ...*

*Things like that are very, very, very important because growing up in foster care, like we were talking about earlier, you feel isolated, like you're the only different kid, you know. And when you get a bunch of kids together from the same, I mean not exactly the same, they grew up in homes, I grew up in a foster care, but, and group homes,*

Table 1. Themes from the focus groups with former independent-living program participants.

The independent-living program, overall, offers opportunities to meet others in similar situations, resulting in decreased feelings of isolation and stigmatization.

Teaching about financial skills was valued. Many expressed a desire for an increased focus on financial issues.

In general, the skills classes were seen as helpful. In addition, several aspects of the classes were noted as helpful.

A supportive and caring foster home was seen as extremely helpful in the transition out of care.

Most, but not all, DFS caseworkers were perceived as not helpful in the transition out of care.

Independent-living specialists were seen as very helpful.

Leaving care was often an abrupt, tough transition.

Being in care was hard to tolerate and viewed as intrusive for older youth in care.

The independent-living stipend was viewed as helpful, with some reservations.

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but you ... we are all away from our families for one reason or another. And they may not be [for] the same reasons, we may not have went to the same place, or the same kind of place even, but there was a bond there that we just can't get from most other people.

Instruction in financial matters was valued. Each focus group discussed the importance of instruction in finances and credit and consumer skills. The financial skills that were mentioned as valuable included how to budget, use a checkbook, comparison shop, use unit pricing, save money, and use and build credit.

*You know, in the long run it helps me 'cause I budget my money very well. My bills is paid on time.*

*The writing the checks and doing the checkbook balance and stuff, that was helpful. That was a godsend.*

*Comparison shopping was important. I have a husband and a child, and comparison shopping is very helpful for us.*

*Everyone had to call a few different stores and ask prices on a stick of gum and mac and cheese, stuff like that. And we just compared prices and that was very helpful, because I am married and if it would not have been for that class, I would not have known how to grocery shop at all.*

Although the young people acknowledged that issues such as credit and the need for savings were discussed in the skills classes, they expressed a need for more teaching in this area.

*We need to do all we can to teach more about credit cards. How they do interest, what happens if you miss a payment, how easy it is to get in trouble for it. My husband and I are responsible people and we got in trouble with our credit card.*

*There are a lot of things coming out nowadays like leases and stuff like*

*that and you don't know how to deal with them and it gets you in trouble.*

*I know that the car I just got ... I have to pay \$300 every month for three years and at the end of these years the car still isn't mine. If I want it, I have to pay \$8,000 to keep it, or I can turn it in and get a new one and keep making car payments. If I pay it all out, it is going to end up costing me \$20,000.*

*[The skills classes need] more of an emphasis on you have to save. It's not optional. You have to have something to fall back on.*

Overall, skills classes were seen as helpful. Overall, the focus-group participants thought the skills classes were helpful. In addition to the financial skills mentioned earlier, several other topics were endorsed as helpful. They included apartment hunting, birth control, cooking, changing tires, building relationships, and finding community resources. The following quotation illustrates one participant's experience in learning useful skills.

*Until I went into foster care, when I was 14, I did not know how to cook, how to do laundry. I had never washed dishes. I had never done anything for myself at all. [My foster parents] thought it would be a good idea if I joined this program. So I did. I learned how to cook. I learned how to clean. I learned how to deal with my emotions and how to deal with other people on a one-to-one basis. My speech-delivery skills got 100% better. Before I went into the independent-living program, I could not even talk to a group of people like this. I learned how to change a tire on a car. I didn't know anything about that. Before I went into the independent-living program, I really didn't know anything about birth control, STDs, and in that group I learned everything I needed to live on my own. And even though when I moved on my own it was a big shock, I had these skills to fall back on, and if it*

*wasn't for them I honestly believe I would have fallen on my face.*

*We were required to go out and look for an apartment for ourselves. I mean, not to rent it, but just to go and look, write down comments about every one we looked at, everything we liked, didn't like ... how much it was, all that stuff. They told us what to look for. Gave us little checklists, something along those lines. I'm getting ready to move to [a new town] and we got a book of apartments yesterday and there's so many things I am going to have to look for, so I am kind of glad I know what to look for.*

*Birth control information was real helpful. My foster parents never would have talked to me about birth control.*

Independent-living stipend was viewed as helpful. Some participants noted that it was helpful to have lived in an apartment of their own while having some expenses subsidized by DFS. Some youth experienced this subsidized independent living through what DFS calls an independent-living arrangement. Others experienced this through group-home-based programs. Both programs are designed to be part of a gradual transition out of care.

*The money really does help. It helps a lot, especially when you are just getting started and you don't know what's going on and, but then you have to also realize when that money's gone, you have to learn to budget your money out of what you make.*

*I was a full-time student and I wanted to concentrate on school. I didn't want to have to worry about having to get a part-time job to pay for certain things. And have to concentrate on getting good grades in school. So it helped to have that money coming in because then you could concentrate fully on school.*

*It's a cushion for when you first go out on your own. It really does help.*

Reservations with regard to receiving the stipend tended to be about the obligations the young people had to meet in order to be able to keep receiving the stipend. Some viewed it as intrusive or excessive. The young woman in the following quotation is talking about a group-home-based transitional-living program.

*In order to get that money ... I had to have a social worker at my house at a certain allotted time like once a week. And I had to go to three out of four groups. There were like four things I had to do to be able to get that check, and I actually found that with me working and going to school and trying to get everything together and keep everything going for myself, I had to get out of that program and go to what is called the independent-living arrangement, where I actually got less money a month but I didn't have the restrictions placed on me, the requirements that I had the first time.*

### **Who Was Viewed as Helpful?**

The young people were also asked to address the topic of who was helpful to them in their transition out of care. In general, they reported that their independent-living specialists were helpful, but their DFS caseworkers were not. Respondents indicated that foster parents were able to provide the most assistance.

Foster parents were seen as helpful. When a healthy, supportive foster family was involved with the young person, the transition to independent living was much smoother. The families provided both material and emotional support during the transition and after youth left care. They may also have provided a platform for learning important values. For some, their foster families provided the most natural environment for

learning the skills they needed to live independently.

*See, I feel lucky, 'cause I had a foster family. When I went into the independent-living program, I came from a foster home, so I kind of learned some of the things. When I first got into this class I was like, "Oh I know this. I know this. I know this. I already know this." A lot of the things, it was kind of like I knew it from watching and listening to my foster parents, and my family worked together on things like, "No you can't get this 'cause money's kind of tight and we need money for this." Just normal family conversation, and then going into the class kind of fine tuned what I vaguely knew.*

*Well, they didn't help much financially, but as far as emotional relationships ... they really helped. Finding a husband, you know. Knowing what qualities I should look for in a husband. You know, emotional qualities, not just physical qualities.*

*She was really good to me, and when I was getting ready to graduate from high school and move out on my own, she helped me find a place. The Christmas before that she didn't give me anything but pots and pans and spoons and dishes and glasses. I was ready. When I was ready to move out, I didn't have to buy anything except for rock and roll posters for my walls and toilet paper. Well, actually, she let me borrow my first roll.*

The helpful aspect of foster families most often mentioned was their willingness to provide emotional support after the young people left care.

*I was released not too long ago. I was in there about a year and a half and I still have problems. I was at my dad's the other night and I called my foster mom. I actually cried to her. She is the kind of person who would support me in my decisions whether she doesn't think they are right or wrong; she will stand behind me, help me.*

*She was open. She was always there for me no matter what. Even when I had the baby, she was the only one, the father didn't even come.... She came up there, and I was still drugged up and stuff and I woke up and there she was. She was right there with all this baby stuff and she was like, "Hello, you finally woke, huh?" And I couldn't do nothing but cry and hug her and hold her 'cause she was like the mother that should have been mine in the beginning, you know. It was like the state placed me with the right person.*

When emotional support was lacking from foster families, it was sorely missed.

*I don't have a close relationship with my foster parents anymore. It seems that since I got out of foster care and went into college, the ties have kind of slipped away. I guess, they felt like they got me to where I am and they don't need to help me any farther. And I'm really hurt by that, because I lived with them for five years of my life and I thought, you know, I'm like their own child. But I don't feel that way anymore. It's more like my in-laws are helping me [more] now than anyone else. I'm really hurt by it.*

DFS caseworkers were not seen as helpful. Although exceptions were noted, the former clients did not find their DFS caseworkers to be helpful in their transitions out of care. When asked if their caseworkers were helpful, the most common reply was a simple "no."

*They're supposed to come every month to see. And I had been in foster care ... for five years and that was the first one. And after five years, she maybe came to see me once.*

*Well, I had, I was in the system from '89-'95. I had seven workers during that time. Last one I had, the only time I saw her is if I went down to the office 'cause I had to be down there for something else. She never came to see me. She never came to see my baby, nothing. You know, I'm*

## ANOTHER VIEW

**Kudos for a Study That Allows Youth to Speak for Themselves**

Beyond the descriptive findings of this excellent and revealing study is a subtext that includes two distinct but interrelated insights about the needs of young people dependent on out-of-family care: (a) the poignant need to realize that they, as individuals, have some worth, esteem, self-confidence, or any of the many terms that intend to confirm one's place in the world and, complementing this need, (b) the opportunity to acquire the practical social and survival skills for coping with life's demands. For some, a sense of personal worth anticipates the ability to achieve; for others, proof of esteem is in the doing, the accomplishing.

Children in intact families are no less in need of these conditions of living. For young people bereft of this dependable and supportive environment, however, the need is more acute. As the respondents of the study stated, they feel different, they lack the constancy of feedback that is reassuring, they are aware that life will present immediate tasks and challenges that cannot be deferred. Simply, for these young people facing a major life transition, more is immediately at stake.

The substance of these insights are included in the study's findings. However, they form part of a list of other findings, when in fact their self-worth and self-esteem are the conditions on which other factors—say, impressions of professionals who were helpful—rest. And they point to even deeper implications. In accord with the values of good qualitative research, participants are free, even encouraged, to respond in and on their own terms; investigators do not apply presumptions and pre-designed questions that predetermine the response. Although participants' responses vary in details, in substance they convey the same message: we have strengths, we can cope, we expect to do well. Despite the hardships they are experiencing, they view themselves as capable, resilient individuals. Given the mistreatment, rejection, or whatever other wicked conditions they actually experience, they could just as easily have defined themselves as unfortunate victims.

As professionals, we do not have a complementary language or a set of theories to define and explain ways of adapting that express strength, resilience, hope, and personal worth. Rather, we depend on a vocabulary of defects and disabilities and on theories that deterministically connect early traumas with later disabilities. As the authors conclude, qualitative research offers richly textured information about the significance of services from clients' perspectives and judgments. Such research continues to contribute to the growing interest in a strengths orientation to social work practice.

Howard Goldstein  
Professor Emeritus  
(Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences  
Case Western Reserve University)  
Oakland, Maine

*In foster care and I have a child and usually in that situation.... She went and checked on my sisters once a month. Now I'm the one in the system and I have a child and there's lot of things I didn't know that she never tried to help me. So I had to depend on other workers to help me to find out things that I needed to know for my baby. You know, I didn't know how to get my baby covered under Medicare or anything. I had to go to other people.*

Those who found their caseworkers to be helpful most often mentioned the provision of emotional support: "She was my best friend. I would always call her and she would come talk to me, whatever. She was always there for me."

Independent-living specialists were seen as very helpful. The youth reported uniformly positive views of the independent-living specialists. They were perceived as helpful while youth were in care, during the transition out of care, and after youth left care. Participants reported that the independent-living specialists provided emotional support, information, and access to goods and services.

*They did a lot of stuff they didn't have to do. Like ... they had some ... sort of ... garage sale kind of thing ... but it was just for the people in the program and you can buy an item for like two dollars, you know, and things when you live on your own, you know, you need things, small things and they did, some things that they did of their own free will.*

*I was really lost when I went to that shelter and I fell down and all I could remember was the independent-living group and I called [the independent-living specialist] and [the contract independent-living trainer] and I was like, "Listen you know, I don't want to bother you. ... " That's the first thing I said, "I don't want to bother you," and then I just break out in tears and I start*

talking to them. And even though I was out, they caught me and even though I was out completely with the group and everything, [they] found me, told me how to do this, that, and that, how to go about getting the apartment, how to go about keeping it, rent paying, how to go about not getting ... behind [in] bills and they just showed me. Even though I had \$234 [a month in AFDC] and even though it wasn't much, it got me three years in this apartment. O.K. now, to tell you how the independent-living program is, I'm off welfare right now, I've been on my job for a year and I have two kids and I'm in a big house and that's where the independent-living program got me and I'm happy.

The following interaction took place in one group. The first speaker was talking about having a baby after she left care.

Participant A: Which is when I needed somebody the most. I had to call [the independent-living specialist]. "Who should I call? Where do I get baby stuff?" And she's like, "Well, you should call these numbers." I mean she had every single ... I don't know where she got her information from, but she had every...

Participant B: She comes up with some stuff, doesn't she?

Participant C: I mean normal people do not know these things.

Participant B: She's got hotlines for everything.

The groups also noted that their independent-living specialists treated them differently from the way others in the system treated them.

They don't do things for you. They tell you how to get them done ... right, exactly ... 'cause a lot of people in the system they will go and do it for you. [The independent-living specialist] will be the first one to tell you, "I will not do anything for you. I will let you know any way you can get it done but I will not do it for you."

## Views on Being in and Leaving Out-of-Home Care

Two themes emerged that were not related directly to the questioning route. These themes focused on the overall experience of being in and leaving care.

Alternative care was seen as intrusive. Group participants discussed how difficult it was to remain in care as an older youth. Some young adults viewed the system as intruding into their lives. Others talked about the number of people involved in making decisions about their lives.

The only thing you're on your own is you're living by yourself and you pay your own bills, but as far as your life is concerned they're completely around your life 100 percent, they need to know everybody you're living with, everybody you know, everything you do, and that's when I got out because, I mean, I was 19 years old. I didn't want it.

You still had to go to the, to the PPRs [periodic review], you still had to go to court, you still had to deal with all the DFS.

Leaving care was a tough transition. In each group, the members began talking about the transition from alternative care to living on their own. Group participants agreed uniformly that it was difficult and often abrupt.

I ended up falling quite miserably after about a year on my own. I had to move back with my mom or become homeless.

When they released me into my own custody at 16, you know, I had a ... I mean I ... fell. I hit the ground hard. I went to a homeless shelter and slept in cars with my baby.

After, you know, growing up in a home where there's a noose around you and then you go into a group home environment where there's a noose around you and then you're

just thrown out one weekend and said, "Here's the rest of your life." I mean that was a little too much of a shock for me. I think if I had gotten a night, a weekend, out and then like a weeknight out and then another weekend you know, had it like so that I could and stay in my new environment [for] a weekend and then a week or something, you know, something not so drastic.

After I was released from foster care, I had my own apartment and everything ... and I am not sure exactly what went wrong, but everything went wrong. I ended up moving back in with my mom and dad, and the reason I was in foster care, in the first place is because the way they treated me.

It's really unrealistic and all of a sudden you're 18 and say, "O.K., bye." And we have no resources to go back to. We have nothing to fall back on at all because they said that you're a grown-up now and we can't take care of you or we don't want to and I count that to be the most difficult thing for me.

I was doing very well, wanted to go to school. I wanted to do this, I wanted to do that, but they wanted to say, "You're out of here." But I still needed support.

## Discussion

Two functions of independent-living efforts stand out from the results of this study: the ability of the independent-living programs to reduce the stigma and isolation of living in out-of-home care and the importance of learning financial skills while in care.

Focus-group participants reported that financial skills were the most important skills taught in the independent-living program. The importance of financial skills training is consistent with the results from Westar's follow-up

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study of former youth (Cook, 1994; Westat, 1991). In that study, researchers found no differences between those who received some independent-living-skills training and those who did not receive such training. But those who had received training in five core areas

“States and local child welfare agencies may want to consider developing low-cost means for youth in out-of-home care to meet one another prior to their participation in independent-living-skills training.”

(money, credit, consumer, education, and employment skills) were more likely to maintain a job for at least a year, not to be a cost to the community, and to be more satisfied with life than those who had not received training in these core areas. It is useful to learn that youth value the financial-skills training after they leave care. Some of these skills are difficult to teach in an engaging manner and are not always received enthusiastically at the time of training. It may also benefit youth currently in care to hear that those who have left care consider the information to be important.

The results also clearly point out the “destigmatizing” function of meeting and getting to know

others in out-of-home care. Although all youth may benefit from contact with others in out-of-home care, this may be particularly important for those living in foster family homes. States and local child welfare agencies may want to consider developing low-cost means for youth in out-of-home care to meet one another prior to their participation in independent-living-skills training. Mellor and Storer (1995) and Palmer (1990) described short-term therapeutic groups for foster youth. Rice and McFadden (1988) described groups for foster youth at foster-parent continuing-education events. Other possibilities include conferences for younger teens, groups for younger teens new to out-of-home care, and regular foster-parent and foster-children events such as picnics.

Foster parents and independent-living specialists were reported to be helpful during the transition out of care, whereas DFS caseworkers were not helpful. The youth reported that foster parents were helpful in teaching skills and providing informational and emotional support as they made the transition out of care. The view that foster parents are important in this transition is consistent with the independent-living literature. Professionals have previously advocated for the rights of youth moving toward emancipation “to have a place of stability, preferably located in a family,” from which they leave according to their own need and timing (Aldgate, Maluccio, & Reeves, 1988, p. 22). And compared with those in group care, youth in foster families score higher on measures of preparedness for independent living (Mech, Ludy-Dob-

son, & Hulseman, 1994).

Youth also found their independent-living specialists to be helpful in their transition out of care. This finding is likely influenced to a degree by recruitment method. All youth had some relationship with their former independent-living specialist in order for them to be contacted and invited into the focus groups. Nonetheless, the stories the youth told about the independent-living specialists indicate that these workers provide important personal assistance at crucial times, at least for some youth. The young people also appreciated the interpersonal styles of the independent-living specialists. Participants noted that the specialists tended to be nonjudgmental and to allow the youth to make decisions about their lives.

In contrast, youth did not find their caseworkers helpful. This is consistent with qualitative comments from older youth in out-of-home care about their caseworkers found elsewhere in the literature (Rice & McFadden, 1988). Case-load size may be the most glaring impediment to the improvement of relationships between youth in care and their caseworkers. Caseworkers' roles are also different from the roles of those who provide the independent-living classes. Caseworkers, with the power to change placements and with access to parents, care providers, and judges, are more likely to be perceived as authority figures. In addition, caseworkers may be less accustomed to dealing with teenagers and thus may be less likely to develop an interpersonal style that works effectively. It is also possible that the recruitment method may have biased results against caseworkers. Youth

with positive relationships with caseworkers may have been less likely to develop relationships with independent-living specialists and thus may have been less likely to have been recruited for this study. Nonetheless, it appears imperative that youth in care and caseworkers develop positive relationships. As Iglehart (1992) noted,

*The worker is the direct link to the entity that has primary control over the client's life. While the agency steps in as parent, in reality the worker fulfills agency mandates and embodies the agency to the youth. The worker role is of paramount importance in the delivery of effective services to the foster adolescent. Permanency plans, treatment plans and ... independent-living programs require in-depth knowledge of the youth's case and individual characteristics. (p. 308)*

Despite the provision of independent-living services, young people continue to find the transition out of care to be harsh. This underscores the need for youth to build helpful connections before leaving care and for programs to accent a gradual transition out of care and the availability of after-care services.

