

**Promising Practices:
Supporting Transition of Youth
Served by the Foster Care System**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed generously to this publication. First and foremost we would like to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Talmira Hill, Program Associate at the Casey Foundation for making this research and publication possible. In addition, the contribution of other collaborating organizations such as the Casey Family Program and Casey Family Services is appreciated for providing ongoing feedback throughout the project.

The early research and literature review of graduate assistants Diane Hogle and Denise Riebman proved to be instrumental to the completion of this work.

Thanks to our Administrative Assistant, Julie Atkins who assisted greatly with editing and layout of the publication.

Finally, much credit and thanks needs to be given to the numerous youth that participated in focus groups during our site visits. As always, their insight, honesty and expertise were very valuable to us and this publication.

We gratefully acknowledge these contributions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Since 1997, funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NCWRCOI) at the University of Southern Maine, and the National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS) at the University of Oklahoma, has enabled us to increase our knowledge and understanding of: (1) the numbers and characteristics of youth and young adults “aging out” of public and private child welfare systems annually; (2) the needs, barriers and strengths, resources that confront youth; (3) characteristics of successful programs and practices; and (4) recommendations for improving policy, public child welfare systems, and community-based responsiveness as young adults make a transition into independent adulthood. In 1999, the primary purpose of our work was to continue advancing our understanding of promising practices across public, private and nonprofit child welfare agencies to improve youth transition to adulthood.

In 1999, the goals of proposed work to be were twofold:

- to propose a set of suggested criteria which can be used by policy makers, practitioners, and community-based agencies to identify “high quality” promising practices that assist the transition of youth served by the foster care system into healthy adult lives; and
- to provide information/data for an interactive database of programs and practices whose characteristics meet these suggested criteria and will be accessible to interested policy makers, practitioners and community-based providers.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

The target population for this study is agencies that provide services contributing to the economic and educational preparation of youth raised in foster care. This includes public and private agencies serving youth currently in care as well as those community based organizations serving adults who were raised in care. We contacted the Independent Living Coordinators in all 50 states and asked them to suggest three or four programs in their state that they felt did a good job with one or more of the criteria we outlined.

We constructed a survey that focused on the delivery of a series of services associated with the eleven criteria we identified. We compiled a list of three hundred and eleven programs and sent surveys to these programs. Ninety-nine surveys were returned a for a response rate of 32 percent.

The surveys were entered into a database and we conducted a preliminary analysis. This level of analysis included examining how many programs delivered certain services associated with the eleven criteria of successful programs.

In addition to the preliminary analysis, we divided the surveys among four project team members and culled the surveys by hand, looking for programs that appeared to be strong in the areas of education and employment. We identified 30 programs and attempted to contact the 30 programs to conduct 45-90 minute semi-structured telephone interviews. We were able to complete the interviews with 22 programs.

After reviewing the interviews we selected ten programs for site visits. Site visits concentrated on gaining a “hands-on” sense of how the program functions. We interviewed a range of people involved with the program including program administrators, caseworkers and youth involved with the program. We have also attempted to interview community members who interact with the programs, including landlords and employers.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The eleven criteria and the recommendations that emerged from our work reflect the current trends in the literature, survey data and the thoughts and experiences of “experts” in the field. The experts include youth in care, emancipated young adults, direct service providers, policy makers, program administrators and advocates. This project was somewhat limited in its scope and did not survey foster parents or examine the foster family models that exist in preparing youth for young adulthood.

It remains clear that the Foster Care Independent Living field is still quite young. Very little research and program evaluation has been conducted. To date, the Westat study remains one of the most frequently cited studies but was conducted some ten years ago, while the Title IV-E IL field was only in its third year. We rely significantly on a few research studies, many anecdotal stories (which do provide us with valuable information) and finally information from field experts. Because of these factors, we are not even sure we are able to suggest that these eleven criteria should be recommended as “promising practices” but more as “suggested practices” to assist youth in their transition out of care and into healthy young adulthood. Until these suggested practices have been tested and evaluated through research then they remain just suggestions or guidelines for programs, administrators and policy makers that are assisting youth in their transition.