Many of the qualities that the group participants valued about the independent-living programs ideally would be a part of regular service provision to youth in out-of-home care. All youth in care need important relationships with similar peers and nonjudgmental adults. The financial support provided by federal independent-living initiatives may allow these youth to receive a level of personal attention and service that conveys that they are important people.

Finally, this study underscores the worth of qualitative evaluations for social service programs.

Such evaluations provide consumer feedback about specific aspects of social service programs to the people who design and operate them. Feedback about the importance of meeting similar others and the provision of financial-skill information would have been masked in a quantitative evaluation. In addition, compared with other forms of research, focus groups are relatively inexpensive, flexible, and simple to conduct. Human service administrators may be wise to include qualitative consumer feedback in future evaluation efforts.

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A Review...

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Administration of Children and Families (ACF) is currently reassessing the role it plays in the management and implementation of the Independent Living Program. The Independent Living Program is designed to assist foster care youth to make the transition to independent adulthood. This Policy Analysis Exercise evaluates the implementation of the program at the state level, the factors that are associated with good programs, and the role that the federal government plays in its management.

### FINDINGS:

We interviewed the Independent Living Coordinators in eleven states, the ten federal regional office contacts for Independent Living, and experts in the field. We also undertook a review of existing studies and of youth development literature. These sources of data yielded the following findings:

- Good programs must address skill development in multiple subject areas through multiple agents. They should build partnerships with existing community agencies and teach youth how to access community resources. They should also offer: after care services, foster-parent and substitute care-giver training; staff that specialize in adolescent issues; a formal skills curriculum; services that are offered according to developmental readiness; mentoring services; and a youth empowerment component. Finally, programs should have an evaluation and oversight component.
- The role of the state Coordinator is the factor that is most significantly associated with program quality. Predictors of program quality are factors such as whether the Coordinator is part-time or full-time and whether the Coordinator delivers technical assistance to direct service providers.
- Implementation structure does not appear to be associated with program quality. We included states with different implementation structures in our sample and conclude that implementation structure in itself does not predict program quality.
- The degree to which programs are connected or isolated is a predictor of program quality. Strong programs have rich networks that they can access for technical assistance, whereas the weaker programs are relatively isolated.
- The regional ACF offices appear to have little impact on the quality of state programs.
- A fiscal threshold effect limits the ability of states with small absolute allocations to implement quality programs.

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- The level of outcomes reporting is, in general, poor.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The relatively open federal guidelines are a boon to states with the resources, knowledge, and wherewithal to implement model programs. On the other hand, the relative lack of guidance does not serve states at the weak end of the spectrum of program quality well. Based on these findings, we recommend that the federal government:

- Maintain the same degree of control over this program and maintain the flexibility of the current program guidelines.
- Focus its activities upon technical assistance rather than upon monitoring.
- Facilitate information sharing amongst states. Regional offices should report what states in their region are doing and exchange this information with other regions. Regional offices should also make curricula developed with federal funds available to states that do not have their own.
- Explore the possibility of contracting with an outside provider to deliver centralized services to states.
- Consider a minimum level allocation for each state so that all states can afford to have a full-time program Coordinator.
- Change reporting requirements to require states to set and track their own outcome goals.

Strategies....

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## PURPOSE

To assist the Administration for Children and Families in its efforts to improve its management and program reporting strategies for the Title IV-E Independent Living Program for foster care youths.

## BACKGROUND

**Program goals:** Through the Title IV-E Independent Living Program (ILP), the Department's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) supports State efforts to assist adolescents in foster care--and adolescents who were previously in foster care after age 16--to prepare for independent adult life. Such efforts are intended to enable youths to find housing and employment, achieve positive social relationships, perform daily living activities, and live independently of public support. Federal instructions to the States note that they "may use varying methods and strategies to achieve the program objectives," though program funds may not be used for room and board, and must supplement, rather than replace, existing expenditures.

**This report:** The program received permanent reauthorization in August 1993, at \$70 million per year. The ACF has taken this occasion as an opportunity to reexamine its approach to the program, and has asked the OIG to provide information and ideas on improved long-term management and program reporting strategies. We have drawn upon several primary sources of information, including a record review, structured on-site and telephone discussions with State and ACF staff, and a focus group with members of the National Independent Living Association.

## ACF AND THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT LIVING

The ACF recognizes that it must address a number of issues as it considers how it can best fulfill its management and oversight responsibilities. These include questions about the agency's general role in independent living, the integration of independent living into the spectrum of child welfare services, and the Federal government's overall approach to the needs of youths.

## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

We recommend two broad strategies that ACF should undertake in order to better ensure accountability, promote quality State services, and enhance understanding in the field of independent living. The ACF's decisions regarding its overall approach to independent living, as outlined above, will help direct its choice of specific options in each area.

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## **THE ACF SHOULD RESTRUCTURE ITS INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM APPLICATION AND PROGRAM REPORTING PROCEDURES.**

### **Issues of Concern:**

The ACF's current application and program reporting mechanisms do not adequately support State planning and do not allow ACF to gain an accurate national picture of independent living efforts. The lack of such information weakens basic accountability and hinders efforts to improve programs and to determine effective practices.

- The current application process discourages effective planning and full integration with other child welfare services.
- Program reporting by the States has been inconsistent.
- The application and program reports have not focused adequately on program performance and outcomes.

### **Options for Improvement:**

#### **Require and support better State planning:**

- Create a consolidated State plan for child welfare services that includes independent living, and set minimum requirements to ensure that relevant issues are adequately addressed.
- Require States to establish measurable goals and targets, and to report on their progress.
- Adjust the timing of the State plan and the grant award to ensure that funds are made available by the beginning of the fiscal year.

#### **Strengthen independent living reporting mechanisms:**

- Retain a distinct focus on independent living and youths in any State child welfare reporting system.
- Use a simple, standard reporting form for aggregate information in order to improve the reliability of data, while minimizing the burden on the States.
- Utilize the capabilities of State Automated Child Welfare Information Systems and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System.
- Encourage electronic reporting specifically for independent living.

**Improve the content of independent living reporting:**

- Establish a basic data set for independent living, including basic demographic, service, and outcomes information.
- Facilitate the development of clear definitions of independent living terms.
- Collect more detailed budget data through the program reporting mechanism.
- Solicit information on effective practices and innovations.

**Focus on program performance and outcomes:**

- Develop performance and outcomes measures for independent living.
- Establish general parameters within which States could define specific outcomes and ways of measuring those outcomes.
- Focus on the status of youths at discharge.
- Encourage and assist State efforts to link independent living data systems with public assistance, unemployment, criminal justice and Internal Revenue Service information systems.
- Play an active role in independent living research.

**THE ACF SHOULD FOCUS ITS MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAM REPORTING EFFORTS ON INFORMATION SHARING.****Issues of Concern:**

The ACF has not actively facilitated information sharing among States, components of ACF, and other Federal agencies. This lack of good communication may be limiting opportunities for States to improve the quality of independent living services and for ACF to provide effective advice to States and others on the program.

- The ACF has not generally made available to States information it currently collects and to which it has access.
- The ACF's interactions with States about the program, aside from the reports and applications, have been limited.
- State and ACF officials see substantial room for improvement, and view more complete and accurate information sharing as key to such progress.

### **Options for Improvement:**

The ACF could capitalize on its investment in independent living by effectively gathering, analyzing, and sharing among the States information on the program's successes and difficulties. Below, we identify several specific options that ACF could consider. Some of these could be undertaken immediately with no extra financial commitment, while others might require additional funding. To finance such activities in a tight budgetary environment, ACF could seek legislation to provide a set-aside from the Federal independent living appropriation for these purposes.

#### **Provide written information to the States:**

- Report on State performance measures.
- Disseminate qualitative updates on State activities.
- Share model forms and directories of available resources.

#### **Facilitate information sharing through ACF staff:**

- Develop a focus for ACF youth programs in central and each regional office.
- Incorporate independent living issues into other child welfare monitoring activities.
- Become a resource on other Federal programs serving youths, and facilitate coordination among these and the Independent Living Program.

### **COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT REPORT**

We shared our draft report with and solicited comments from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, the Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget, and the Assistant Secretary for Legislation. We also solicited comments from the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and the National Independent Living Association (NILA).

We received written comments from ACF and from CWLA and NILA. They all concurred with our two recommendations. The CWLA and NILA also commented favorably on several options we offered for each recommendation.

Evaluation of Title IV-E

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth was conducted to evaluate the influence of the Independent Living Initiatives. Public Law 99-272 on (1) States' development of programs, policies, and services; and (2) the impact of services on outcomes for older youth discharged from foster care.

The first phase of this evaluation was completed in August 1990. This report addresses the findings of Phase II conducted between August 1990 and September 1991.

The study found that:

- Services authorized by the Independent Living Initiatives have the potential to improve outcomes for youth.
- Skills training in particular skill areas led to better individual outcomes. No one skill area had a consistent effect across all outcomes assessed.
- More comprehensive effects were achieved with a combination of skills delivered within a prescribed set of five skill areas – money management, consumer, credit, education opportunities and employment

### Methodology

The sample design for this study employed a multi-stage, stratified design with probability sampling at each of three stages of selection – State, county clusters, and youth 16 and older who were discharged from foster care. During Phase I (1988), case record data were obtained for a sample of 1,644 adolescents (weighted to represent 34,600 youth) discharged from foster care between January 1987 and July 1988. Phase II included the difficult task of locating these youth, with minimal information about their whereabouts, 2.5 to 4 years after their discharge from foster care. Interviews were conducted with 810 youth between November 1990 and March 1991 to obtain information about their adaptation after leaving the foster care system.

Using regression modeling techniques, the impact of receiving independent living skills training on these youths' outcomes was assessed. The ability to achieve self-sufficiency was

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measured in the near term -- that is, the ability to be self-supporting in the period some 2.5 to 4 years after discharge -- and also the long term. Long-term indicators of self-sufficiency include those outcomes that are likely to affect the ability of youth to support themselves and have productive lives. Eight outcomes were assessed in terms of five different measures of skills training. Figure 1 summarizes the measures that were used in assessing the impact of skills training on the outcomes of interest.

### **Findings**

**Finding 1:** The type of skills training encouraged by P.L. 99-272 was positively related to outcomes, particularly when the skill areas of money management, credit, consumer, education and employment were provided in combination.

Until the passage of P.L. 99-272, only minimal attention was paid to the systematic provision of services to adolescents. In particular, how much emphasis to place on the provision of skills and resources that youth would need to function as self-sufficient adults was often left to the discretion of individual caseworkers or other service providers. The funding that has resulted from the law has provided States the opportunity to address these service deficiencies. Overall, there has been a tremendous amount of activity to develop and implement services, but a systematic and comprehensive approach to providing services is still the exception rather than the rule.

The Federal initiative outlined areas of skills training for States to consider when developing and providing independent living services to youth. Although the respondents had not necessarily participated in services directly funded through P.L. 99-272, they had received training in the same types of skills as encouraged through the Federal initiative. These skill areas include employment, education, daily living skills, and the other skills necessary to ensure self sufficiency.

Study findings indicate that youth who received independent living skills training exhibited better outcomes with respect to the eight outcomes that were assessed than did youth

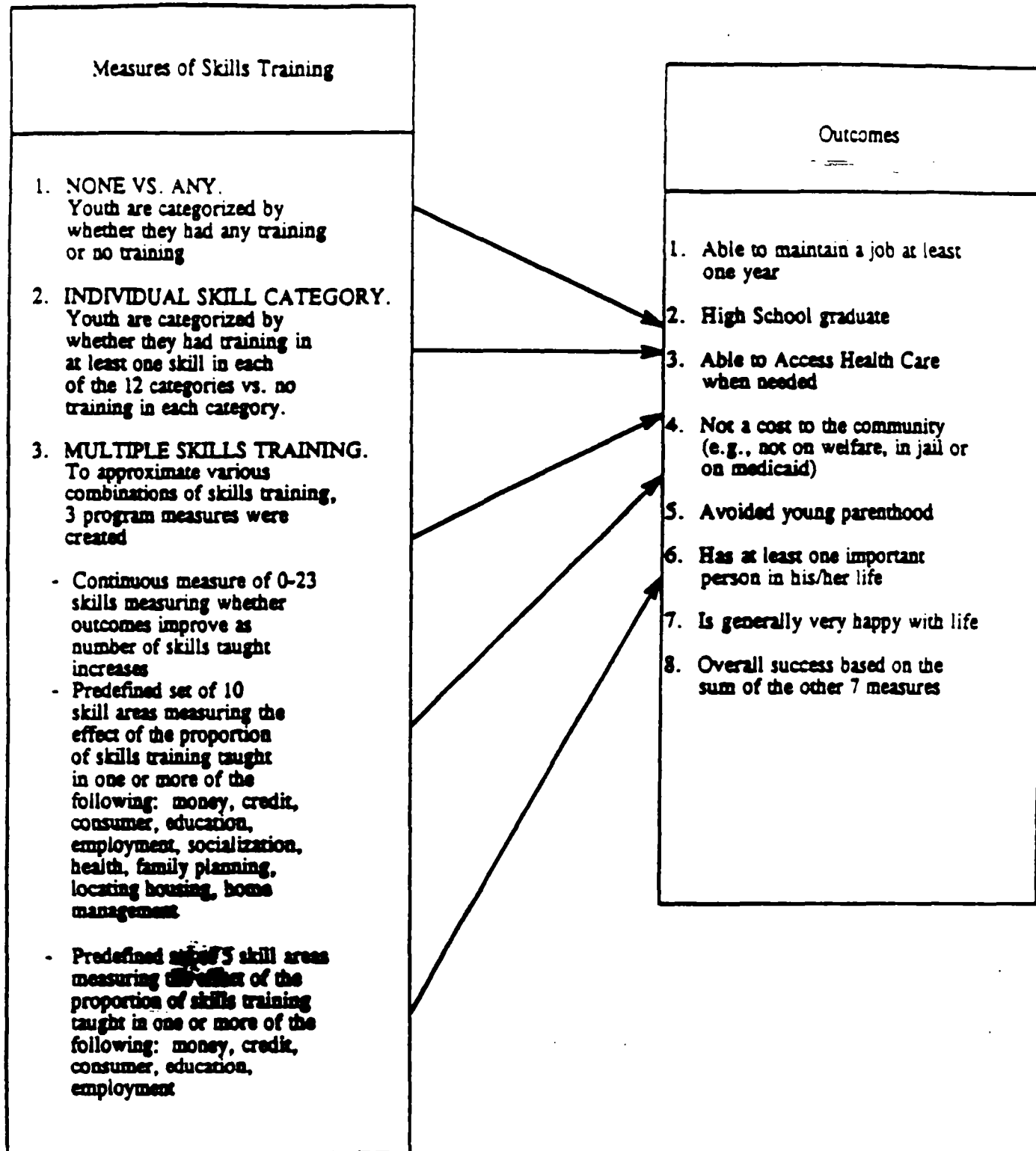


Figure 1. Measures for assessing impact of skills training on outcomes

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who had not received this training. However, this finding depends upon how skills training was measured.

1. No significant difference was found between those youth who received no skills training versus those who had any skills training for any of the outcomes of interest.
2. Some individual skills training areas produced positive effects on particular outcomes (e.g., health training on accessing health care). However, no one area had a consistent effect across all outcomes.
3. Combinations of skills training led to better outcomes. However, random increases in the number of skills taught did not in themselves lead to a greater likelihood of being able to maintain a job for at least 1 year or avoid being a cost to the community. Skills training in the five core areas (money, credit, consumer, education and employment) increased the probability of accomplishing these outcomes as well as increased the likelihood of youth accessing health care, being very satisfied with life, and overall self sufficiency.

The magnitude of the effect of these 5 core skills varied depending upon the specific characteristics of the youth and the outcome being assessed. Using a young woman with the typical characteristics of youth discharged from care as an example,<sup>1</sup> it was estimated that if she was not provided any of the five skills her likelihood of maintaining stable employment 3 years after discharge was 22 percent. However, as the number of skill areas in the five areas increased, the young woman's likelihood of maintaining stable employment increased from 40 percent (with one service) to 95 percent with all 5 services.

Random increases in the number of skills taught did not, in themselves, lead to a greater likelihood of achieving better results for specific outcomes. For example, adding skills training in home-management, socialization, obtaining community resources, or locating housing did not increase measurably the probability of being able to maintain a job for 1 year. For the best results, skills needed to be targeted toward the outcomes which they were intended to improve, and they needed to be provided in combination.

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<sup>1</sup>White female, no high school degree at discharge, no job while in care, no emotional, mental or physical handicaps, no drug or chronic health problems, entered care at age 13, remained in care 42 months, three different living arrangements, one placement into care, entered care because of family dynamics, any skills training - formal and informal.

Three outcomes that were assessed -- early parenthood, educational status after discharge, and having a social network -- were not significantly increased by skills training as measured for this study. Training in the areas of education, socialization, and family planning were included in the analysis, but they did not significantly increase outcomes in their related areas.

A number of youth receive independent living services by attending life skills training for a designated period of time (usually 8 to 10 weeks) and these classes include training in a wide variety of skills. While the classes include education and employment training, the focus tends to be on budgeting, housekeeping, and other daily living activities. In fact, youth reported that the greatest amount of skill training they received was in home management and socialization. Some programs have been developed specifically to address the educational and employment needs of youth, but they are not being provided as commonly as basic skills training classes. Also, service provision is often delivered as a package with little attention to the specific needs of youth or the outcomes that the services are intended to target.

The findings from this study indicate that this is not the most effective approach for service delivery. Services work best when a set of particular services are targeted to meet specific goals. The provision of any services, or even a number of services that are not targeted toward specific outcomes, was not shown to be effective in providing the desired results.

**Finding 2. High school completion prior to discharge led to better outcomes, regardless of skills training.**

High school completion prior to discharge was positively related to stable employment, ~~not~~ being a cost to the community, and overall self-sufficiency for foster youth, after discharge, ~~whether~~ or not youth had received any type of skills training during foster care.

**Finding 3: Discharged foster youth need services to help improve after discharge outcomes.**

■ In general, the status of older foster care youth 2.5 to 4 years post discharge is only adequate at best.

- Fifty-four percent (54%, 19,700) completed high school.
- Forty-nine percent (49%, 17,000) were employed at the time of the study interview,
- Thirty-eight percent (38%, 12,800) maintained a job for at least one year.
- Forty percent (40%) were a cost to the community at the time of interview.
- Sixty percent (60%, 11,800) of the young women had birthed a child.
- Twenty-five percent (25%, 8,400) were at least one night, homeless.
- The median weekly salary was \$205, and
- Seventeen percent (17%) were completely self supporting.

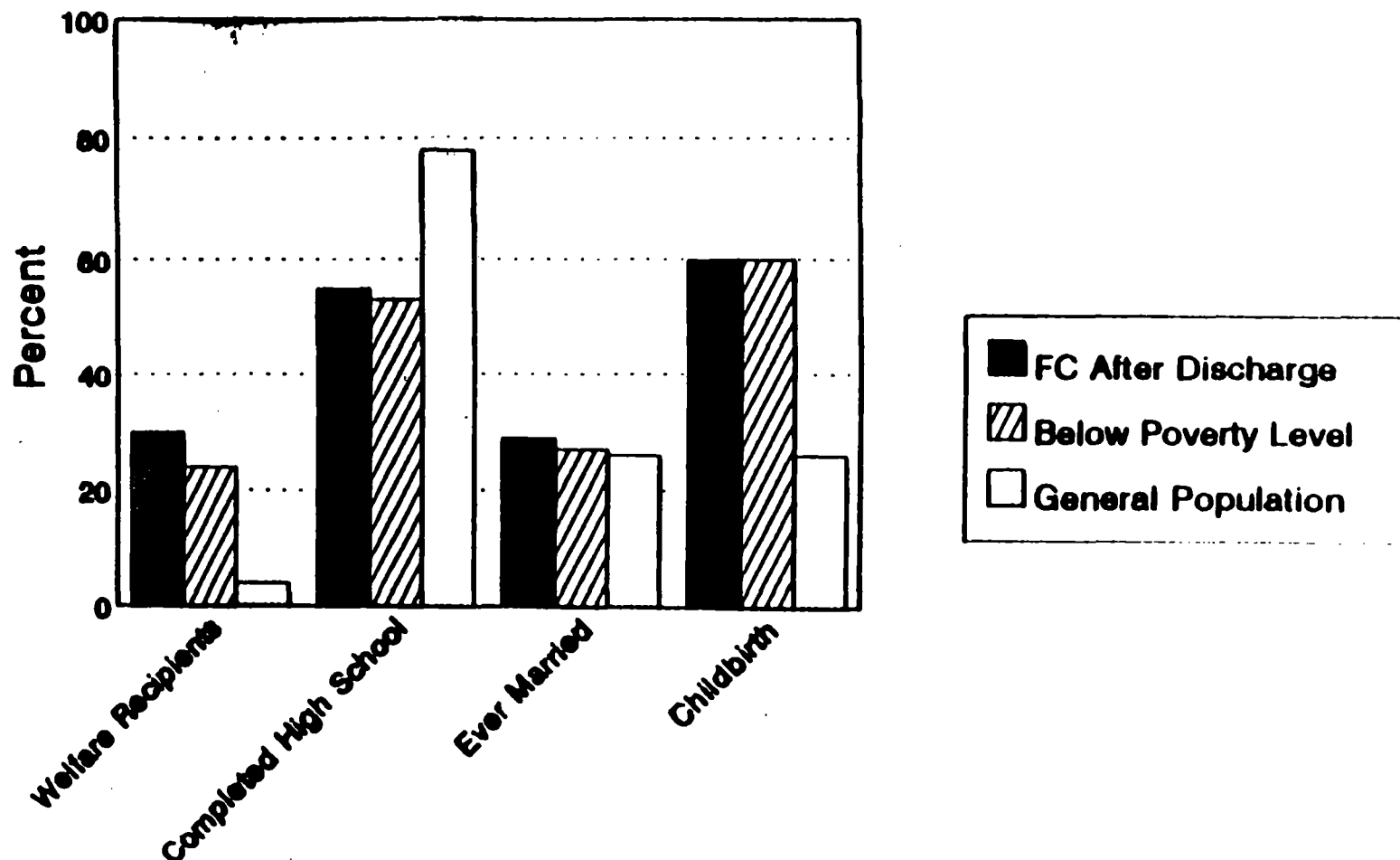
■ With respect to education completion, young parenthood, and the use of public assistance, discharged foster care youth more closely resemble those 18 to 24 year olds living below the poverty level than they do 18 to 24 year olds in general population. (See Figure 2).

These findings verify the need for services to help improve the outcomes for youth after discharge from foster care.

**Finding 4: Extended family members were involved with youth prior to and post discharge.**

A small percentage of youth had their parental rights terminated (11%), a large number of the youth entered care as teenagers (approximately 70%), a number of youth were visited by their parents in their last year of care (69% of mothers and 47% of fathers), and 54 percent of the youth went to live with extended family members upon discharge. These findings suggest that further exploration of the role that parents can play in helping make the transition of

Selected outcomes for 18-24 year olds in the general population, living below poverty level, and foster care youth 2.5-4 years after discharge.\*



\* Includes both children receiving and not receiving skills training

Figure 2. Comparisons of selected outcomes for three youth groups

youth to the community is essential. In some instances, these extended family members provide both emotional and financial support to youth upon discharge.

**Finding 5:** Approximately 60 percent of the young women had given birth to a child, and becoming a young mother was associated with becoming a cost to the community after discharge from foster care.

The percentage of study youth who became young mothers (60%) and the extent to which this can be associated with poorer outcomes is another critical issue that must be addressed. Overall, those young women who birthed a child had poorer outcomes than young women who had not birthed a child with respect to:

- Completing high school (47% and 67%, respectively),
- Completing further schooling after discharge (21% and 50%, respectively),
- Being employed at the time of interview (34% and 55%, respectively),
- Maintaining a job for at least 1 year (23% and 33%, respectively), and
- Being a cost to the community (61% and 22%, respectively).

The issue is more complicated than just providing family planning services. The study did not find that independent living skills training were significantly related to youth avoiding young parenthood. To complicate the issue, for many of the young women, having a child to care for is the most important aspect of their lives. Finally, this finding also has major implications for future health care issues. The situation requires careful consideration, more study, and for now, a number of alternative service interventions.

**Finding 6:** Obtaining health care when needed was a problem for approximately 30 percent of the study youth. Youth indicated that the main barrier to accessing health care was lack of money or health insurance coverage.

### **Program and Policy Implications**

These findings suggest a number of implications for service delivery and future policy. In delineating these implications one cannot dismiss the general impressions youth left on all who interviewed them. The youth were open, provided constructive input about the foster care system, and most important, conveyed a sense of hopefulness about their future. Many of the youth have persevered despite obstacles and disappointments, and would be aided by being provided the tools necessary to lead productive and fulfilling lives. The following program and policy implications for Federal and State initiatives are presented to help achieve this goal.

**FINDING 1: The type of skills encouraged by P.L. 99-272 were positively related to outcomes, particularly when the skill areas of credit, consumer, budget, education and employment were provided in combination.**

#### **Federal**

1. Continuation of the Federal Independent Living Initiative Legislation.
2. Enforce the provision of P.L. 99-272 that requires that specific case plans be developed for youth 16 and older to aid in their transition out of foster care through the 427 review process.
3. Require that youth's case plans address at a minimum the acquisition of skills in the five core areas, money, credit, consumer, employment and education.

#### **State**

1. Prioritize formal skills training to include education, employment, consumer, credit and budgeting skills.
2. Institute training for the foster parent role in teaching life skills into the pre-service and in-service foster parent training. The teaching of life skills can be accomplished informally through every day living arrangements, while skills such as employment and educational training need to take place in more formal settings. While this appears to be stating the obvious, the point needs to be made, since child welfare agencies have frequently attempted to make up through formal training for what they correctly perceive as a missing element in the youths foster home or group home environment. Since the findings showed that the most likely precursors to self-sufficiency were the completion of high school and training in employment, education and money management skills, it would be a waste of resources to provide formal training in basic living skills

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(e.g., home management) when completion of high school is likely to provide the greater payoff. This is not to deny the importance of basic living skills, but these should be provided through the youths living arrangement: caretakers should be trained and encouraged to incorporate the teaching of these skills into everyday living situations.

3. Regard caretakers as members of the social service team. Their talents, ideas, and personal resources augment the success of informal life skills instruction. They should be encouraged to allow youth to make their own decisions, prepare family meals, and generally learn to take responsibility for their own welfare.
4. Formalize written assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of individual youth which include youth as an integral part of this process so that they become involved in the decisions about the services they receive. Moreover, by formalizing assessments and inviting youth to participate in these assessments, specific goals can be identified and services tailored to meet youths' needs. This decision making can be emphasized by implementing case review conferences with all youth in care at age 16 to discuss independent living issues. Involving youth in this process is itself an important means of moving them towards self-sufficiency.

**FINDING 2: High school completion at discharge led to better outcomes, regardless of whether or not youth received Independent Living skills training.**

### **Federal**

1. Develop policies that promote keeping these youth in care until they are 21 years old to give them more opportunity to complete high school and training plans. Currently Federal payments do not extend to the care of children until the age of 21. Although many States have the option of keeping youth in care until they are 21, these policies have many contingencies. Also, because Federal funding is no longer available for these youth, the impetus at the State level to encourage keeping youth in care past their eighteenth birthday is often negligible. Keeping youth, who do not have family to return to for care, until age 21 is particularly important in light of the finding that youth who stayed in care past their 18th birthday were more likely to complete high school and the completion of high school leads to significantly better overall outcomes.
2. Enforce compliance with the federal regulations which require education plans be included in case records.
3. Encourage targeting foster youth participation in existing education programs funded through other Federal agencies.
4. Fund demonstration grants to develop model education planning procedures and programs for foster youth.

**State**

1. Every possible effort should be made to help youth complete high school. If an agency has to choose between using funds for enrolling a youth in an independent living program or providing educational tutoring that would lead to completing high school, the study results suggest the most effective choice may favor providing educational tutoring.
2. Encourage the child welfare system and the education system to work together to target those youth who need special programming, develop the programs, and monitor progress.

A number of States require that educational plans be developed for foster care youth, and some States have developed innovative ways of implementing these plans. A key element is to incorporate team meetings with school personnel to ensure that all delivery systems are working towards the same goal. These plans also become part of the youths' casework plans, and progress toward completion of the plans is incorporated into the administrative and court reviews of youth.

Some States have begun to develop special programs that coordinate the provision of independent living services through the schools. One method for accomplishing this has been to provide independent living services through the community college system, and give youth school credit for the courses. In one State independent living programs are provided in the local high schools as part of the high school curriculum. Providing training through the school setting does not mean providing training in a traditional classroom manner. Experiential training can be incorporated into the programming. These programs not only coordinate services for individual youth, but they begin to coordinate services across agencies.

**FINDING 3: Extended family members are involved with youth prior to and post discharge.**

**State**

1. Review agency practice with respect to involving family members in case planning, and service provision. The majority of the youth discharged from care entered care as teenagers and their families have been a major influence in their development. Whether this influence has been positive or negative, it exists, and at a minimum, agencies should consider encouraging parental participation whenever possible.
2. The findings also suggest that preventive family services and crisis intervention might be viable alternatives to removing teens from their homes in the first place.

**FINDING 4:** Sixty percent of discharged young women and 23% of young men had birthed/fathered a child.

**Federal**

1. Develop Model Licensing regulations for alternative living arrangements for foster youth, such as apartment settings for mothers and babies.
2. Fund demonstration grants to develop programs and support services for foster youth with babies.
3. Further research is needed to address the implications of young parenthood: for example, the ramifications for health issues and a better understanding of the underlying causes of the problem, so that services can be appropriately targeted.

**State**

1. For those young girls who do have children, in the interest of the well-being of both the children and the mother, there is a need for services to help them learn how to parent so that while the welfare cycle perhaps cannot be interrupted for now, there is at least the hope that another generation of foster care children is not being raised. Also, job training courses are needed which allow the mother eventually to provide the income necessary to raise her children.
2. Many of the young women interviewed reported that the reason they left care was that they became pregnant, and that was the only way they could keep their child. Policies and practices that inhibit maintaining young mothers with their children in foster care need to be reviewed. Programs that provide independent living arrangements for pregnant teens and the development of foster homes that will take the young mother and her child need to be developed. Also programs that provide mentors for these young women by connecting them with other pregnant women in the community need to be explored.

**FINDING 5:** Obtaining health care when needed was a problem for approximately 30 percent of the study youth. They indicated that the main barrier was lack of money or insurance.

**Federal and State**

1. Consider providing health care for these youth extending Medicaid benefits after discharge.

2. Consider using independent living funding to help older youth pay for health insurance for up to 6 months after discharge.

As a result of the independent living initiatives more emphasis has been placed on preparing youth for self-sufficiency. The study findings indicate that services can help the process. However, foster youth like all youth need skills training in a wide spectrum of areas to move towards self-sufficiency. Thus, the concept of preparing youth to be self-sufficient is a philosophic approach to service delivery as well as a practice. It is an approach to providing care that promotes growth and self-sufficiency for all youth. Each responsible adult (foster parent, child care worker, birth parent, mentor, etc.) should be involved in the active teaching of independent living skills. Such a model for service delivery requires a reorientation of existing policies and programs in a direction that acknowledges self-sufficiency as the goal of all individuals who are working with foster care youth.

Other sources



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## CWLA PUBLICATIONS

### INDEPENDENT LIVING

CWLA Standards for Independent-Living Services

Independence: A Lifeskills Guide for Teens

Independent Living Services for Youths in Out-of-Home Care

Positive Youth Development: A Special Issue of CWLA's **Child Welfare Journal**

Preparing Adolescents for Life After Foster Care: The Central Role of Foster Parents

Preparing Foster Youths for Adult Living: Proceedings of an Invitational Research Conference

- Ready, Set, Go: An Agency Guide to Independent Living

#### **CWLA Standards for Independent-Living Services**

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CWLA Classic!

#### **Independence: A Lifeskills Guide for Teens**

Anne Brobyn and Julius Ceccerallo

This book, a guide for teenagers in their pursuit of responsible independence, contains topics applicable to young people, such as finding a place to live, banking and budgeting, health and nutrition basics, transportation, finding a job, counseling, and leisure time, to name a few. It is designed to stimulate ideas and questions, making it a useful tool in lifeskills education.

1990/0-87868-350-X/#3500.....\$14.95

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#### **Independent Living Services for Youths in Out-of-Home Care**

Madelyn DeWoody, Kathy Ceja, and Megan Sylvester

Adjustment to adulthood and independence may be particularly difficult for youths in out-of-home care, since they frequently suffer from the lack of family and social supports as safety nets. This book reports on the results of a survey of youth-serving agencies conducted by CWLA and offers recommendations

for the further development and support of independent living services.

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### **Positive Youth Development**

A Special Issue of CWLA's Child Welfare Journal

Edited by Robin Nixon

This special issue provides an opportunity to examine child welfare and youth service practice in a new and different light. Positive youth development is not about "fixing broken kids," it's about emphasizing respect, strengths, and support--with new ways of thinking, new program designs, and new tools for doing the work.

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### **Preparing Adolescents for Life After Foster Care: The Central Role of Foster Parents**

Edited by Anthony N. Maluccio, Robin Krieger, and Barbara A. Pine

Foster parents play the central role in helping adolescents prepare for life after foster care. This practice-oriented book provides comprehensive suggestions and strategies that foster parents and/or social workers may use to guide young people toward self-sufficiency.

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### **Preparing Foster Youths for Adult Living: Proceedings of an Invitational Research Conference**

Edited by Edmund V. Mech and Joan R. Rycraft

This book of papers from the CWLA/University of Illinois Invitational Research Conference on Preparing Foster Youths for Adult Living offers fresh perspectives in the area of preparing foster youths for the transition to early adulthood. Contents include readiness assessment, outcome research, mentoring relationships, program development, and public policy issues.

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CWLA Classic!

### **Ready, Set, Go: An Agency Guide to Independent Living**

Helen D. Stone

This handbook arose from a growing concern in child welfare practice: foster adolescents being aged-out of care with little or no preparation for independent living. It describes essential program components, pitfalls to avoid, and ideas from successful programs in the U.S. and Canada.

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Articles  
published  
from 1984  
to 1997

CD-24825

Dependent-Living Services: The Views of Former Foster Youth.

McMillen, J. C.; Rideout, G. B.; Fisher, R. H.; Tucker, J.

Journal Article

Copyright September-October 1997

Families in Society.

78(5):471-479.

Twenty-five former consumers of independent-living programs for youth in out-of-home care presented their views of the services they received in four focus groups. The youth found that skills classes and stipends for independent living were helpful, that instruction in managing a budget was particularly valuable, and that the services lessened the stigmatization and isolation of being in care. Foster parents and specialized independent living workers eased the transition out of care. Regular public child welfare caseworkers were not helpful in this regard, due to factors such as large caseload size, the perception of them by the youth as authority figures, and the lack of positive interpersonal relationships between them and the youth. The young people reported that being in care was difficult to tolerate and that the transition out of care was often abrupt and difficult to manage. 24 references. (Author abstract modified)

Descriptors:

foster children; emancipation; independent living; service delivery; youth services; program evaluation

CD-22749

Transitional Independent Living Foster Homes: A Step Toward Independence.

Colca, L. A.; Colca, C.

Journal Article

Copyright 1996

Children Today.

24(1):7-11.

This article discusses transitional independent living foster homes for older adolescents who are approaching emancipation. Obstacles to preparing foster adolescents for independent living are presented, including the lack of resources and programs and the lack of opportunities for learning the necessary skills. The Transitional Foster Care Program, which was created in New York State in 1990 to assist adolescents in foster family care make successful transitions to independent living, is described. This program uses real life experiences to help adolescents between the ages of 16 and 20 to learn independent living skills. The basic principles that underlie the program are discussed, including creating individualized plans, using a multilevel approach and adult learning techniques, and being reality based. Variations of the Transitional Foster Home Program are described, including the Mentor Model and the Boarder Model. Three methods used to help the older adolescents learn money management are presented. Responsibilities of the individuals involved in the transitional program are highlighted, and program obstacles are identified. Case examples are used to illustrate the types of foster youth who have entered transitional living foster care and independent living homes. 5 references.

Descriptors:

independent living; adolescents; foster care; independent living centers; program descriptions; models; state programs; independent living skills

**CD-23549**

**Independent Living Program: Characteristics, Outcomes, and Indicators for the Future of Foster Care Services.**

Scannapieco, M.

Journal Article

Copyright Fall 1996

Community Alternatives.

8(2):19-25.

In response to the Independent Living Initiatives enacted as part of the Comprehensive Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, the Baltimore County Department of Social Services established the Independent Living Program (ILP) to help foster youth make the transition from foster care to independent living.