From the observations coming out of this study we make recommendations in these two areas:

I. Programming/ Services

- 1. Assist youth in identifying a mentor, relative, or staff member who can provide on-going support after discharge.*
- 2. Assist youth in establishing/re-establishing or working through redefining their relationships with family of origin prior to discharge.*
- 3. Assist programs in operationalizing the youth development philosophy in agencies and programs.*
- 4. Expand life skills training to provide greater focus on vocational training, computer training, driver's education, and long-term academic planning targeted toward post-secondary education.*
- 5. Provide youth who are struggling educationally and who do not plan to pursue post-secondary education with the educational support necessary to complete a high school degree or GED.*
- 6. Complete and review life skill assessments with youth.*
- 7. Provide "real world" opportunities for youth to practice life skills.*

II. Evaluation and Data Collection/Reporting

- 1. Encourage programs to document their activities.*
- 2. Assist programs in identifying and utilizing those data collection and evaluation tools that do exist.*
- 3. Develop a common language to define the services provided and create uniformity of reporting.*
- 4. Assist programs in developing and using a standardized reporting tool that measures short-term and long-term outcomes for youth.*
- 5. Utilize the study instruments to create an assessment tool for programs.*

Nature and Scope of Work

This project is the result of collaboration between several groups. The primary project partners are the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement located in the Institute For Child and Family Policy of the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine in Portland, ME and the National Resource Center for Youth Services located at the University of Oklahoma in Tulsa, OK. Other Project Partners include Workforce Strategy Center in Brooklyn, NY and the Child Welfare League of America in Washington, DC. The two resource centers are partners under a single grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Workforce Strategy Center and the Child Welfare League of America hold separate Annie E. Casey Foundation grants.

The two primary partners were responsible for all of the project tasks including the survey of programs, in-depth telephone interviews, and site visits. We held monthly telephone meetings with CWLA and the Workforce Strategy Center to share information and keep each other up to date on project progress. Our collaboration with the Workforce Strategy Center also entailed the mutual sharing of information regarding programs with innovative educational and/or employment components.

The project design included a national survey, in-depth telephone interviews and site visits with Independent Living Programs across the United States. The National Survey of Independent Living Programs focused on the design and delivery of independent living services and supports. We outlined a series of criteria that our research team believed were necessary in order to fully prepare youth for a successful transition out of foster care. The promising practices criteria are listed below.

1. A youth development philosophy;
2. A clearly defined life skills instruction component;
3. Educational supports aimed at helping youth achieve educational goals;
4. An employment component;
5. A component that helps youth establish community linkages;
6. A supervised independent living component;
7. Health services that prepare youth to manage their own medical/dental/mental health needs;
8. Preparation for adulthood counseling activities;

9. Youth development activities;¹
10. Comprehensive aftercare services;
11. An on-going training component for program staff, and,
12. An on-going program evaluation component.

In order to identify any potentially effective independent living programs, we contacted the Independent Living Coordinators in all 50 states, and asked them to suggest three or four programs in their state that they felt did a good job with one or more of the promising practices criteria we outlined. We then cross-checked the resulting list of programs with the Child Welfare League of America's *Resource Directory: Community Based Organizations Serving Former Foster Care Youth and Adults*. (CWLA, 1998) as well as with experts in the field. A list of 311 programs was compiled.

The survey we constructed focused on whether IL programs incorporated the 12 outlined criteria into their programs. In addition, we left space on the survey for the programs to self-identify components of their program that they felt contributed to the development of the youth in their programs. Surveys were distributed to the 311 programs; 98 surveys were returned for a response rate of 32 percent.

The data from the surveys were entered into a database, enabling us to examine the number of programs that delivered directly, or indirectly through referrals, important services for youth in foster care. We were also able to identify those programs that were conducting evaluations of their services.

For the second phase of the study, the in-depth interviews, we identified programs that appeared to either be especially strong in one or more areas (e.g. mentoring) or demonstrated that their overall program provided comprehensive services. We identified 30 programs which were then contacted to conduct 45-90 minute, semi-structured telephone interviews. We were able to complete interviews with 20 programs. We were unable to complete interviews with 10 programs as a result of time constraints.

We transcribed the interviews and selected seven programs for site visits. Based on the interviews and the criteria stated below, we completed seven site visits. Site visits concentrated on gaining a "hands-on" sense of how the program functions. We interviewed a range of people involved with the programs including program administrators, caseworkers and youth involved with the programs. We conducted site visits with the following programs:

¹ We treat criteria 1 Youth Development Philosophy and 9 Youth Development activities as a single item in our report summation.