This paper presents a program description and research findings of a comparison study between the ILP and a regular foster care group. The study was conducted to determine if there were differences in demographics, reason for placement, and family structure between children who experienced the ILP and those who did not, and if there were differences in outcomes at the end of placement. Case records were examined for 44 foster care youth who participated in the ILP and 46 youth who remained in regular care. Although no significant differences were found in demographic variables, delinquent behavior, and services received, participants in the ILP group did have significantly higher levels of high school graduation and employment than the foster care group. 11 references and 3 tables. (Author abstract modified)

**Descriptors:**

foster care; emancipation; independent living; independent living skills; program descriptions; program evaluation

**CD-22358**

**Pathways of Older Adolescents Out of Foster Care: Implications for Independent Living Services.**

Courtney, M. E.; Barth, R. P.

Journal Article

Copyright January 1996

Social Work.

41(1):75-83.

This article reports the results of a study of final discharge outcomes for an exit cohort of 2,653 foster youths in California who were at least 17 years old at exit and had spent at least 18 months in care before their final discharge. A logistic regression model of discharge status was developed that expresses the effect of selected variables on the odds that a child exited foster care via one of three routes: by reaching the age of majority while still in care or being legally emancipated to independent living; by family reunification, placement with a relative or guardian, or adoption; or by an unsuccessful exit from care. A youth's number of placements in foster care, time spent in care, and the type of placement the child last resided in were all found to be related to final discharge status. The implications of these findings for efforts to prepare foster youths for independent living are discussed. Of particular interest is the finding that a large proportion of youths who have spent a long time in foster care away from their families nevertheless return to their families after exit from care. 19 references and 5 tables. (Author abstract)

**Descriptors:**

Adolescents; emancipation; foster care; independent living; outcomes; attachment; family reunification; kinship care

**CD-24786**

Emancipation Preparation in California Counties. Executive Summary.

Giovannoni, J.; Chaneske, E.; Furman, W.

Final Report

21 pp.

June 1996

Publication Information:

California Univ., Los Angeles. Center for Child and Family Policy Research

Distributed by:

California Univ.

Center for Child and Family Policy Research.

Los Angeles, CA

This study examined the implementation of independent living services provided in 11 counties in California. County administrators, staff, independent contractors, and other personnel were interviewed about organizational structure, demographics of participants, program procedures, and services provided. The counties varied in utilization of contract agencies, focus on individual and group services, ongoing placement supervision, and interagency coordination. Recruitment and monitoring procedures are described and problems in service delivery are identified. The study also highlighted the training needs of child welfare staff regarding emancipation services, specifically environment issues, adolescent development, resources and referrals, assessments, cultural issues, foster care issues, sexuality, social skills, special needs, and teen parenting. Results of the training analysis are provided in a separate report.

**Descriptors:**

california; foster care; emancipation; independent living skills; professional training; program descriptions; program evaluation

**CD-24093**

The Wisconsin Study of Youth Aging Out of Out-of-Home Care: A Portrait of Children About to Leave Care.

Courtney, M.; Piliavin, I.

Technical Report

10 pp.

Copyright September 1995

Publication Information:

Wisconsin Univ., Madison

Distributed by:

Wisconsin Univ.

School of Social Work

Madison, WI

This report summarizes the findings of the first stage of the Wisconsin Study of Youth Aging Out of Out-of-Home Care study. During the first phase of the study, 141 foster youth were interviewed before they exited care to determine their status before leaving the child welfare system. All of the youth in the sample were 17 or 18 years old and had been in care for at least 18 months. Questions focused on demographic characteristics, history of maltreatment and reasons for placement, need for placement, experiences in out-of-home care, attitudes toward

out-of-home care, independent living training, mental health and social services, education and employment, mental health status, delinquency, and perceived social support. Approximately three-quarters of the sample reported that they had experienced at least one type of maltreatment before placement, usually neglect. Twenty-five percent had been removed from their home because of physical abuse, 12 percent were removed due to parental neglect, and 11 percent were removed after sexual abuse. Eighty-seven percent reported that their foster parents had helped them and most indicated a positive attitude toward the foster care experience. About 76 percent of the youth reported that they had received some type of independent living skill training, such as money management, food preparation, personal hygiene and health care, housing, transportation and employment, and educational planning. The majority of youth planned to attend college, although some indicators suggest their future educational achievements may be limited. 3 references.

Descriptors:

foster children; youth services; independent living skills; emancipation; individual characteristics; health status; statistical data; wisconsin

**CD-24749**

Developmental Tasks of Adolescents Prior to Emancipation: Youth Delays. Recommendations for Practice.

Mahoney, J.

Technical Report

14 pp.

1995

Publication Information:

Project to Enhance Adoption Practice. Northwest Resource Associates, Seattle, WA

Distributed by:

University of Washington

Department of Social and Health Services

1602 NE 150th St., N17-2

Seattle, WA 98155-7224

(206) 368-7104

This paper summarizes the developmental tasks of adolescents in general and of adolescents in foster care. Adolescence is conceptualized as the time period between the ages of 11 and 28. The behavioral and emotional strengths which present in the passage of adolescence to adulthood are enumerated as they relate to the development of a secure attachment. The developmental tasks of adolescence are listed, and unique developmental tasks for adolescents in foster care and for adopted adolescents are presented. Considerations affecting adjustment and later emancipation are explored, including the role of nature, nurture, and fate. Maslow's hierarchy of human needs with regard to adolescents is examined. Strategies for successfully navigating issues of loss in foster care and adoption are explored with a focus on phases in grief work, including pre-protest, protest, despair, and detachment. Criteria for determining the readiness of older children for placement are presented, and factors in adoption disruption are discussed. A series of practice interventions for working with adopted adolescents or adolescents in foster care who are approaching emancipation are explained. Numerous references.

Descriptors:

foster care; adoption; adolescence; emancipation; development; attachment; treatment

CD-20385

Readiness For Independence: Comparison of Foster Care, Kinship Care, and Non-Foster Care Adolescents.

Iglehart, A. P.

Journal Article

Copyright 1995

Children and Youth Services Review.

17(3):417-432.

This article describes a study that compared 63 nonfoster care adolescents with 42 adolescents placed in kinship care and 69 adolescents in nonrelative foster family care in their readiness for independent living. Data were obtained from adolescents living in Los Angeles County. Results reveal that foster care and nonfoster care adolescents were not significantly different in perceptions of independent living skill levels, type of employment they held, and perceived overall preparation for independent living. The results do indicate, however, that nonrelative foster care adolescents were more likely than the other two groups to believe particular skills were self-taught, work full-time, work more than 40 hours a week, and not expect to live with a relative right after emancipation from foster care or graduation from high school. These differences remained even after ethnicity and gender were controlled. Adolescents living with a parent or a relative, regardless of their foster care status, were less likely to be working full-time, less likely to work more than 40 hours a week, and more likely to expect to continue living with a relative. Foster care adolescents, in general, were found to be more likely to worry about their futures and to expect to support themselves after emancipation or high school graduation. Implications of the findings for service delivery and social policy are considered. 15 references and 5 tables. (Author abstract modified)

Descriptors:

foster care; kinship care; adolescents; foster children; independent living; independent living skills; comparative analysis; employment

CD-23854

Research on Kinship Foster Care: What Do We Know? Where Do We Go From Here?

Berrick, J. D.; Barth, R. P.

Journal Article

Copyright 1994

Children and Youth Services Review.

16(1-2):1-5.

This introduction to a special issue on kinship care summarizes the findings and conclusions of the studies presented in the journal. In general, research has done little to examine services provided to kinship foster parents or their role in preserving the family. The studies described in the issue have contributed information to the knowledge base of kinship foster care. State policies regarding kinship providers, characteristics of kinship providers, and their role in family preservation and with child welfare agencies are examined. The studies also investigated the needs of adolescents living in kinship foster care and kinship adoptions. Further research is needed in the areas of services for kinship foster parents, emancipation for children leaving kinship foster care, and the success of guardianship and adoption. 13 references.

Descriptors:

research reviews; foster parents; kinship care; family preservation; adoption

**CD-19888**

Those Who Remain in Care: Independent Living.

Ryan, P.

Chapter in Book

pp. 85-93

Copyright 1993

Publication Information:

In: Abramczyk, L. W. and Ross, J. W. (Editors). International Reunification Symposium, Charleston, SC, September 10-12, 1992. South Carolina Univ., Columbia, College of Social Work

Distributed by:

University of South Carolina

College of Social Work

Columbia, SC

This chapter describes the principles of independent living preparation, which is intended to prepare adolescents for emancipation. Although Public Law 99-273 (1986) provides funding for States to establish programs to help adolescents make the transition from foster care to independent living, few States have implemented such programs. Services focus not only on skills such as obtaining employment and managing finances but also address the emotional needs of young people, helping them to maintain or establish an ongoing network of relationships. The paper provides guidelines for developing independent living programs for adolescents in short-term foster care, long-term family foster care, and group care. Barriers to success are also discussed. 23 references.

Descriptors:

foster care; permanency planning; adolescents; out of home care; emancipation; program planning

**CD-20376**

State of Tennessee IV-E Independent Living Report, October 1, 1992 through September 30, 1993.

Grunow, R. A.

Technical Report

42 pp.

December 30, 1993

Publication Information:

Tennessee State Dept. of Human Services, Nashville

Distributed by:

Tennessee State Dept. of Human Services

400 Deaderick St.

Nashville, TN 37219

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (DHHS), Washington, DC.

This report outlines Tennessee's IV-E Independent Living Plan to prepare youth for termination of foster care services. The programs funded by the Independent Living Initiatives Program are: staff and foster parent training and assessment; foster home-apartment living program; independent living consultation; and two tutor-mentor programs. A written transitional or independent living plan is developed for every youth age 16 to 21 in foster care. Descriptions of projects funded by the program are provided in the report, including stories of how each project had helped a youth successfully

make the transition to independent living. The report also summarizes the costs of the program and presents utilization statistics.

**Descriptors:**

tennessee; independent living; state federal aid; emancipation; program descriptions; program evaluation

**CD-20983**

Title IV-E-IL Adolescent Living Skills, SELF Program Evaluation Report: Does Anybody Care?

Wiener, P. H.

Final Report

104 pp.

February 1993

Publication Information:

Minnesota State Dept. of Human Services, St. Paul. Family and Children's Services Division

Distributed by:

Family and Children's Services Division

444 Lafayette Rd.

St. Paul, MN 55155-3832

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.  
(019101MN1420).

Results of an evaluation of the Minnesota Support for Emancipation and Living Independently (SELF) program are reported. The SELF program provides Federal Title IV-E-IL funds to counties and private agencies for the development and implementation of services to help prepare adolescents for the transition from substitute care to independent living. The program was rated favorably by participants and administrators. Significant improvements were found in the participants' self-esteem and knowledge needed for independent living. As of 90 days after completion of the program, 46 percent of the youth were employed and another 44 percent were enrolled in educational programs. 17 tables.

**Descriptors:**

minnesota; program evaluation; adolescents; foster care programs; independent living skills

**CD-20984**

Title IV-E-IL Adolescent Living Skills, SELF Program Evaluation Report: Appendix Volume. The Interviews. Authorized, Edited Transcripts.

Wiener, P. H.

Final Report

217 pp.

February 1993

Publication Information:

Minnesota State Dept. of Human Services, St. Paul. Family and Children's Services Division

Distributed by:

Family and Children's Services Division

444 Lafayette Rd.

St. Paul, MN 55155-3832

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.  
(019101MN1420).

This volume contains the appendix to an evaluation report on the effectiveness of the Minnesota Support for Emancipation and Living Functionally (SELF) program. Edited transcripts of interviews conducted with SELF program county coordinators for the evaluation study are provided. The coordinators were asked about the objectives of the program, their involvement and professional background, decisions about eligibility and services, strengths and weaknesses of the program, results, and changes that could be made.

**Descriptors:**

interviews; minnesota; program evaluation; adolescents; foster care programs; independent living skills

**CD-21613**

Self-Help Skills: Instructor. //PUSH for Youths GOALS//.

Ryan, P.

Training Material

136 pp.

Copyright 1992

Publication Information:

Second Edition. Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti

Distributed by:

Institute for the Study of Children and Families

Eastern Michigan Univ.

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

(313) 487-0372

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (DHHS),  
Washington, DC. (009C100788).

This module of the PUSH for Youth Goals curriculum focuses on teaching self-help skills. The workshop trains foster parents to help foster children learn the skills they will need to live on their own. Permanency planning for adolescents, adolescent development, the development of abused children, enhancement of self-esteem, and use of community resources are addressed. The instructor's manual describes techniques for teaching adults, class procedures, class exercises, and the general concepts behind the curriculum. Participant worksheets for each session are also included.

**Descriptors:**

foster children; emancipation; independent living skills; competency based training; foster parents training; child development; adolescents

**CD-21614**

Self-Help Skills: Goals. //PUSH for Youths GOALS//.

Ryan, P.

Training Material

228 pp.

Copyright 1992

Publication Information:

Second Edition. Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti

Distributed by:

National Foster Care Resource Center

Eastern Michigan Univ.

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

(313) 487-0374

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.  
9C100788).

This workbook is to be used by foster children, age 11 to 19, as preparation for emancipation. Part of the PUSH for Youth GOALS program, the manual focuses on the self-help skills needed for independent living. Topics include: health and self-care; clothing purchase and care; cleaning house; food preparation; transportation; money management; housing; keeping things organized and in good repair; and using community resources. Each section provides exercises that help participants assess their current skills, learn proper procedures, and practice their new skills. Forms and worksheets are included.

**Descriptors:**

foster children; emancipation; independent living skills; competency based training; adolescents

**CD-21612**

Self-Help Skills: Participant. //PUSH for Youths GOALS//.

Ryan, P.

Training Material

103 pp.

Copyright 1992

Publication Information:

Second Edition. Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti

Distributed by:

Institute for the Study of Children and Families

Eastern Michigan Univ.

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

(313) 487-0372

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (DHHS), Washington, DC. (009C100788).

This workbook for foster parents is provided as part of the Self-Help module of the PUSH for Youth GOALS curriculum. The PUSH for Youth GOALS curriculum was designed to train foster parents to prepare foster children for emancipation. The Self-Help sessions also address permanency planning for adolescents, adolescent development, the development of abused children, self-esteem, and use of community resources. A skills assessment inventory is included, and guidelines for teaching self-help skills are provided. Foster parents are encouraged to teach independent living skills as early as possible, modeling appropriate behavior and providing a safe environment for practicing new skills.

**Descriptors:**

foster children; emancipation; independent living skills; competency based training; foster parents training; child development; adolescents

**CD-21610**

Choices and Consequences: Participant. //PUSH for Youth GOALS//.

Ryan, P.

Training Material

59 pp.

Copyright 1992

Publication Information:

Second Edition. Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti

Distributed by:

Institute for the Study of Children and Families  
Eastern Michigan Univ.  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197  
(313) 487-0372

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.  
(009C100788).

This workbook for foster parents is provided as part of the Choices and Consequences module of the PUSH for Youth GOALS curriculum. The PUSH for Youth GOALS curriculum was designed to train foster parents to prepare foster children for emancipation. The Choices and Consequences workshop teaches foster parents to help foster children recognize the consequences of their behavior; make wise choices; choose friends; make decisions about sexual involvement; and manage health, stress, and leisure activities. Guidelines for conducting exercises with foster children are provided. Foster parents are encouraged to teach decision making skills as early as possible, modeling appropriate behavior and providing a safe environment for practicing new skills.

Descriptors:

foster children; emancipation; independent living skills; decision making; competency based training; foster parents training

**CD-21611**

Choices and Consequences: Goals. //PUSH for Youth GOALS//.

Ryan, P.

Training Material

28 pp.

Copyright 1992

Publication Information:

Second Edition. Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti

Distributed by:

National Foster Care Resource Center

Eastern Michigan Univ.

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

(313) 487-0374

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.  
(009C100788).

This workbook is to be used by foster children, age 11 to 19, as preparation for emancipation. Part of the PUSH for Youth GOALS program, the manual focuses on the choices and consequences that are part of independent living. It is used as part of a program including training for the foster parents. Topics include: recognizing the consequences of behavior; making wise choices; choosing friends; growing up; sexual involvement; and choices about health, stress, and leisure activities. Each section provides exercises that help participants clarify their values and learn skills for responsible decision making.

Descriptors:

foster children; emancipation; independent living skills; decision making; competency based training

**CD-5595**

Coping as a Foster Child.

Blomquist, G. M.

Book

pp.

Copyright 1992

Publication Information:

New York, NY, Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.

Distributed by:

Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.

29 E. 21st St.

New York, NY 10010

This book explores the problems and difficulties faced by children and youth who are placed in foster care and explores some of the choices, decisions, and emotions these children can go through to take more control over their lives. Also discussed are the care programs most often utilized by State or city departments of social services, and the type of assistance provided by trained adults, foster parents, social workers, counselors, and other staff in helping foster children deal with their emotions and develop socially. Care programs examined include shelter homes and receiving homes, crisis centers, family and therapeutic foster homes, group and relative homes, residential child care facilities, and emancipation programs. Other issues discussed are adoption, temporary placement, and the separation of the child from the parents. Includes glossary of terms and directory of resources.

Descriptors:

foster care; temporary placement; separating child from parents; emotional problems; removing child from home; foster children; foster homes; child care vices

**CD-21609**

Choices and Consequences; Instructor. //PUSH for Youth GOALS//.

Ryan, P.

Training Material

92 pp.

Copyright 1992

Publication Information:

Second Edition. Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti

Distributed by:

Institute for the Study of Children and Families

Eastern Michigan Univ.

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

(313) 487-0372

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.

(009C100788).

This module of the PUSH for Youth Goals curriculum focuses on choices and consequences. The workshop trains foster parents to help foster children recognize the consequences of their behavior; make wise choices; choose friends; make decisions about sexual involvement; and manage health, stress, and leisure activities in preparation for emancipation. Foster parents are encouraged to teach decision making skills as early as possible, modeling appropriate behavior and providing a safe environment for practicing new skills. The instructor's manual describes techniques for teaching adults, procedures to use with groups of foster parents, and the general concepts behind the curriculum. Course materials, instructor's guides, and worksheets are provided for a series of five training sessions.

**Descriptors:**

foster children; emancipation; independent living skills; decision making; competency based training; foster parents training

**CD-22655**

A Child's Journey Through Placement.

Fahlberg, V. I.

Book

432 pp.

Copyright 1991

Publication Information:

Indianapolis, IN, Perspectives Press

Distributed by:

Tapestry Books

P. O. Box 359

Ringoes, NJ 08551

(800) 765-2367

(908) 788-2999 FAX

This book provides professionals, parents, and others with the knowledge and skills needed for understanding and working with children and families involved in the child placement process. The focus of the book is on the feelings, needs, and behaviors of the child. Chapter 1 examines the issue of attachment and bonding by discussing the importance of attachment, the usual ways that attachments between parents and children are formed, ways to assess attachment and bonding, and ways to strengthen weak attachments or promote new attachments. Chapter 2 explains the primary tasks to be accomplished during the normal development of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, grade school children, and adolescents and addresses the issues of conscience development and normal sexual development. Chapter 3 explores the issues of separation and loss, focusing on the factors influencing the reaction to separation, the stages of grief, and the impact of unresolved grief on the process of forming new attachments. Chapter 4 presents strategies for minimizing the trauma of moves into and out of the foster care system; discusses specific aspects of placing children into the interim care system; explores the role of the foster family when a child leaves care; and suggests ways of minimizing trauma associated with reuniting a child with the birth family, moving a child to an adoptive family, and having the adolescent leave the system by emancipation. Chapter 5 deals with case planning. Issues addressed include developing a relationship with birth parents; gathering and organizing information on the child and family; planning treatment alternatives; and making decisions about siblings, relative placements, and the maintenance of racial and cultural continuity in placements. Chapter 6 discusses the principles of behavior management, provides a framework for analyzing behavior problems, describes specific behavior problems that are common among children in out-of-home care, and examines behavior problems secondary to learning problems. Chapter 7 focuses on direct work with children. Topics explored include general principles of and techniques for communicating with children and the role of direct work during adolescence. Cases examples and exercises are also included throughout the book to help readers apply the material to practice, and a glossary is provided. Numerous references, 11 figures, and 41 tables.

**Descriptors:**

child placement; attachment; child development; separating child from parents; foster care; case management; behavior problems; permanency planning

**-21790**

ependent Living Programs: Avenues to Competence.

Wedeven, T.; Mauzerall, H. A.

Chapter in Book

pp. 91-105

Copyright 1990

Publication Information:

In: Maluccio, A. N., Krieger, R., and Pine, B. A. (Editors). Preparing Adolescents for Life After Foster Care: The Central Role of Foster Parents. Child Welfare League of America, Washington, DC

Distributed by:

Casey Family Program, Research Dept.

1300 Dexter Ave., N., Suite 400

Seattle, WA 98109-3547

(206) 270-4907

(206) 282-3555 FAX

This chapter deals with independent living skills for foster youths who are preparing to leave foster care. The preconditions of adolescent development that are needed for competency in adulthood are described, including the emergence of individuation, the integration of past trauma, the establishment and clarification of oneself as having a unique history, and the emergence of sexual identity. The use of these components in the design of an independent living program is discussed. Guidelines and principles for planning and implementing developmentally sensitive independent living programs are presented. These guidelines and principles deal with screening youths for

participation in an independent living program, allowing youths to choose to enter a program, recognizing the uniqueness of youths, having youths function as tenants in an apartment, setting a calendar of events and goals, coping with separation, addressing the myth of emancipation, dealing directly with the anxiety created by separation, allowing youths to do as much for themselves as they can, establishing boundaries, creating situations that stimulate youth action, helping youths assume sexual responsibility, normalizing youth mistakes, reframing the past, helping youths assess alternatives for adulthood, meeting staffing needs, and letting go of youths after meeting their dependency needs. 3 references.

**Descriptors:**

independent living; independent living skills; competency; adolescents; child development; program descriptions; emancipation; empowerment

**CD-24505**

A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth. Phase 1 Final Report.

Cook, R.; McLean, J. L.; Ansell, D. I.

Technical Report

142 pp.

August 1990

Publication Information:

Volume 1. Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC

Distributed by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS)

Amospace Bldg., Ste. 600

370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW

Washington, DC 20447

(202) 401-9200

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.

This report presents the findings of Phase One of a national evaluation of the impact of the Title IV-E foster care independent living programs on state policies and services as well as on outcomes for foster youth. The first phase of the study collected case record data for a sample of 1,644 youth discharged from foster care during 1987 and 1988 to determine characteristics and service needs of adolescents aged 16 and older. Data were also collected from state independent living plans and program reports, telephone interviews with state officials about their independent living services, and a process evaluation of 8 states and 24 regions. The analysis found that youth discharged from foster care at age 18 had low rates of educational achievement and job experience as well as high rates of emotional disturbance, pregnancy, drug abuse, and health problems. About 60 percent of youth reported some type of independent skill training before emancipation, most frequently in the areas of personal appearance, health, and social skills. The law successfully encouraged states to develop policies regarding services for adolescents and develop basic skills training programs and education and employment initiatives. However, many states have implemented programs without sufficient planning and consideration for a comprehensive approach to service delivery. Phase Two of the study will examine long-term outcomes for youth discharged from foster care. 1 figure and 36 tables.

Descriptors:

program evaluation; foster care; adolescents; independent living; outcomes

**CD-24751**

The Coming-of-Age in Foster Care.

Land, H.

Chapter in Book

pp. 35-51

Copyright 1990

Publication Information:

In: Maluccio, A. N.; Krieger, R.; and Pine, B. A. (Editors). Preparing Adolescents for Life After Foster Care: The Central Role of Foster Parents. Washington, DC, Child Welfare League of America

Distributed by:

Child Welfare League of America

440 First St., NW, 3rd Floor

Washington, DC 20001-2085

(202) 638-2952

(202) 638-4004 FAX

This book chapter discusses the process of emancipation for adolescents in foster care. The developmental tasks necessary for the successful completion of emancipation are discussed, including identity formation and transaction with the environment. Methods of intervention aimed at reducing psychological risk within this population are presented and classified according to developmental stages during pre-emancipation and emancipation stages. The following pre-emancipation stages are described: judging self and others; identification with significant others; competence, gender identification, and sex roles, planning for a new living environment; and obtaining emotional refueling. Assessing oneself within society's domain is presented as a step during

emancipation itself. The role of the foster family and how to create a foster parent-worker partnership is also discussed. Numerous references.

**Descriptors:**

adolescents; foster care; emancipation; development; clinical intervention; foster parents; birth parents; parental role

**CD-21782**

Modes of Exit from Foster Family Care and Adjustment at Time of Departure of Children with Unstable Life Histories.

Fanshel, D.; Finch, S. J.; Grundy, J. F.

Journal Article

Copyright July-August 1989

Child Welfare.

68(4):391-402.

Sponsored by:

Casey Family Program, Seattle, WA.

This article presents a study of the modes of exit from care of a population of 585 children who were placed in out-of-home care through the Casey Family Program. Results indicate that 37.4 percent of the children stayed with the program until they reached age 18, 17.8 percent of the children left care to enter into independent living at less than 18 years of age, 20.2 percent of the children returned to one or both parents, 20.7 percent of the children did so poorly in their foster homes that they were remanded to the court holding jurisdiction or the public social service agency that formerly provided care, 3.9 percent of the children ran away from their foster homes and did not return to the program's care. Results also reveal that children emancipated at age 18 left care under the most serene circumstances and on average showed the best adjustment, the average condition at exit of children with disrupted adoptions was essentially the same as the average condition of children without this experience, children whose foster families were transferred to supervision of the Casey Family Program were in better condition at exit than other Casey children, and children with difficult problems at entry into the Casey Family Program were in poorer condition at exit. 4 references, 1 figure, and 3 tables. (Author abstract modified)

**Descriptors:**

foster care; emancipation; family reunification; runaway children; foster care programs

**CD-24494**

Adolescents in Foster Families.

Aldgate, J.; Maluccio, A.; Reeves, C.

Book

192 pp.

Copyright 1989

Publication Information:

Chicago, IL, Lyceum Books, Inc.

Distributed by:

Lyceum Books, Inc.

224 S. Michigan Ave.

Chicago, IL 60604

This book examines the specific needs of adolescents in foster care and describes principles for effective practice with that population. Experts from

the United States and the United Kingdom provide an overview of the characteristics of adolescents in foster families and examine the implications of parenting adolescents. Chapters also present a conceptual map for social work practice and address preparation for emancipation from foster care, interventions with foster youth and their families, the use of agreements in foster family placements, programs for interdependent living, and the training and assessment of foster parents. A directory of related agencies and organizations in the U.S. and U.K. is provided in the appendix. Numerous references, 3 figures, and 1 table.

**Descriptors:**

foster children; foster parents; independent living; adolescents; child placement; social work; foster care; program planning

**CD-20339**

Leaving Home Again: Emancipation from Foster Family Care.

McFadden, E. J.; Rice, D.; Ryan, P.; Warren, B.

Chapter in Book

pp. 133-148

Copyright 1989

Publication Information:

In: Hudson, J. and Galaway, B., (Editors). Specialist Foster Family Care: A Normalizing Experience. Binghamton, NY, Haworth Press

Distributed by:

Haworth Press

10 Alice Street

Binghamton, NY 13904

This paper describes how social workers, therapists, and foster parents can help to prepare young people for emancipation from foster care. In addition to tangible independent living skills, these young people require assistance with the emotional, intangible aspects of emancipation including reliving the separation experience and confusion about their identity. Foster parents can be trained to assist youth in the emancipation process by understanding that preparation of the young person will often lead to a reactivation of earlier losses, maladaptive responses to separation and rejection, and reunion fantasies and may reactivate emotional scar tissue which has previously helped the young person with their loss experiences. Foster parents and youth may also be encouraged to maintain post-emancipation relationships. (Author abstract modified)

**Descriptors:**

emancipation; foster care; foster care workers role; foster parents training; followup services; independent living skills

**CD-14959**

P.U.S.H. for Youth G.O.A.L.S. Self-Help Skills.

Ryan, P.

Training Material

260 pp.

Copyright 1988

Publication Information:

Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti. Inst. for the Study of Children and Families

Distributed by:

Eastern Michigan University

Child and Family Publications

Institute for the Study of Children and Families  
Ann Arbor, MI 48197  
(313) 487-0372

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.  
(009C100788).

This training material is part of a curriculum designed to assist foster parents develop the skills and home environment necessary to work with adolescents approaching emancipation from foster care. The curriculum is divided into 4 modules, and each module has instructor and foster parent manuals and a youth workbook. This training material focuses on self-help skills and consists of an instructor manual and a youth workbook. The instructor manual contains all of the materials in the foster parent manual and also includes general procedures and techniques, a guide at the beginning of each session, and an outline or brief summary of answers to discussion questions. Topics focus on helping youths prepare for emancipation from foster care, understanding adolescent development and the development of abused children, helping youths work on self-esteem, and teaching youths about the community. Youth workbook topics include providing health and self care, purchasing and caring for clothing, cleaning a house, preparing food, obtaining transportation and housing, managing money, and using community resources. Each section includes a skills inventory and exercises. Instructor manual appendices present ideas for working with adolescents and offer information foster parents need to know to help adolescents reach their goals. 2 references, 2 figures, and numerous illustrations.

Descriptors:

foster care; foster children; adolescents; foster parents; curricula; social skills; parent education

**CD-20405**

New Legal Options to Prepare Adolescents for Independent Living.

Hardin, M.

Journal Article

Copyright November-December 1988

Child Welfare.

67(6):529-546.

New legal alternatives are needed to assist older adolescents living apart from their families to make the gradual transition to self-sufficiency. At present, there are only two legal alternatives for such adolescents in most States: agency legal custody (foster family or group care) and emancipation. Two new alternatives are needed to allow mature young persons to practice limited independence and to receive some continued aid and supervision from child welfare agencies: independent-living arrangements and special programs for young adults formerly in agency custody. This article reviews existing State laws and proposes a range of new legal options that will help young people make the transition from foster family or group care to self-sufficiency. 24 references and 2 figures. (Author abstract modified)

Descriptors:

independent living; foster care programs; emancipation; legal processes; state laws; adolescents

**CD-20296**

The Role of Foster Parents in Helping Young People Develop Emancipation Skills

Finn, P.; McFadden, E. J.; Rice, D.; Warren, B. L.

Journal Article

Copyright November-December 1988

Child Welfare.

67(6):563-572.

Sponsored by:

Administration on Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.

(90CW0788).

This article focuses on the role of foster parents in helping young people develop emancipation skills. Until recently, programs designed to prepare youth for emancipation from foster care have largely ignored the critical role foster parents can play. The advantages of foster parents being the primary teachers of the youths in their homes are identified, and the problems confronting foster parents in helping youths develop emancipation skills are discussed. Projects designed to help foster parents develop the skills and home environment necessary to work systematically with the youths in their homes are described. The materials developed through these programs can be used as part of a systematic foster parent education program and can provide additional resources on the continuum of services an agency provides youths leaving care. 23 references. (Author abstract modified)

Descriptors:

foster parents; independent living; independent living skills; adolescents; foster parents training; youth services; foster care; parent education

**C 20300**

On Their Own: The Experiences of Youth After Foster Care.

Barth, R. P.

Final Report

71 pp.

December 1988

Publication Information:

California Univ., Berkeley. Family Welfare Research Group

Distributed by:

California Univ., Berkeley. Family Welfare Research Group

1950 Addison St., Suite 104

Berkeley, CA 94704

Sponsored by:

Contra Costa County, CA (20-719).

Fifty-five young adults emancipated from foster care were contacted to examine the preparation for independent living that they received from the foster care program. This "favored" sample was primarily from suburban counties, had good relationships with foster parents and professionals, and received tutoring and counseling. The youth were interviewed about their experience with foster care, employment, continued contact with foster families or birth families, education, life skills preparation, satisfaction with foster care, substance abuse, criminal activity, and problems during the transition to independent living. More than half of the participants had not graduated from high school. They reported problems with health insurance, housing, and depression. While most participants believed that foster care was a positive experience, 63 percent suggested that independent living skill training could have prepared them better for the transition through post-foster care. 54 references, 15 figures, and 11 tables.

**Descriptors:**

• ter children; emancipation; independent living skills; followup studies

**CD-21021**

Helping Foster Parents Prepare Youths for Emancipation.

Ryan, P.

Journal Article

Copyright Summer 1988

Fostering Ideas.

2(2):1-5.

This booklet describes a curriculum designed to train foster parents to help youth make the transition from foster home to independent living. PUSH for Youth GOALS addresses adolescent development, skills, and assessment and planning techniques. The four modules focus on self-help skills, decision making, employment, and the emotional implications of emancipation. Foster parents are viewed as the primary teachers of skills needed for independent living. The training teaches them how to break skills into a series of steps and explain how each is accomplished. Foster families also play an important role in encouraging the youth to accept responsibility and develop positive interpersonal skills.

**Descriptors:**

foster parents training; emancipation; parenting skills; foster parents; parental role; independent living skills

**24656**

Examination of Long-Term Foster Care.

Kluger, M.; Fein, E.; Maluccio, A.; Taylor, J.

Final Report

464 pp.

July 1986

Publication Information:

Child and Family Services, Hartford, CT. Research Dept.

Distributed by:

Administration for Children, Youth, and Families

PO Box 1182

Washington, DC 20013

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.  
(90CW0721).

This final report addresses which variables, alone or in combination, account for the phenomenon of long-term foster care, which is defined as remaining in out of home placement two years or longer. Specifically, this report examines the children who remain in foster care, what permanency planning efforts have been made for these children and with what results, and how permanency planning for children in long-term care differ from those children who successfully move out of care. This study focused on 779 children and youth, 2 to 20 years of age, in long-term foster care in Connecticut on January 1, 1985. It was structured to investigate the following questions: the child, family, and system characteristics associated with long-term foster care; foster parents'

ceptions of children's functioning; needs and support systems of children and families involved with foster care; and issues families face as the age of emancipation approaches. Data is compared with a previous study of youngsters who left foster care for a permanent placement. Practice and policy

recommendations impacting the plans and procedures of child welfare agencies are presented with emphasis on addressing children's permanency planning needs and promoting their positive contribution to society. The researchers examined theory, practice, and service delivery at the state as well as national levels in several ways in order to understand the theory and methodology of permanency planning, including any existing barriers; and determine the implications of findings for decision making on allocation of resources for long-term and short-term foster care. Emphasis is placed on the development of permanency planning efforts to move more children out of long-term care and into permanent placements. Numerous tables, appendixes, and references.

**Descriptors:**

long term foster care; permanency planning; out of home care; foster children; adolescents; connecticut; comparative analysis; questionnaires

**CD-24658**

Planning for Independence: Preparing the Older Foster Child for Adulthood.

Yoshikami, R.; Ahearn, J.; Dvorak, J.; Mason, J.; Yoakum, K.

Technical Report

47 pp.

1986

Publication Information:

Portland State Univ., OR. Regional Research Institute for Human Services

Distributed by:

Administration for Children, Youth, and Families

PO Box 1182

Washington, DC 20013

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC.

(90CO0229).

This final report of a demonstration project examines the planning and resource needs of youth in foster care preparing for emancipation. Surveys were administered to former foster youth (N=57), current foster youth ages 16 years and older (N=33), foster parents (N=21), and social workers (N=24) to identify the needs central to emancipation and the types of resources that would best address those needs. Surveys also examined the role of child welfare agency services in preparing youth for independent functioning in the community. Each respondent was asked to consider a list of 16 areas of need related to the process of emancipation, and were asked to identify the 5 most important areas. Results indicated that the areas of major concern focused on issues of economic security and physical well-being rather than on social and interpersonal issues.

Nearly 40 percent of the foster parents reported that there was little preparation for emancipating foster children and little contact with social workers. Both social workers and foster parents agreed that judicial and agency review procedures could be improved with more active participation of the youth, more communication and information sharing between social worker and foster parent, and more focused case plans that address achievable, practical objectives. Both identified effective community resources which were found to be largely unavailable, including transitional living arrangements, affordable medical and dental care, survival skills training, job training and placement services, and support groups for emancipating youth. The project included a mentor program in which formerly emancipated foster youth are paired with current foster youth, the testing of procedures for identifying and coordinating appropriate resources, and case planning procedures with emancipating foster youth and their social workers and foster parents. A prototype policy for

emancipation planning is presented, including questionnaires and worksheets. Numerous tables and references.

**Descriptors:**

emancipation; foster care; adolescents; questionnaires; child welfare research; demonstration programs; independent living skills; oregon

**CD-22231**

Project Stepping Out: Stepping Out of Foster Care Into a More Independent, Self-Sufficient Living Network.

Baltimore County Dept. of Social Services, Towson, MD.

Final Report

199 pp.

April 1985

Publication Information:

Baltimore County Dept. of Social Services, Towson, MD

Distributed by:

Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information

P. O. Box 1182

Washington, DC 20013

(800) FYI-3366

Sponsored by:

Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (DHHS), Washington, DC. (90CO0223).