- United Friends of the Children, Culver City, CA;
- Adolescent Outreach Program, YMCA, Seattle, WA;
- Epworth Children and Family Services, St. Louis, MO;
- Quakerdale Independent Living Cluster and Scattered Site, New Providence, IA;
- Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Oklahoma City, OK;
- Valley Youth House, Edinboro, PA; and,
- Good Will-Hinkley Transitional Living Program, Hinkley, ME.

There are a number of limitations to our sample and our findings. First, the sample was gathered through a subjective process. We asked the state Independent Living Coordinators to list programs they “felt” were successful, providing only the stated promising practices criteria. Second, we only conducted interviews and site visits with those programs that responded to the survey. Thus, programs not responding to the survey were not considered for further investigation. We were also interested in identifying successful programs that were “off the map,” i.e. programs that were not already nationally known as successful models. Finally, we concentrated our research on programs; therefore, our study is very limited in the area of older teenage youth living in foster family homes.

Key Issues

We have identified five key areas that are critical issues to youth transitioning out of foster care. These issues taken together, as described in the last section, present a challenge to those assisting the youth and to the youth themselves.

Early Discharge

Discharging youth from care at a particular age, usually 18 or 21, means that some youth will have to leave before they are emotionally, educationally or financially ready. We review the issue of early care discharge below. Depending on their state of residence, older youth are required to leave state care between the ages of 18 and 21. There are a number of ways for youth to extend the time they remain in care, in the majority of these cases youth are required to:

- Be enrolled in an educational program full time; or,
- Be enrolled in an educational program on a part-time basis and be employed enough hours per week to create the equivalence of full-time employment.

Iowa is an example of a state that allows youth to extend their stay in care beyond 18 in order to complete their high school education.

The importance of completing high school or obtaining a GED has been documented by a number of studies. Data from the 1995 Current Population Survey revealed that 24%-36% of high school dropouts were employed full-time while 87% of college graduates were employed full-time.

Youth who grow up in state care face a series of challenges that may be exacerbated by the need to leave care early. Many youth growing up in care lag behind their peers academically, often due to multiple changes in placements, which result in disruptions in their educational progress. There is a good chance that youth who have grown up in care will not have completed high school by age 18, and expecting these youth to complete their secondary education while living on their own is naive. Courtney et al.² reported that 37% of sample youth who had left foster care had not completed high school after being out of care for 12 to 18 months. Fortunately, the trend in recent years has been for states to extend the upper age limit for youth to remain in care, creating needed opportunities for youth to complete secondary education and, in many cases, move on to post-secondary education.

Congress addressed the issue of early discharge in the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P. L. 106-169, hereafter referred to as the Chafee Act)³. The act specifically stipulates that:

- Former foster care youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who have left the child welfare system are now eligible to receive independent living and other support services.
- States may use up to 30 percent of their allocation of Federal funds to provide room and board for youth up to age 21 who aged out of foster care.

These changes will directly impact states' ability to continue to serve 18-21 year-old youth. The ability to use Federal funds to serve these older youth should result in more states expanding their services to the 18-21 age group.

Housing

The biggest step youth will make in the transition from state care to living independently is assuming the responsibility for their own housing. Housing options for former foster youth are limited by a number of different factors including:

² Courtney, M. E., Piliavin, I., Gorogan-Taylor, A., Nesmith, A. (1998) *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

³ ACYF-CB-IM-00-03: Information on Public Law (P. L.) 106-109, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. March 16, 2000. <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/policy/im0003.htm>. (Chafee Act)

- Cost;
- Willingness of landlords to rent to young tenants; and,
- Availability of suitable housing.

Among the life skills youth learn, the ability to obtain and maintain housing ranks among the most important. Without the ability to find and maintain suitable housing, all of the other skills youth have acquired become compromised. Ansell⁴, cited in Cook (1988), described four stages on a continuum to independent living:

- Informal learning;
- Formal learning;
- Supervised practice; and,
- Self-sufficiency.