Project Stepping Out was designed to prepare youth in foster care for emancipation. Social workers and volunteers worked with the youth to improve skills necessary for daily living management, economic self-sufficiency, social network development, coping, and emancipation. The program involved six components: social work intervention; strengths and needs assessments; task groups; workshops; apprenticeships; and remedial skill training with adult role models. The model was tested with 31 older adolescents in foster care and group homes in Baltimore County, Maryland. Compared to a group of 29 foster care youth not receiving independent living skills training, the test group showed significant improvement in the social functioning skills of independent living, employment, and social network. No differences were found in the psychosocial areas of self-image, interpersonal relationships, self-control, motivation, and expression. This outcome was expected because the emphasis of the program was on developing concrete skills rather than on resolving psychosocial issues. Recommendations for replication include: adapt the Project Stepping Out model by focusing on strengths and educating the community; work with foster parents; sensitize service providers to their own biases; provide continuing services targeted toward emancipation; and address psychosocial development. 49 references and 35 tables.

**Descriptors:**

foster care; independent living; independent living skills; demonstration programs; program evaluation; competency based training

**CD-08020**

Legal Rights of Children. //Family Law Series//.

Horowitz, R. M.; Davidson, H. A.

B

70 pp.

Copyright 1984

Publication Information:

Colorado Springs, Colo., Shepard's/McGraw-Hill

This 13-chapter book covers Federal and State laws dealing with children. It is designed to help lawyers gain a better understanding of the current status of children's law. An introduction reviews children's rights and notes attempts to define children's legal rights. An examination of children's economic interests discusses child support, enforcement of child support obligations, inheritance, illegitimate children, property, and taxes. Procedural rules, torts, contracts, and the child witness are considered in the context of the child litigant. Legal rights of adolescents are reviewed, with special note made of restrictions on liberty, emancipation, and status offenses. Public benefits programs for children and their families are discussed, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Supplemental Security Income, social security, medicaid, nutrition assistance programs, and housing assistance. The child's perspective in child custody disputes is explored, with attention directed to the maternal preference era, the best interests of the child rule, joint custody, the child's custodial preference, and counsel or guardian ad litem for the child. A discussion of protection of children from family maltreatment covers the evolution of the child protection proceeding, contemporary child abuse laws, and judicial intervention. Child labor laws, child sexual exploitation, and parental kidnapping are examined in the context of protection of children from exploitation. Children living apart from their parents -- as in foster care and with adoptive families -- is reviewed, along with the related issues of permanent planning for foster children and termination of parental rights. Legal issues related to children in institutional care, including preinstitutionalized due process rights, the least restrictive alternative principle, and rights within institutions, are noted. An examination of the juvenile justice system at children in trouble considers systemic issues, constitutional protection, pretrial concerns, trial procedure, transfer to adult court, dispositional options, and privacy of juvenile records. Discussions of education rights and education of handicapped children conclude the text. Highlighted issues include the right to attend school and its limitations; the use of corporal punishment; the right to free speech in school; and the rights to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures, from race discrimination, from sex discrimination, and from economic discrimination. Provisions of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act are highlighted. Chapter case notes; appendixes of cases, statutes, and codes; and an index.

**Descriptors:**

childrens rights; legal processes; legal rights; child custody; child abuse laws; juvenile courts; federal laws; state laws

## Newspapers Articles

**RE:** More information on foster care transition/emancipation

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There is a new test available that can be used to evaluate the self-sufficiency of foster youth. The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) was recently developed in Seattle, WA and comes in three versions for the age groups 8 to 11, 12 to 15, and 16 to 19. The test assesses a number of different skills from money management to problem-solving. It also concentrates on a youth's strengths and weaknesses in areas such as social relationships, emotional well being, pregnancy awareness, values, etc., as well as tracks essential items for independent living such as whether the youth has a photo ID.

Each exam is scored and returned with a summary of the skills that the youth still needs to develop before emancipation. The ACLSA has been field-tested with over 800 youths and care givers in all living circumstances.

## State dispatches: Washington state

Public Welfare  
Washington  
Winter 1998

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**Authors:** Anonymous  
**Volume:** 56  
**Issue:** 1  
**Start Page:** 39  
**ISSN:** 00333816  
**Subject Terms:** Tests  
Children & youth  
Caregivers  
Child welfare

**Abstract:**

A new test that captures the views of youth and their caregivers regarding young people's self-sufficiency is now available to child welfare organizations and educators.

**Full Text:**

Copyright American Public Welfare Association Winter 1998

How ready are Dick and Jane to face the world? Are they on schedule? A new test that captures the views of youth and their caregivers regarding the young people's self-sufficiency is now available to educators and child welfare organizations. The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) comes in three versions, for youth ages 8 to 11; 12 to 15; and 16 to 19. A complementary form is completed by their caregivers. ACLSA was developed by the Casey Family Program, a Seattle-based foundation that supports children in family foster care, and Dorothy Ansell, author of texts and curricula for independent living and the editor of Daily Living, a national newsletter. The Casey Family Program, which continues to underwrite most of the assessment's costs, has contracted with Bavendam Research Associates of Mercer Island to supply the forms and score them for users.

The ACLSA assesses such abilities as money management and vocational aptitudes and also measures intangible skills, such as decision-making and problem-solving. It focuses on a youth's strengths in such areas as social relationships, emotional well-being, money and household management, health and safety, pregnancy awareness, and values. A supplemental checklist tracks items important for self-sufficient living, such as whether a youth has a photo identification card.

Each form returned for scoring results in an ACLSA Individual Report, which presents a wide range of practical data in an easy-to-understand format. The report gives a numeric and graphic summary, and aggregate summaries are also available to help guide program development and evaluation. Teachers, parents, and other guardians can then see if Dick and Jane are prepared to climb on a school bus, go off to college, or knock on employers' doors. If they are not yet ready, the assessment reveals the skills that they need to develop.

The forms are available from Bavendam Research Associates at 3010 77th Avenue SE, Suite 204, Mercer Island, WA 98040. Packets of 25 cost \$150.00, which includes data processing by Bavendam Research and a multipage report that provides both graphic and numeric summaries comparing youths' perceptions of their competencies with caregivers' perceptions of the same competencies.

"We developed this assessment in response to the federal Independent Living Initiative of 1986 [P.L. 99-272], which requires all youths in out-of-home care to be assessed for life skill competencies by the age of 16 so that deficiencies can be identified and remedied before emancipation," says Peter Pecora, the Casey Family Program's manager of research services and an associate professor at the University of Washington's School of Social Work. "Here we are 11 years later, and many youths still leave foster care, residential treatment centers, or, indeed, high school at risk for unemployment, homelessness, and dependence on public assistance."

"The ACLSA has been field-tested with over 800 youths and caregivers across the country with great success," adds Kimberly Nolan, ACLSA project coordinator. "It is equally effective with youths in all living circumstances. If it proves as beneficial as we think, we should see a marked reduction in the number of youths unprepared for life in the year 2000 and beyond."

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**MEMORANDUM**

To: Nicole Rabner  
 From: Areej Hassan  
 Re: Summary of Foster Care & Homelessness report

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**The Relationship Between Foster Care and Homelessness--** cover story of Winter 1997  
*Public Welfare*

Goal of study: To determine whether or not people with a foster care history are over represented in the homeless population.

Sources of information:

- background histories of over 1000 homeless individuals
- survey data collected by homeless services around the country
- a series of case studies of homeless individuals who were once in foster care

All three of these sources resulted in consistent findings

Key results included:

- ✓✓
- there is indeed an over-representation of foster care youth in the homeless population (about 40% of the sample surveyed had been in foster care)
  - homeless people with a foster care history are more likely to have their own children in foster care-- foster care in homeless families may span generations.
  - people with a foster care history tend to become homeless at an earlier age than those without a history
  - people with a foster care history tend to remain homeless for a longer period of time than homeless individuals who had not been in foster care

This research does not indicate that foster care is a direct cause of homelessness, but rather that it is one of many factors that affect children. Surprisingly, the report did not include any recommendation to improve the transition process of foster youth. Instead the recommendations focused on family preservation and adoption.

# *Public Welfare*

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC WELFARE ASSOCIATION

WINTER 1997

## *Foster Care and Homelessness*



# *The Relationship Between Foster Care and Homelessness*

Research shows that children in foster care have a greater chance of becoming homeless adults.

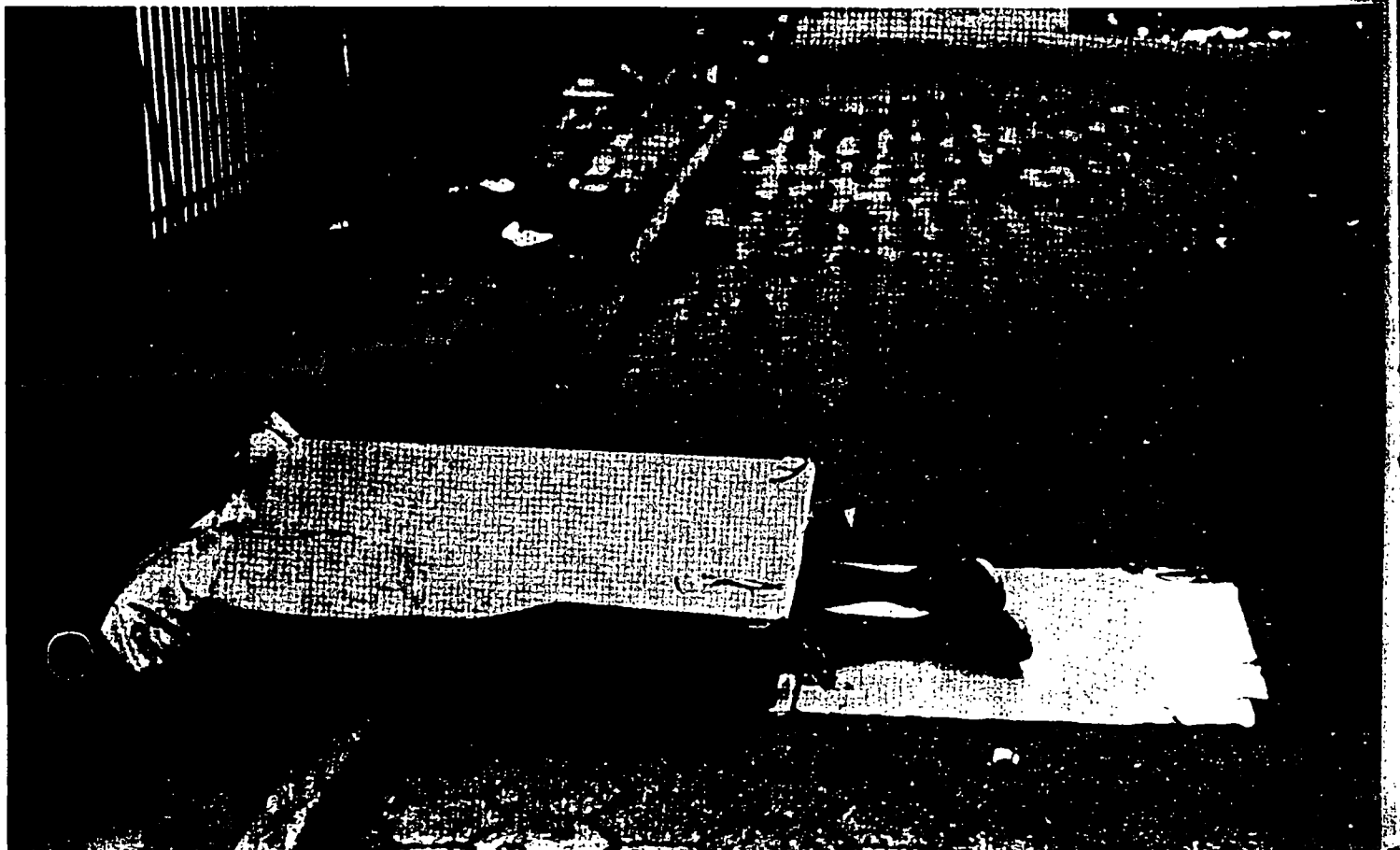
by Nan P. Roman and Phyllis B. Wolfe

*Editor's note: The paper that forms the basis for this article was first presented at the National Colloquium on Housing and Public Welfare, hosted by the American Public Welfare Association's Research and Demonstration Department. The September 1996 conference in Alexandria, Virginia, was part of a study focusing on housing and foster care. The colloquium was funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services.*

*The cover photograph and the photographs accompanying this article were first published in Homeless in America (Acropolis Books). Jointly produced by the National Mental Health Association and Families for the Homeless, a nonpartisan partnership of congressional, administration, and media families, the book seeks to raise public attention toward homelessness across the United States. Copies of the book and the 12-minute video based on the book are available from the National Mental Health Association, 1021 Prince Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2971.*

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ABRAHAM MENAS



I never felt like I was loved —  
that anybody really cared.  
I felt like the black sheep of the family.

Latasha  
Birmingham, Alabama

**I**n the late 1980s, the National Alliance To End Homelessness began to hear from service providers around the country that a seemingly disproportionate number of homeless people had a foster care history. Although their conclusions were based largely on anecdotal information, providers reported that many of the people who were becoming homeless as adults had been in foster care as children, often spending years in a mixture of official foster care placements and other, less formal, "placements" with relatives and friends. At the time, the alliance was involved in a national project on the prevention of homelessness. The alliance was motivated to pursue the foster care issue because it believed that if foster care and homelessness were somehow connected, interventions in the foster care system might help to prevent homelessness.

As the alliance began to investigate, it discovered that both foster care placements and homelessness increased in the United States during the 1980s. It also found some research on individual homeless programs, and on specific subpopulations of the homeless population, that did indeed indicate that people with a foster care history were overrepresented among the homeless people surveyed. Moreover, there was evidence that homeless people with a foster care history were more likely than other homeless people to have their own children in foster care.

Based on these preliminary findings, the alliance decided to undertake a modest research project to examine the relationship between foster care and homelessness on a national level and across all subpopulations of people who are homeless. The research was funded by the Freddie Mac Foundation. The full findings, which are summarized in this article, are contained in *Web of Failure: The Relationship Between Foster Care and Homelessness* and its appendix, published by the alliance.

## The Complex Nature of Homelessness

**T**his article examines the interrelationship between foster care and homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Its purpose is to establish whether or not people with a foster care history are overrepresented in the homeless population.

To properly understand any relationship between homelessness and foster care, one must first understand the complex nature of homelessness. Homeless people are the poorest of our nation's poor, and as such reflect the face of poverty in America. They are families, primarily with one parent, but often with two. They are people who work but do not earn enough to pay for housing. They are unemployed people—those looking for work and those, young and old, who have never worked. And they are women and children escaping

from domestic violence.

The alliance estimates that on any given night, over 730,000 Americans are homeless. Over the course of a year, between 1.3 million and 2 million Americans are homeless. This number includes the people who live on the streets, in emergency or transitional shelters, and in cars or abandoned buildings. It does not include the people housed in institutions, the millions of people who are doubled up with family or friends, or the millions more who are precariously housed, paying such a large percentage of their incomes for rent that any unforeseen medical expense or temporary job loss could dislodge them. However, all of these individuals make up the pool from which people cycle in and out of homelessness.

The homeless population exhibits a wide variety of characteristics. Some homeless people have mental illnesses or substance abuse illnesses, whereas others are handicapped. Some have a criminal justice history; others are escaping from violent domestic situations. Most are men, and minorities tend to be overrepresented in the population. It is important to emphasize that, although these are some of the characteristics of homeless people, they are not the causes of homelessness. The causes can be found in an interrelated set of socioeconomic factors that have become prominent over the past two decades. These factors include a lack of affordable housing, decreasing incomes for poor families, changing health care issues and treatment availability, and the increasing instability of families.

The supply of low-income housing has declined over the past 20 years. In 1970, there were twice as many low-cost units available as there were low-income households. By 1983 these numbers had been reversed, and there were two households competing for every available unit. Currently, some 4 million households receive federal housing assistance because they cannot afford to pay for housing without it; almost 10 million households are eligible for such assistance but do not receive it because of lack of funding availability.

Compounding the problems caused by a lack of affordable housing, neither wages nor benefits have kept pace with inflation over the past 20 years. In 1992, nearly 37 million Americans were poor, up 5 million from 1989. One of every five Americans who worked full-time earned a wage below the poverty level for a family of four, a 50 percent increase from 1979. For those reliant upon public assistance, the picture was no better. In 1992, the average combined value of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and food stamps for a family of four was approximately 66 percent of the official poverty level. Between 1970 and 1992, AFDC benefits dropped in value by approximately 46 percent.

The public sector's failure to address the increasingly important roles that drugs, disabilities, and chronic health problems play in the lives of poor people has also contributed to a greater vulnerability to homelessness. While the incidences of alcoholism, substance abuse illnesses, and other illnesses (HIV, AIDS, and tuberculo-

*Taking into consideration the data from all sources, the research showed that there is indeed an overrepresentation of people with a foster care history in the homeless population.*

sis) are on the rise, treatment has in many cases become less available or prohibitively expensive.

The number of single-parent families has increased dramatically in recent years. In 1970, single-parent families accounted for 14 percent of all families; by 1992 this had risen to 22 percent. In 1991, female-headed households accounted for 39 percent of the poor population of the nation. Nearly half of all African American children and over two-fifths of Hispanic children live in such households. As a result of economic and social changes, poor families often experience severe stress. Parental stress often leads to child abuse and neglect, the reports of which have almost tripled since 1980. Family stress can also result in spousal abuse and divorce. Children who are abused or neglected, whose parents become homeless, or whose families dissolve often become involved in the foster care system. Lack of housing, low incomes, lack of services, and increasing family instability, along with other factors, have contributed to the instability of individuals and households and, eventually, to their homelessness. Foster care, and the circumstances that lead up to it, are part of this complex web of structural factors that can result in homelessness.

## Research and Results

In examining the connection between foster care and homelessness, the project used four sources of data: (1) existing research and reports investigating the foster care histories of homeless people; (2) data on foster care histories gleaned from the intake or case management forms of organizations that ascertain clients' foster care histories; (3) a survey questionnaire administered, via homeless service and housing organizations, to a sample of homeless individuals; and (4) a series of case studies of homeless and formerly homeless people who had foster care histories. The alliance chose to utilize diverse sources of information so as not to miss any critical point or overemphasize any finding.

Taking into consideration the data from all sources, the research showed that there is indeed an overrepresentation of people with a foster care history in the homeless population. The research also demonstrated that childhood placement in foster care can correlate with a substantial increase in the length of a person's homeless experience and that people who are homeless frequently have had multiple placements as children, both in foster care and in the homes of families and friends (unofficial placements). The alliance also discovered that homeless people with a foster care history are more likely than other people to have their own children in foster care. In addition to these findings, the research

revealed some demographic factors related to homelessness and foster care. For example, people with a foster care history tend to become homeless at an earlier age than people without a foster care history, and homeless people who are African American or Hispanic are less likely to have a foster care history than those who are Native American, Caucasian, or of mixed race.

These are the primary findings of the study, with data compiled from all sources. Following is more specific information obtained from each source, with results organized according to source.