Although this continuum is presented in the context of an overall strategy to achieve self-sufficiency, it is easily adapted to describe an effective continuum of housing options. Informal and formal learning can take place in highly supervised contexts such as a group home or a cluster-site apartment environment. Supervised practice living describes the situation youth face in scattered-site apartment living situations; the youth are nearing independence but still have the supports and resources of the IL program to fall back on in times of need. Ideally, self-sufficiency is reached at the point when youth are discharged from the IL program; in practice, self-sufficiency is often forced on youth when they age out of the IL program.

Changes introduced through the Chafee Act⁵ will allow states to address the issue of youth aging out of their IL program by allowing states to continue to provide room and board support to youth through age 21. In the instance of states where room and support to youth aged 18-21 is provided through state funds, the Chafee Act provision will allow states to expand this support with Federal funds.

Health and Medical Care

Health and medical care presents one of the most difficult problems for youth making the transition to adulthood. Most youth in care receive health insurance and mental and physical health care through the Medicaid program in their state. The transition from state care generally means that eligibility for care in this system is lost, especially if the youth is employed full-time. Most youth leaving state custody and entering the work force are employed in jobs that neither provide health insurance nor pay a wage sufficient to allow the youth to be able

⁴ Cook, R. (1988) "Trends and needs in programming for independent living." *Child Welfare* V. LXVII, n. 6.

⁵ Chafee Act, op Cit.

to buy health insurance. According to the US Census Bureau,⁶ “about one half, (47.5%) of poor full-time workers did not have health insurance in 1998.”

Lack of access to health insurance and mental and physical health care is one of the cruelest unintended consequences that accompany youth in a transition from care to the work force. In the absence of employer provided insurance, the successful graduate of an IL program who moves into full-time employment may lose all access to health care.

The Chafee Act directly addresses this issue as well. The Chafee Act establishes a new Medicaid eligibility group for children who are in foster care under the responsibility of the state on their 18th birthday. States can provide any of the following options:

1. Provide eligibility for all of these children until they reach age 21;
2. Not apply an income or resource test for these children. If the State does apply an income or resource test, then the standards and methodologies used cannot be more restrictive than those used for the State’s low-income families with children eligible under section 1931 of the Act.
3. Only make those children eligible who were furnished foster care maintenance payments or independent living services under a program funded under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.⁷(p.1)

The Healthy Care Financing Administration Letter also includes the following paragraph emphasizing the intention of the Chafee Act in this Area:

Please note that the Congress and the President worked to ensure that these children receive the full Medicaid benefits package. All services, including Early and Periodic screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Services must be provided to all children whom you cover under the new optional group.⁸(p.1)

Education

In discussing the importance of education to youth, especially those in foster care, Edmund Mech states:

Relationships between education, skill training, job acquisition and income have been well documented. An

⁶ [Http://www.census.gov/Press Release/www/1999/cb99-189.html](http://www.census.gov/Press/Release/www/1999/cb99-189.html)

⁷ US Dept of Health and Human Services Health Care Financing Administration Center for Medicaid and State Operations, <http://www.hcfa.gov/medicaid.smd121499.htm> (December 14, 1999).

⁸ *ibid.*

economy saturated with low-paying, part-time, service jobs together with the changing nature of employment structure in the United States holds important implications for the world-of-work preparation of foster system graduates. Possessing less than a high school diploma is a serious, perhaps insurmountable barrier. A GED only is insufficient and may be a deterrent to stable employment, and by itself, a high school diploma no longer assures employment beyond a poverty level wage.⁹(p.614)

When we compare the above statement with the stated educational goals put forward by many IL programs of supporting youth through high school graduation or attainment of a GED, we can begin to understand the employment and self-sufficiency problems many youth face as they attempt to make the transition to adulthood. Blome¹⁰ (1997) reported the following educational deficits of foster care youth in comparison to non-foster youth.

- Foster youth are more than twice as likely (37% vs. 16%) to have dropped out of high school than non-foster youth.
- Foster care youth who dropped out of high school were less likely to have received a high school diploma or a GED (77% vs. 93%).
- Foster care youth were less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes than non-foster youth (15% vs. 32%).
- Foster youth were more likely to report that they had been disciplined in school, suspended, and had been in “serious trouble with the law.”

States that allow youth to stay in care beyond age 18 provide an extended opportunity for youth to finish high school or GED programs and in many cases to begin post-secondary educational or vocational programs. Continuing to support youth in care to age 21 or beyond will result in improved educational outcomes for youth in care.

The Workforce Strategy Center (WSC)¹¹ describes today’s economy as characterized by a “dumbbell,” or “hourglass,” phenomenon, with jobs clustering into two categories:

⁹ Mech, E. V. (1994) “Foster Youths in Transition: Research Perspectives on Preparation for Independent Living” *Child Welfare* 73(5), 606-623.

¹⁰ Blome, W., W. (1997) “What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth.” *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 14(1), 41-53.

¹¹ Alssid, J. L., Gruber, D. (2000) Workforce Strategy Center, *Promising Practices: School to Career and Postsecondary Education for Foster Care Youth*. Workforce Strategy Center, Brooklyn, NY.

1. **High-wage positions with a continuing career pathway.** These jobs, in areas such as manufacturing and technology, typically require some form of advanced training and skills and offer continuing career opportunities to successful individuals.
2. **Low-wage entry level jobs.** These positions, found in areas such as the fast growing service sector, typically require minimum training, pay low wages, and offer little prospect for career advancement. Recent data from the welfare to work demonstration show that, contrary to the belief held by some, entry into these low-level jobs does not provide a career ladder into economic self-sufficiency. (p.1)

WSC emphasizes:

Given the structure of today's economy, the WSC believes that effective school to career strategies will require a pathway to high-wage, high-skill jobs. This pathway calls for some form of post-secondary education and training as well as a direct connection to high-wage, high-demand skill sectors.¹² (WSC, 2000,p. 2)

Employment

North, Mallabar and Desrochers¹³ describe four skill areas essential to employability:

- Basic education skills (reading, writing, speaking, math)
- Pre-employment skills (job searching, interviewing)
- Work maturity skills (work habits, behavior)
- Marketable skills (knowledge/skills related directly to a particular trade or field).

Work experience reinforces the basic skills training that youth receive in IL programs. Iglehart¹⁴ examined the experiences of 152 randomly selected youth in foster care in Los Angeles County. Iglehart found that youth that had experiential employment opportunities also exhibited better self-care abilities.

Successful adult employment experiences for youth leaving care are predicated on the quality of skills training and experience obtained while in care. A number of authors^{15, 16, 17} have emphasized the need for employment programs to build

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ North, J., Mallabar, M., Desrochers, R. (1988) "Vocational preparation and employability development." *Child Welfare* 67(6), 573-585.

¹⁴ Iglehart, A. P. (1994) "Adolescents in foster care: Predicting readiness for independent living." *Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review* 16(3-4), 159-169.

¹⁵ Child Welfare League of America (1998) *Improving Economic Opportunity for Youth Formerly Served by the Foster Care System: Identifying the Support Network's Strengths and Needs: Interim Report.* Washington, Child Welfare League of America.

collaborative relationships in the community. North, Mallabar and Desrochers¹⁸ provide the following recommendations to agencies caring for older youth:

- Develop a collaboration between the foster care agencies to create their own constituency of programs;
- Establish formal inter-agency agreements with employment and training programs;
- Form coalitions to pool financial resources for employment activities;
- Link with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), [replaced in 1999 by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)] Job Corps and Cooperative Education programs; and,
- Develop informal networks with businesses, volunteer agencies and career networking groups.

The Workforce Strategy Center¹⁹ makes the following recommendation concerning the introduction of career and educational options for youth:

Programs should incorporate a clearly defined educational and career counseling element, developed either internally or in partnership with an educational institution such as a local community college that offers basic labor market and educational information tied to the regional economy. Programs should also seek to work with youth to develop an individual educational and career plan to ensure participants understand the range of opportunities available and are moving forward to meet them. (p. 10)

Integrated Nature of the Key Issues

Each of the key issues; early discharge, housing, health and mental health care, education and employment, were considered individually. A comprehensive focus integrating each of these areas into a related set of skills and abilities will translate into successful preparation for adulthood. None of these areas can exist in a vacuum, a lack of basic competency (or availability in the area of health care) in any of these areas is likely to hasten failure in all of the key areas.

The inter-relatedness of the key issues points toward the need for comprehensive preparation for the transition to independence. The Westat²⁰ study provided the following findings related to successful transitions:

¹⁶ Child Welfare League of America (1990) *Child Welfare league of America: Standards for Independent Living Services*. Washington, Child Welfare League of America.