## Review of Existing Data

As mentioned above, the alliance examined studies and reports chronicling the relationship between homelessness and foster care. Of the existing research the alliance reviewed, none was comprehensive (both national in scope and focused on a full spectrum of homeless subpopulations, including veterans, families, single people, African Americans, and Caucasians). However, there were a number of more restricted studies, using nonrepresentative samples, that looked at the relationship between foster care and homelessness, and an examination of this research revealed some important trends.

Several of the studies support the finding that there is an overrepresentation of people with a foster care history in the homeless population. For example, Piliavin et al. found that of 331 homeless adults in Minnesota, 38.6 percent reported childhood placement in foster care, as opposed to 2 percent of the general population.<sup>2</sup> Susser et al. found that of 223 men entering the New York City shelter system for the first time, 23 percent reported being placed in "foster care, group homes, [or] other special residences."<sup>3</sup> And a study by Knickman and Weitzman of 1,228 homeless New York City families found that 10 percent of the heads of households had been placed in foster care homes as children, while an additional 10 percent had lived in a group home or institution.<sup>4</sup>

A key New York City study found that foster care among homeless families may span generations.<sup>5</sup> The study showed that 27 percent of homeless parents with a foster care history had children in foster care versus 15 percent of homeless parents with no such history. Thus, concluded the researchers, "homeless parents who had grown up in substitute care were almost twice as likely as parents with no such history to see their own children placed into the [foster care] system."

Other studies examined various trends among subpopulations of homeless adults. Owen et al. found that in Minnesota, rural or urban residence made little differ-

## *Accustomed to being "wards of the state," researchers said, children in foster care may have difficulty making the transition from dependence to independence.*

ence in the likelihood that a homeless person would have experienced foster care.<sup>6</sup> Examining several types of rural facilities for homeless people, the Minnesota research found that 20 percent of the people in transitional housing, 20 percent of the women in battered-women's shelters, and 13 percent of people in emergency shelters had been in foster care as children. In urban Minnesota, the numbers were 21 percent in transitional housing, nearly 22 percent in the battered women's shelters, and 26 percent in emergency shelters.

Homeless women were found to be more likely to have experienced foster care (17 percent) than men (10 percent) in a study by Winkleby et al. of 1,400 homeless people in northern California.<sup>7</sup> Among men, Davis and Winkleby examined the issue in light of race and ethnic background.<sup>8</sup> They found that homeless Caucasian men were most likely to have experienced foster care (13 percent), followed by native-born Hispanic men (10 percent) and African American men (7 percent). Winkleby and Fleshin found that 12 percent of homeless veterans had a foster care history.<sup>9</sup> Rosenheck and Fontana also found that foster care had a "significant direct relationship to homelessness" among veterans.<sup>10</sup> Homeless youth are likely to have been in foster care at some time in their lives as well, according to a Chicago study in which 45 percent of the homeless youth interviewed reported that they had been wards of the Department of Child and Family Services.<sup>11</sup>

Physical and mental health problems also interact in the homelessness-and-foster-care equation. Homeless people with physical or mental health problems seem to have higher rates of childhood foster care placement than those without such problems. Winkleby and White found that homeless adults who already had substance abuse illnesses, physical health problems, or a history of psychiatric hospitalization when they became homeless were more likely to have been in foster care (13.3 percent) than those not reporting such disorders (8.2 percent).<sup>12</sup> Susser et al. found that for homeless people with a history of psychiatric treatment, 15 percent had been in foster care and an additional 10 percent had been in group homes.<sup>13</sup>

Some research demonstrates that childhood placement in foster care affects the nature of adult homelessness. For example, Piliavin et al. found that childhood placement in foster care substantially increased the length of a person's homeless experience.<sup>14</sup>

Many of these reports examine or speculate on what could cause the connection between foster care and homelessness. A large number point out that the foster care system can fail to deal adequately with problems caused by sexual abuse, physical abuse, or troubled or

dysfunctional families—that is to say, with the very issues that often lead to foster care placements in the first place. Similarly, many found that the foster care system can neglect to address adequately children's mental or physical health problems and that, compounding the children's problems, caregivers assigned by the foster care system can themselves be abusive.

Other researchers posited that multiple placements can preclude the development of the nurturing bonds that have been shown to be critical to normal personal development and that children in foster care may be unable to establish support networks that carry over into adulthood. The foster care system can also fail to help children achieve educational and training goals, which can lead to depressed salaries and poverty (precursors of homelessness) in adulthood.

Recognizing that institutionalization can be established as a normal lifestyle for children in the foster care system, other researchers suggested that foster care may not adequately prepare children for emancipation. Accustomed to being "wards of the state," researchers said, children in foster care may have difficulty making the transition from dependence to independence.

### **Data Collected from Service and Housing Providers**

**T**he alliance collected data from 21 homeless service organizations, located in every region of the country. Each organization provided client data, compiled from case files, for one winter week and one summer week in 1994. Requested information included the total number of homeless people served, how many people had a foster care history, and how many of both groups had children in foster care. Data were received on 1,134 individuals.

The information garnered from this part of the study supports the results of existing research. Of the homeless individuals for whom data were obtained, 36.2 percent had a foster care history. Of the parents with a foster care history, 77 percent had at least one child who had been or currently was in foster care; in comparison, 27 percent of the parents without a foster care history had at least one child who had been or currently was in foster care.

### **Data from Homeless Individuals**

**F**orty homeless service and housing providers worked with the alliance to distribute survey questionnaires to their clients and tenants. The questionnaires were self-administered and were designed to ascertain individuals' foster care his-

## *Underscoring the cyclical nature of foster care that emerged from this study, the case studies indicated that people who were in foster care as children may find their own children placed in foster care.*

tories, their children's foster care histories, and demographic information. The alliance received 1,209 completed survey questionnaires.

Of those surveyed, 9 percent reported having lived in a foster care or group home, whereas 43 percent reported having lived outside of their home when they were children.<sup>15</sup> As with the data from the service and housing providers, the data from the self-administered questionnaires showed that a significant number of people with a foster care history had their own children in foster care: 16 percent of the respondents who were parents with a foster care history had their children in foster care or a group home versus 7 percent of those who did not have a foster care history.

Demographically, survey questionnaires demonstrated that 23 percent of mixed-race homeless people reported a foster care history versus 13 percent of Native American homeless people, 12 percent of Caucasian homeless people, 8 percent of African American homeless people, and 5.3 percent of Hispanic homeless people. Also, 13 percent of female homeless respondents reported a foster care or group home history versus 7 percent of male respondents.

### Case Studies

**T**en case studies were conducted around the country.<sup>16</sup> All were arranged by service or housing provider organizations. The case studies were conducted to discover, among other things, the process by which someone becomes homeless, the length of time between foster care emancipation and homelessness, and any relationship among mental illness, alcohol and other substance abuse illnesses, and foster care placement and homelessness. The case studies showed many things that empirical data did not about how foster care fits into the homeless experience.

As mentioned briefly above, case studies found that the foster care system often fails to provide children with any type of therapy to help them address the problems that brought them into the system in the first place. These problems include sexual and physical abuse, family dissolution, parents' alcohol and substance abuse, and being abandoned or orphaned, as well as their own behavioral problems. Case studies found that foster care placements can themselves be abusive situations: several of the respondents were sexually and physically abused in their foster families. Moving children from placement to placement seems to exacerbate the inability of the foster care system to provide them with consistent treatment for their problems or illnesses.

The case studies also pointed out that alcohol and substance abuse illnesses frequently interact with foster care

and homelessness. Several respondents described using alcohol and drugs to escape their problems. One described substance abuse as another way of running away from his problems.

Children in foster care, many of whom experience multiple placements (both official and unofficial), may fail to learn the nature of stable family life. Some respondents pointed out that the lesson of multiple placements is that the way to deal with problems is to leave and go somewhere new. Foster care, therefore, may not prepare children for successful and stable independent living. This conclusion is supported by the fact that although people who are emancipated from foster care often manage to hold things together for a while, many eventually find themselves unprepared to maintain residential stability. Foster care can fail to help people develop networks of support that they can use when they fall upon hard times as adults.

Psychologically, case studies point out that children recognize the difference between their parents, who presumably take care of them because they are members of their own family, and foster parents, who are paid to take care of them. They may be less likely to experience unconditional love and acceptance, from either their birth parents or their foster care parents, which can result in feelings of insecurity, both as children and as adults.

Once again underscoring the cyclical nature of foster care that emerged from this study, the case studies indicated that people who were in foster care as children may find their own children placed in foster care or in unofficial out-of-home placements. One homeless woman revealed that her own brief but positive experience with foster care had led her to place her own children in foster care until she "got back on her feet."

### Summary

**A**ll the sources of data consulted by the alliance support the primary finding that people with a foster care history are overrepresented in the homeless population. Numerous sources, including the data collected from individual homeless people, indicate that homeless people with a foster care history are more likely than other homeless people to have their own children in foster care. There are also strong indications that unofficial placements with relatives and friends often supplement official placements, and that the two together can lead to a series of multiple placements which can be very disruptive to a child's development.

The sources also reveal some interesting demographic factors. Among homeless people, women are more

## *To eliminate any contribution foster care may make to homelessness, the child welfare system must be strengthened.*

likely than men to have a foster care history, and Caucasians are more likely than Hispanics or African Americans to have been in foster care as children. Some subpopulations of the homeless population, including youth and veterans, also tend to have a disproportionate number of foster care histories.

The research does not indicate that foster care itself causes homelessness. Rather, it suggests that foster care is one element in a complex web of familial, social, and institutional failures that affects some children. All indications are that this web of failures occurs more often for poor children. By the time these children become adults, many are unable to establish independent households or maintain residential stability. Compounding the problem, they have fewer economic and social supports on which to fall back.

### Recommendations

**I**t is clear from this study that what happens to children has a lifelong impact on them. When you see homeless adults, it is quite possible that they are homeless because of people and systems that failed them as children. To eliminate any contribution foster care may make to homelessness, the child welfare system must be strengthened. First, a better job must be done of supporting and strengthening families (particularly those in crisis) in order to keep children out of the foster care system. Extraordinary steps should be taken to avoid placing children in foster care solely because of their parents' homelessness. In fact, based on the findings of this study, a special emphasis should be placed on meeting the service and housing needs of homeless parents with a foster care history in order to promote their stability and help ensure that a second generation of children will not be placed in foster care.

If it is necessary for children to enter the foster care system, extraordinary measures should be taken to move them as quickly as possible into a permanent living situation (family reunification or adoption), taking all steps necessary to avoid multiple placements. For those children who do experience multiple placements, a directed effort should be made to help them gain the skills and other resources necessary to move to successful independence.

The ability to implement these recommendations will be significantly affected by recent changes in the ways in which assistance is provided to poor families. Reductions and changes in support programs, such as welfare, social security, food stamps, and housing assistance, may tend to weaken rather than strengthen families. Income assistance, considered in the past to be an important method of strengthening and stabilizing families,



SIBYLLA HERBRICH

will no longer be available as an entitlement. With increasing stresses on poor families, the demands on the foster care system—the only remaining “entitlement” in the support system for children—may increase.

On December 14, 1996, President Clinton ordered the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to prepare a set of recommendations on how to reduce the time that children spend in foster care and double, by the year 2002, the number of foster care children who are adopted. Such efforts, if successful, will be critical not only to ensure the health and happiness of children in foster care but also, given the findings of this study, to prevent homelessness. **PW**

*Nan P. Roman is the vice president for policy and programs at the National Alliance To End Homelessness. Phyllis B. Wolfe is the president of Spearmint, Inc., and currently acts as a consultant to the National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy.*

## MEMORANDUM

To: Nicole

From: Areej

Re: Foster Care: Transition/Emancipation

Date: July 20, 1998

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a brief summary of new developments regarding foster care emancipation.

★ San Diego, California: Officials have earmarked federal job-training funds specifically to help foster children develop job skills and make a successful transition from foster care to the working world. In March, the San Diego Workforce Partnership allocated \$850,000 to target a minimum of 300 foster children for summer job programs, vocational training, and mentorship programs. All of these programs will place foster teens in a paying job or internship. Teens are already offered classes in independent living skills such as balancing a checkbook, renting an apartment, and applying for college financial aid, but until now have only been offered limited assistance in job training and employment. Currently officials are also seeking outside funding to provide "after-care" services to former foster children. A report will be issued with more information in September.

Los Angeles, California: In June, more than 100 high school seniors (who grew up in foster care) graduated from the Independent Living Program of the Department of Children and Family Services. All of the 124 graduates have been accepted at state and national colleges for the fall semester. Currently, L.A. has a program in which they provide subsidized housing, job training, and some employment to kids leaving the foster care system.

Orange County, California: In February, the Orange County Junior League made a pitch to

all area business leaders to hire neglected and abandoned foster youth. Many of the league members are part of the "On My Own Business Mentor Program" and are recruiting others to join and provide part-time jobs in which the foster youth can gain work experience and skills. This is an ongoing campaign.

Texas: Currently, Texas has two programs to help ex-foster kids. One gives them free tuition (not including room and board) at public universities and colleges in the state. The second program called Preparation for Adult Living, provides classes to the older foster children on basic life skills. However, statistics show that fewer than one-third of the foster kids earn high school diplomas by age 18. Officials are now attempting to obtain state funding and support from other state agencies, nonprofit groups, and religious organizations to offer the following initiatives:

- a toll-free hot line that former foster kids could call for advice and encouragement
- "adoption" by local churches or volunteer groups to help feel less alone
- supervised transitional housing for 18-22 year olds
- reduced-rate room and board at state colleges and universities
- extended health coverage until age 22

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: SOS Children's Village of Milwaukee has been an ongoing project for the last seven years. The village will include clusters of single-family homes for 60 abused and neglected foster children who are unlikely to be adopted or reunited with their parents. Currently coordinators of the Village are searching for a site, and will then begin a \$5 million campaign to pay for the cost of the building and the initial operating costs. They announced in May, plans to open their doors in 1999.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Plans are underway to construct a cluster of 40 homes to house foster care children including an "academic village" to house 300 youths, ages 15 to 18, and prepare them for life after the foster care system. If successful, it will be the largest private effort to care for foster kids.

# Into Adulthood's Deep End

## For Ex-Foster Children, Transition Is Difficult

By BARBARA VOBEJDA  
Washington Post Staff Writer

A1

CINCINNATI—Seventeen-year-old Carrie Lucas has spent the past two years in the embrace of the state. Her mother was mentally ill, her father in jail, and Ohio's child protection officials considered it their business to place Carrie in a safe foster home.

Now she's about to be dropped. At the toll of her 18th birthday next spring, Carrie will be released from the state's child protection system. The federal and state bureaucracies that fashioned themselves into a substitute family will declare themselves done.

And like 20,000 other young people across the country each year, Carrie will be left to pay her own rent, fill her own refrigerator, manage her own budget. In essence, she will be expected to become her own parent.

"It's sort of scary to think I have to do this on my own," Carrie said. "I don't want to think about it too much."

If ever there was proof that, for many children, the foster care system does not offer a stable, surrogate family, it comes at the point they turn 18. The day the money stops, the care stops too.

See CHILDREN, A6, Col. 1

### CHILDREN, From A1

While a minority of teenagers stay on for some time with their foster families, most grow up knowing exactly when their funding will end. They accept that they will be forced to leave on or near that birthday, knowing they'll be replaced by a younger child, who comes with money attached. If the foster families had wanted to make a permanent commitment to one child, experts say, they would have adopted. Most don't.

"We can't dump them fast enough at 18," said Robin Nixon, director of youth services at the Child Welfare League of America, referring to the federal-state system that has responsibility for more than 500,000 children, most of them abused or neglected by their parents. "But kids in the average community are 25 and 26 years old before they're expected to live alone."

It is this large but mostly forgotten population of America's disadvantaged that social researchers now believe makes up a significant component of the nation's homeless population: One study found four of 10 of the nation's homeless are former foster children. Experts on homelessness say it is predictable—that young people isolated from their families, often suffering from emotional problems, many of them former runaways, would end up in an emergency shelter. While some of these teenagers can go to grandparents or siblings for help, most are on their own.

The most recent study on the fate of foster children, conducted by University of Wisconsin researcher Mark Courtney, found that 12 to 18 months after they left foster care, just half were employed, one-third were receiving public assistance, one-fifth of the girls had given birth and more than one-quarter of the boys had been incarcerated.

Most of the teenagers had less than \$250 in savings when they went out on their own.

Yet while other subgroups among the disenfranchised—the mentally ill, victims of domestic violence, welfare workers—have their vocal advocates in policy debates, there is little public attention focused on how to keep foster children from migrating from their bureaucratic family to the streets.

For Carrie Lucas, the journey to independence has already begun. It is both tangible and psychological. She is a 17-year-old constantly aware of a clock ticking: Nine more months of financial help. That's it. One minute she's sure she can handle it. The next, she's in a panic about what lies ahead.

The state will keep paying an agency more than \$1,000 a month to help her until her 18th birthday. But after that, she can make no mistakes. Blow her rent money on a car, she may be sleeping in that car. Anger her landlord, she could be looking for a place to sleep. The same mistakes other kids make, but nobody to bail her out.

A month ago, she moved into a tiny attic apartment by herself. It is stifling, with no air conditioner, and the stairway leading up smells of cat urine. But she chose it because she loved the bathtub—an antique with claw feet and flowers painted on the side.

Carrie had trouble sleeping when she first moved in, frightened of the nighttime sounds echoing around her old building. But now she's more relaxed, cuddled on the living room carpet beside her worn, thrift store couch, or in her narrow bedroom, surrounded by stuffed toys.

When Carrie was 4, her grandmother took her in because Carrie's mother would stay away from home for long periods of time, leaving Carrie and her three siblings to care for themselves. Carrie grew up cooking for herself, washing her own clothes.

"I think my mother is mentally

insane," Carrie said. "She was never reliable, always working, or out with whoever."

But Carrie's grandmother died of cancer two years ago, and the child protection system took over. Carrie moved in with a foster mother, a woman in her late sixties who had raised 10 children of her own. "Her message was, 'I'm here for you,'" Carrie said, "but there was distance between us."

Under the state's policy, her foster mother received more than \$400 a month to keep Carrie, but that ended when Carrie asked to move out. She had heard of a program that would help her move into her own apartment, and her foster care money would go toward rent and utilities. So she left her foster mother's home and moved into her apartment. And since then, neither has picked up the phone to stay in touch.

In fact, Carrie says she's lucky. She lives in one of the few places around the country—Hamilton County, Ohio—where the child protection system places people as young as 16 in apartments to prepare them to live on their own. The program pays rent and sets up a savings account with a \$60 weekly stipend—until she's 18.

Carrie likes living by herself. But already, her days play out with the rhythms of an adult, not a girl of 17.