¹⁷ North, J., Malabar, M., Desrochers, R. (1988) op. cit.

¹⁸ North, J., Malabar, M., Desrochers, R. (1988) op. cit.

¹⁹ Workforce Strategy Center, op cit.

²⁰ Westat, (1991) *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth: Final report*. Department of Health and Human Services: Washington, D.C.

- Providing training in specific skill areas related to specific outcomes is preferable to providing training in a vast number of skill areas;
- Five skill areas (money management, credit, consumer skills, education and employment) were particularly noted for their affect on improving outcomes; and,
- Integrated skills training (especially in the identified five areas) produced better outcomes.

While the provision of integrated services is the ideal, two recent reports have identified barriers that exist in the field. The General Accounting Office (GAO)²¹, through interviews with state and local program administrators, reported some of the following shortcomings in state Independent Living Services that detract from states' ability to provide integrated services:

...some programs do not sufficiently seek out employment opportunities in the community and offer few opportunities for youth to participate in real-life practice opportunities or esteem-building experiences. Moreover, some programs could not provide enough housing or other transitional assistance to both youths still in care and those who have left care. (p. 6)

Caliber Associates²², in their review of 10 years of State Independent Living Reports, found that the three most commonly reported barriers to successful ILP implementation were:

- resource availability;
- federal eligibility requirements; and,
- transportation.

Additional barriers included:

- program coordination;
- staff turnover;
- training;
- youth recruitment; and,
- information technology issues.

We found that these issues were raised repeatedly throughout our survey, interviews and site visits as critical components in the lives of youth transitioning out of foster care.

²¹ GAO/HEHS-00-13 *Foster Care: Effectiveness of Independent Living Services Unknown* (November 1999).

²² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. *Title IV-E Independent Living Programs: A Decade in Review*. (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1999).

Examination of Best Practices

A comprehensive review of the literature on independent living for older adolescents was conducted. The following pages provide a review of the literature supporting the four core principles and eleven suggested practice criteria identified for independent living/self sufficiency.

Core Principle: Youth Development Philosophy

Although the idea of youth development has been around for several years, we have just begun to see consistent movement of agencies involving youth in the development, implementation, and evaluation of their programs. This is done by creating an environment and opportunities where young people feel supported and safe in practicing skills, learning about relationships and connecting with their communities.

Westat²³ found that independent living services targeted toward specified youth needs and outcomes achieve the best results. Based upon results from a pilot study, Nollan, Downs, Wolf and Lamont²⁴ recommend that life skills assessment tools be designed for youth across an age continuum and structured to involve participation from both the youth and their caregiver. Two recommendations were made by Caliber²⁵ relevant to further engaging youth in helping to shape independent living program activities.

First, states should be encouraged to embrace a youth development approach that moves beyond occasional youth involvement to ongoing engagement of youth in the planning, development, and delivery of ILP services. Second, training and technical assistance (including peer-to-peer TA) should be provided. This training and technical assistance should focus on integrating youth development approaches, emphasizing youth strengths rather than deficits, and keeping youth engaged.
(p. VI-12)

Successful transition to adulthood to a large degree depends on the youth's ability to make appropriate decisions regarding his or her case plan. Youth who have a sense of self-esteem and who feel empowered are often better equipped to deal with the barriers as well as the opportunities that arise during and after care. By encouraging youth and adults to become partners in making decisions, youth learn to take responsibility for themselves and thus feel empowered. This

²³ Westat (1991) *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care and Independent Living Programs for Youth: Final Report*. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

²⁴ Nollan, K., Downs, A. C., Wolf, M., Lamont, E. (1996) *Mastery of Life Skills Among Young Adolescents in Long-term Foster Care*. Paper presented at the Society for Research and Development, April 3-6, 1996. Washington, D.C.

²⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. (1999) *Title IV-E Independent Living Programs: A Decade in Review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

philosophy lies at the core of the youth development movement. Therefore, in order to provide effective services and achieve positive, desired outcomes for older foster youth, it is imperative that both public and private independent living/transitional living providers embrace the youth development philosophy and incorporate youth into aspects of not only their own case assessment and planning, but overall independent living policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation.

Core Principle: Collaboration

Preparing a young person to take his/her place in the community as a young adult is the community's responsibility. Independent living/transitional living programs should be proactive in seeking community involvement/collaboration. When programs reach out to community organizations and individuals, they create linkages that will benefit youth while they are in the program and after they leave it. Community involvement can lead to additional financial resources, in-kind contributions, and support. Community members can be helpful to youth who are looking for housing, seeking employment, and finding ways to fill their free time. Collaborations with community organizations can lead to job shadowing experiences, mentoring opportunities and long-term personal connections.

Collaboration also involves working with other agencies to secure the myriad of services necessary to prepare youth for adulthood. For example: integrated service delivery is described as procedures and structures that help service agencies coordinate their efforts to address the wide range of needs in a holistic manner.(Burt, Resnick and Matheson)²⁶ The researchers offer the following recommendations for inter-agency collaboration; long-term commitment, identification of needed services, common goals and objectives, flexible funding, minimization of administrative barriers, effectively designed and implemented evaluations, and institutionalizing change.

The importance of integrated service delivery is reinforced by the American Youth Policy Forum's ²⁷(1997) comprehensive evaluation of youth programs. They found that unsuccessful programs are generally ones that only provide a single focus for intervention rather than addressing all the dimensions of a youth's developmental needs. While some programs are able to provide the full range of services solely through their agency, most need to work collaboratively with other agencies in order to offer a complete continuum of youth services.

²⁶ Burt, M. R., Resnick, G., Matheson. (1992) *Comprehensive Service Integration Programs for At Risk Youth: Final Report*. Urban Institute, Washington, DC.

²⁷ James, D. W., Donahue, C. (1997) *Some Things DO Make a Difference for Youth*. American Youth Policy Forum, Washington, D.C.

In examining literature specifically focused on foster youth, there is strong implied support for the concepts of both inter-agency collaboration and agency-to-school collaboration. (Westat²⁸; Barth²⁹, Mech,³⁰; Kazis and Kopp³¹, CWLA interim report³²) One component that Cook³³ refers to as essential to the operation of integrated service delivery is the inclusion of inter-agency training. Training needs to incorporate all of the involved parties, including the administrators, caseworkers, foster parents, school personnel, and other outside service providers. This process facilitates the flow of information, builds both formal and informal relationships and creates a foundation of trust and cooperation between agencies.

Caliber Associates³⁴ made three recommendations concerning promoting increased collaboration for independent living agencies with other agencies and community services. They included:

1. At the Federal level, pursue interagency initiatives and joint program funding among HHS (including CB, FYSB, CSAP, and CMSH), DOE, OJJDP, HUD, DOL, and other relevant agencies for collaborative community programs that support youth exiting the child welfare system. Coordinate activities with ongoing foundation initiatives.
2. At State and local levels, identify formalized mechanisms (e.g., interagency task forces, designated point person responsible for collaboration) to facilitate coordinated efforts.
3. Promote involvement of private sector businesses in ILP activities (e.g., through job placement programs). (p. VI-12)

When young people move out on their own, they need to be well connected with community resources and individuals. Programs that promote community interactions and interagency collaboration are modeling for the youth the importance of networking and community support systems. Therefore, collaboration is offered as a core principle, which must be at the foundation of any effective independent/transitional living programs. Administrators and staff in these agencies should embrace the value of interagency and community

²⁸ Westat. (1991). Op Cit.

²⁹ Barth, R. P. (1986) *Emancipation Services for Children in Foster Care*. Social Work, May-June, 165-171.

³⁰ Mech, E. V. (1994) *Foster Youth in Transition: Research Perspectives on Preparation for Independent Living*. Child Welfare 73(5) 603-623.

³¹ Kazis, R., Kopp, H. (1997) *Both Sides now: New Directions in promoting work and learning for disadvantaged youth, a report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Executive Summary)*. Jobs for the future: Boston, MA

³² Child Welfare League of America (1998). *Improving Economic Opportunity for Youth Formerly Served by the Foster Care System: Identifying the Support Network's Strengths and Needs Interim Report* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

³³ Cook, R. (1988) *Trends and needs in programming for independent living*. Child Welfare 67(6), 497-514.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (1999). *Title IV-E Independent Living Programs: A Decade in Review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

collaboration and seek to make the necessary linkages that will help youth as they prepare to leave and after they leave care.