This summer, she gets herself up at 6 each morning, eats a bowl of cereal and leaves her apartment by 7, catching a bus to work as an intern at a downtown bank, where she spends her days checking account numbers and ATM receipts. At 5 p.m., she heads home and fixes her own dinner. She is in bed by 9 p.m. On the weekends, she works a second job at a restaurant.

For now, she has \$594 in savings, and in the fall, she'll return to finish her senior year in high school. The county and the judge overseeing her case could extend her funding long enough to help her get her high school diploma. But even if that happens, she'll be cut loose in less than a year.

She worries most about how she will pay her \$240 monthly rent, or if she'll be able to afford college.

"I pray I can go to college," she said. "I'm going to try everything in my power to get a scholarship."

Some of the half-million children in the child protection system are allowed to stay with their biological families. But for those who are taken out of their homes, a combination of federal and state funds provides payments—averaging \$431 a month for 16-year-olds—to foster families. The government may pay much more for group homes or residential treatment facilities, where many foster teens reside.

In 1986, after research notice the link between and homelessness, Congress by establishing an "independent program" for states to pare foster children for life. States can extend the program to older teens, which is common those with disabilities.

While states have established these programs, many are cursory occasional weekend seminars housekeeping and budgeting, for ample. And Courtney's study in Wisconsin found that one out of 10 teenagers had received no help preparing for independence before they left the system.

In a handful of jurisdictions, however, welfare offices have gone great lengths to ease this passage.

Los Angeles County, where almost 800 young people leave foster care each year, has pulled together a package of subsidized housing, training and some entry-level employment to help those moving out of the system.

And in Hamilton County, Ohio, where Carrie lives, dozens of teenagers, some as young as 16, are living in apartments as a transition to independence.

"Independent living without h

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The Washington Post

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TUESDAY, JULY 21, 1998

ance is like driver's education out the car," said Mark who runs an independent program for Lighthouse Youth Services, a nonprofit agency contracted by Hamilton County to put young people in apartments.

"You learn to budget food money when you go a day without food. You learn to budget utilities when you come home to a dark apartment," he said.

When young people come into his program, having been referred by county social workers or juvenile judges, they are matched with an adult on Kroner's staff who helps them find an apartment, shops with them for furniture and helps them move. The social worker stops by weekly, and the agency becomes the newest surrogate family.

But this family is dedicated to a daunting goal: sending a child, often one with emotional difficulties, out into the world.

It is not uncommon for Kroner to get a call saying one of his teenagers been arrested. He has had kids knocking on a landlord's door asking for money just a week after moving in. Some have been kicked out of the program for failing to follow the

Despite the problems, studies have found that placing kids in their own apartments is probably the most effective way to help them become independent.

One of Kroner's newest "clients," as the former foster children are called, is 16-year-old Ricky Bryant, who has dropped out of high school.

He lives in a second-floor, two-room apartment, where he sleeps on the living room floor. The dishes are carefully soaking in soapy water, and the refrigerator is virtually empty.

In just over a month of living on his own, it has become clear to Ricky that some things are beyond him: "My laundry. I cannot afford to do it. And keeping groceries in my house," he said. "I buy it and it's gone."

He says this on a Wednesday, five days until he gets his paycheck from Wendy's, where he works nights. He cereal in the cupboard, but no milk to pour on it. A loaf of bread, but nothing to put between the slices. He literally, one penny in cash.

When Kroner hears this, he gives Ricky a dollar and tells him to take the bus to the agency office and someone there will give him an advance on his weekly \$60 stipend.

"I was afraid to ask," Ricky said. "I don't want to aggravate nobody."

Ricky landed here after years in the child welfare system, where he lived in 12 to 15 places, he estimates.

"My mom is the type who is a bar hopper," he said. "She was never home. She left us kids wherever." He was often home alone when he was just 7 and 8 years old. When his mother brought home a new boyfriend, and Ricky saw him abusing her, he left to live with his dad.

But that didn't work out either, "because I was a 'hood rat.'" And child protection workers moved Ricky to his first foster home. That began a long and sad list of fighting, running away, ending up in juvenile detention, until he was finally allowed this spring to return to his father.

That was the home Ricky had wished for all the years he was in foster care, he said. But three months later, in May, his father died of pulmonary disease.

Once again, a caseworker was ready to put him with a foster family, but Ricky wanted no more.

"I've never had a mother-father type deal in my life, so I wouldn't be ready for it," he said.

The next step for Ricky was his own apartment.

Last week, he sat huddled over a spiral notebook, the kind most kids his age would use for geography or math. He is no longer in any math classes, but the notebook is perfect for managing his money.

He budgets \$144 for two weeks of groceries, \$6 for "hygiene," \$50 for "recreation," \$20 for miscellaneous and \$20 to pay back a debt. But when he totals up his expenses, he compares it with the paycheck he expects to get and realizes he's \$3 short. He decides he will take it out of groceries.

He has written all this out carefully, underscoring the totals in pink highlighter.

Ricky has two years before his safety net is folded up.

He hopes he'll get a high school equivalency degree and a better job. In the meantime, he is learning to navigate the adult world. He lost his electricity in the middle of the night recently when he plugged in an old air conditioner he had found in the basement. But when he called the power company and heard they weren't going to send over any help right away, he told them he was blind. That got them over.

But for every victory, he discovers another trap. He is out of money because he blew a bundle on a Fourth of July cookout. He and his friends bought food and cases of soda pop and cigarettes, and that sent him way over budget.

"It was the first night of really enjoying myself," he said. It was Independence Day.

## Struggling in the Adult World

*Children leaving foster care at age 18, when federal and state funding ends, face a difficult future. Many suffer from emotional problems and are without financial help from relatives, making them vulnerable to homelessness and other problems. One study found that nearly four in 10 of the homeless population are former foster children.*

### 12 to 18 months after leaving foster care system

|                     |                                      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Average weekly wage | \$210 for males<br>\$157 for females |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|

|                 |                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physical Injury | 26% of the males had been beaten or otherwise seriously injured.<br>15% of the females had been beaten.<br>10% of the females had been raped. |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

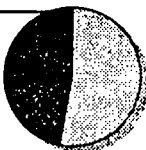
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| Incarceration | 27% of the males had been incarcerated.<br>10% of the females had been incarcerated. |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|       |                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Other | 33% were receiving some public assistance.<br>19% of the females had given birth to children.<br>37% had not finished high school.<br>50% were unemployed. |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Mental health treatment

#### Before leaving foster care:

47 percent were receiving some kind of counseling or medication for mental health problems



#### After leaving foster care:

21 percent were receiving treatment, although there was no reduction in mental problems



SOURCE: Mark Courtney, Irving Piliavin, School of Social Work, University of Wisconsin

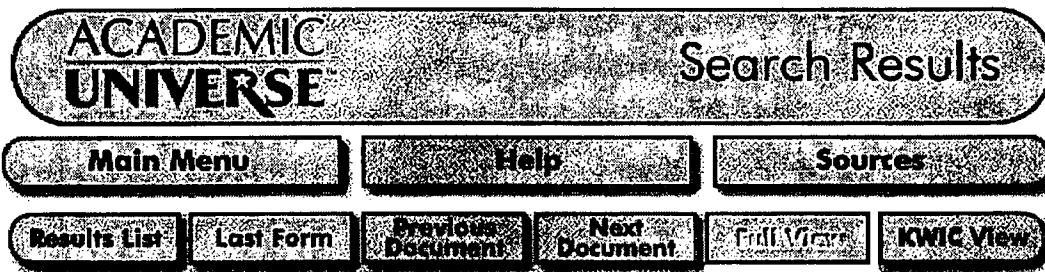
The Washington Post

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THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

February 13, 1998 Friday MORNING EDITION

**SECTION:** METRO; Pg. B04

**LENGTH:** 214 words

**HEADLINE:** Business leaders asked to hire youths leaving **foster care**;  
**BUSINESS:** The Junior League makes the pitch in hopes of preventing homelessness.

**BYLINE:** CAROL HUMPHREYS, The Orange County Register

**BODY:**

Orange County business leaders are being asked to hire neglected and abandoned youths who, at age 18, are leaving **foster care** and will be on their own.

Members of The Junior League made a plea to business leaders at breakfast Thursday at the Santa Ana Country Club. "We want to get the word out to all Orange County businesses," says league member Susan Barrett, chairwoman of the On My Own Business Mentor Program.

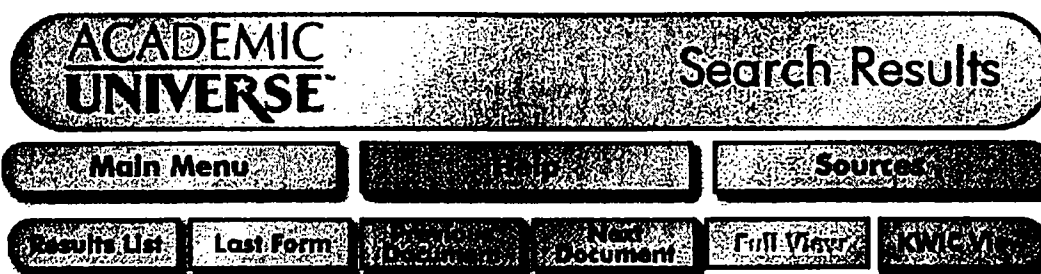
About 30-50 percent of the youths leaving foster care become homeless because they lack job skills, she says.

Nearly 600 young people ages 16-23 need part-time jobs to provide them with work experience and skills, said John Hagestad, foundation president.

"It doesn't cost much for a business to join the program, and the rewards are so overwhelming," said R. David Threshie, publisher of The Orange County Register, which underwrote the breakfast and participates in the program.

In addition to job opportunities, business mentors also are needed at work sites to provide guidance and support for the youth, said Gene Howard, executive director of the foundation. "The mentor provides the youth with support, guidance, role-modeling and assistance toward career vision and goal planning. "

For more information, call (714) 741-9376.



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March 17, 1998, Tuesday

**SECTION:** LOCAL; Ed. 7,8,1,6,2,3,4,5; Pg. B-1

**LENGTH:** 591 words

**HEADLINE:** Plan aims to help foster kids in coping as adults

**BYLINE:** Karen Kucher; STAFF WRITER

**BODY:**

When you are in **foster care**, your 18th birthday can be an ominous date.

Unless you are still in high school, that is when the system considers you an adult and puts you out on your own. It happens to more than 300 teens each year.

But often these teen-agers are left to fend for themselves with few skills, little education and no one around to lend them a hand.

Officials hope they can change that by earmarking federal job-training funds specifically to assist foster children in developing job skills and preparing for the working world.

"Right now, the best I can determine, when they turn 18 or when they graduate from high school, they are pretty much on their own," said county Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox, who has led efforts to revamp the county's foster care system. "I don't think there has been very much follow-up.

"What we want to do is provide the support that these young people need in order to not only make the transition from foster care but make sure they have a fighting chance to be able to go out and get a good job."

Last year, only 51 percent of the foster children who left the system because of age had earned a high school diploma or equivalency, compared with the 85 percent of students who complete high school countywide.

In recent weeks, the San Diego Workforce Partnership has allocated \$850,000 to target at least 300 foster children for summer hire-a-youth programs, vocational training and mentorship programs. In both programs, teens will be placed in paying internships or jobs.

Today, Cox will ask his colleagues to support linking existing foster-care programs with the vocational training and mentorship programs funded by the Workforce Partnership.

"Our job is to focus our dollars on the kids who need it most," said Larry Fitch, president of the Workforce Partnership, which administers federal job-training funds. "Foster kids are by nature economically disadvantaged. These are the kids who are most at risk for not making it."

Teens in foster care already are offered classes in independent living skills. There they learn such real-life skills as balancing a checkbook, renting an apartment and applying for college financial-aid or vocational programs. But the classes offer only limited employment assistance and job-readiness training.

Many teens enrolled in the programs, particularly those nearing the end of foster care, wanted more individual employment help than the program offered.

"Once they leave the system, they are on their own and they need to be able to have some education and training about how to meet those things that are going to be facing them," said Dawn Johnson, who oversees the program for the YMCA.

Few resources are available for former foster children. If they lose their jobs or are evicted from of an apartment, many do not have the option of going back home to live with their parents.

"Some of them do wind up couch-hopping," said social worker Nina Morgan, who works with teen-agers in the system. "They move a lot from place to place. They live with friends."

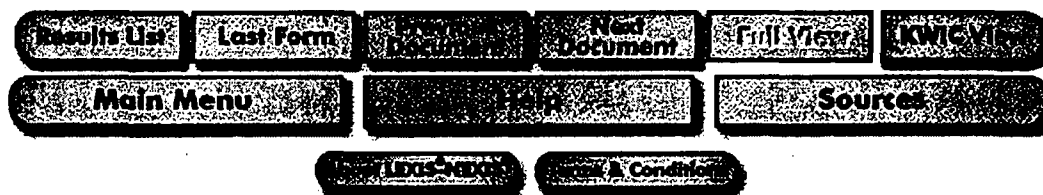
Cox said the county needs to do a better job of giving kids in foster care "a fighting chance to succeed."

The way he sees it, officials can either help foster kids to succeed now or pay later.

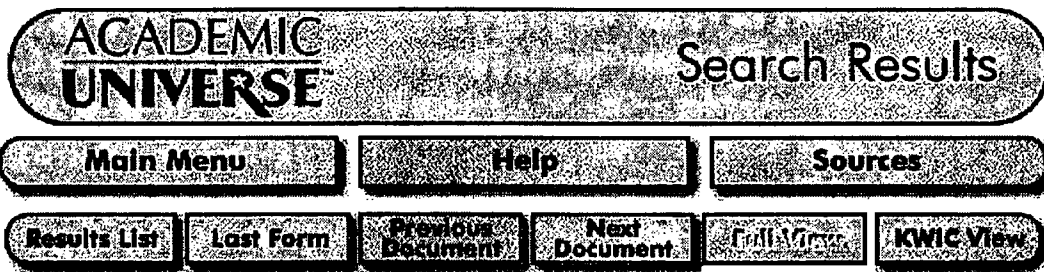
"Statistically, if we don't give them the tools they need, we are going to see them later on, either as somebody who is homeless or someone who is unemployed or, at some point, they might enter the criminal justice system," Cox said.

**LANGUAGE: ENGLISH**

**LOAD-DATE: March 18, 1998**



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Document 408 of 544.

Copyright 1998 The San Diego Union-Tribune  
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March 18, 1998, Wednesday

**SECTION:** LOCAL; Ed. B-3;Pg. 2,4,7,8  
Ed. B-4;Pg. 3,5  
Ed. B-8;Pg. 1,6

**LENGTH:** 137 words

**HEADLINE:** County will join plan to help foster kids to cope as adults ; UNION-TRIBUNE

**BODY:**

County supervisors agreed yesterday to pursue ways to improve life after **foster care** for hundreds of teen-agers who turn 18 and are dropped from the system each year.

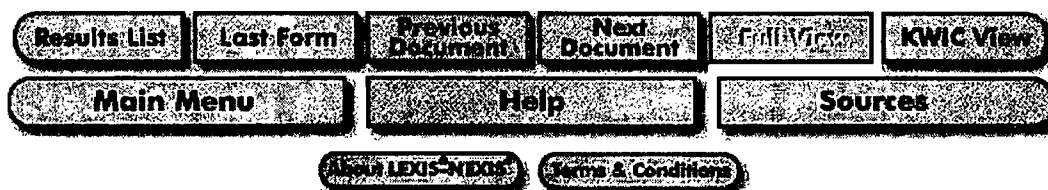
The county will link its existing **foster-care** services with new vocational training and mentorship programs expected to start this spring. These programs were recently funded with \$850,000 in federal job-training funds.

The board also told Chief Administrative Officer Larry Prior to seek outside funding to provide other "after-care" services for former foster children. Prior will report back on his efforts in six months.

The county is revamping the entire foster-care system and recently began a campaign to sign up 500 new foster families. People interested in learning more about foster care were asked to call (619) 292-KIDS.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**LOAD-DATE:** March 19, 1998





Document 281 of 544.

Copyright 1998 The Dallas Morning News  
The Dallas Morning News

April 28, 1998, Tuesday HOME FINAL EDITION

**SECTION:** EDITORIALS; Pg. 10A; EDITORIALS

**LENGTH:** 389 words

**HEADLINE:** Foster Care;  
Former 'wards of the state' deserve encouragement

**BODY:**

Few parents expect their 18-year-old children to be perfectly self-sufficient.

But when foster children turn 18, they're out. It's free fall. They lose health coverage. If they live in group homes or residential treatment centers, they lose their housing. A foster family has no duty to continue helping the child after age 18.

Last year, 680 Texas foster children who had been permanently removed from their parents "outgrew" the system. Some will struggle with homelessness; others will gravitate back to biological families poisoned by violence or addiction. A 1992 federal report found that only 17 percent of former foster kids became completely self-sufficient young adults. Increased assistance to 680 young Texans won't break the state budget and will give those kids a better chance of becoming independent.

Texas has two excellent programs to help ex-foster kids. One gives them free tuition \_ but not room and board \_ at public colleges and universities in Texas. Another program, called Preparation for Adult Living, helped 1,877 older foster children learn basic life skills, such as balancing checkbooks, last year.

But fewer than one-third of foster kids earn high school diplomas by age 18. And the program is no substitute for the long-term guidance of good parents. With a bit more state funding, and collaboration among state agencies, nonprofit groups and religious organizations, Texas could offer:

- . A toll-free hot line that former foster kids could call when they need encouragement and advice.
- . Local churches or volunteer groups to "adopt" ex-foster kids to help them feel less alone.
- . Transitional housing for young adults ages 18 to 22. Ex-foster children with mental retardation can gain access to Mental Health and Mental Retardation Department group homes. But average kids \_ who are not ready for college, have no real job skills and may have emotional problems \_ must fend for themselves. A supervised living situation could help them stay out of trouble while they improve their skills.

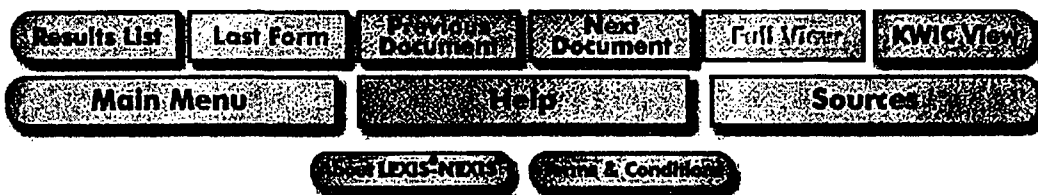
. Reduced-rate room and board at state colleges and universities.

. Extended health insurance coverage \_ until age 22.

Foster kids have no control over what happened to them in the past. The least Texas can do is give them the tools and support they need to control their futures.

**LANGUAGE: ENGLISH**

**LOAD-DATE: May 27, 1998**



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