Core Principle: Cultural Competency

Public and private child welfare agencies across the country are increasing their attention to the issue of diversity and cultural competence. Culture is a constantly changing, learned pattern of customs, beliefs, values and behaviors, which are socially acquired and transmitted through symbols, rituals and events, and convey widely shared meanings among its members. Culture includes gender, age, sexual orientation, urban, rural, ethnicity, values, personalities, marital status, and job position.

According to the statistics cited earlier, the following percentages were reported for children in care: 34 percent African-American, 13 percent Hispanic, 2 percent American Indian, 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5 percent Unknown/Unable to Determine. While there is a disproportionately large number of children of color in the child welfare system, professionals of color appear to be under-represented in the fields of social work and psychology. (Gilbelman and Schervish³⁵, Lennon³⁶)

This influx of children and youth of color into the child welfare system has contributed to the need to provide services that are more compatible with the cultural needs of the youth and families served. Many agencies have embraced this challenge by developing approaches to provide more acceptable and useful services to these populations. Changing demographics have also contributed to the need to recruit and retain workers knowledgeable about providing services to individuals and families from different cultures.

Leigh and Green³⁷ (1989) define cultural competency as “the ability of the service provider to give assistance to clients in ways that are acceptable and useful to them.” Culturally competent agencies and staff are able to view a young person’s strengths and needs within the cultural context and integrate what they know in helping the youth develop a meaningful plan of action. Every agency should strive to meet this definition of competency. This is a skill learned by the individual and the organization. It does not occur merely out of good intentions. It is fostered out of the commitment to provide services that are culturally appropriate and that make a difference in the lives of individuals and families.

³⁵ Gilbelman, M., Schervish, P. H. (1993) *Who we are: The social work labor force as reflected in NASW membership*. Washington: NASW.

³⁶ Lennon, T. M. (1993) *Statistics of social work education in the United States: 1992*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.

³⁷ Green, J. S., Leigh, J. W. (1989) *Teaching Ethnographic Methods to Social Service Workers*. *Practicing Anthropology* 11(3): 8-10.

The concept of developing culturally competent agencies is similar to the teaching of youth to appreciate and value differences. If agencies do not create an atmosphere that values and appreciates cultural differences, how can they expect to develop awareness in youth with whom they work? Staff who value diversity are more apt to move beyond the comfortable and familiar to seek out services, essential connections, and role models that are meaningful to their young people. As staff grow to appreciate the additional tasks faced by these adolescents, viewing the world from another's perspective enriches their own lives. Cultural competence is offered as the third core principle or value that should underscore the work of child welfare agencies providing independent living/self-sufficiency services.

Core Principle: Relationship Permanency

Assisting youth to successfully sustain life-long emotional relationships with adults is essential to their successful transition to adulthood. Former youth in care have reported that they seek out relatives as well as other adults they met while in care for emotional connections after they have left the system. These relationships have an enormous impact on the young person's ability to succeed in making the difficult transitions from youth to adulthood.

Programs that focus on youth-defined family connections by working with the youth and those people whom the youth has relationships with are more likely to successfully establish relationship permanency. Youth may be the best resource in identifying people in their life or from their past that can serve as their permanent family connection. The permanency planning process should also include relatives, foster parents, group home staff, school personnel and other professionals to assist caseworkers in establishing placement options, as well as defining what problems may exist to establishing permanent, healthy relationships with adults.

Youth who learn life skills that address issues of self-esteem, self-determination, loyalty and loss, and how to safely relate with their relatives will be better able to reconcile their feelings with the past and build healthy permanent relationships. Agencies that assist youth to address their needs for independent living skills while also assisting their needs for permanent family connections are more likely to help youth achieve self-sufficiency.

Examination of Promising Practices

Note on Survey Findings

We report the findings from our survey, the interviews we conducted and the site visits we made in the following sections. We refer to programs as “directly providing,” services to youth or “referring” youth to services. Services that are “directly provided” are provided to youth by the program and represent an element of the program. “Referring,” youth to services implies that the program is acting as a broker of services, connecting youth to services they need that the program does not provide. For example, if a program employs a mental health counselor and program youth receive mental health services through this counselor, then the program is “directly,” providing this service. On the other hand, if a program arranges for program-youth to receive mental health services from a resource that is not affiliated with the program, then the program is “referring” youth to this service.

It is important to emphasize that while we asked programs to tell us whether they directly provide or refer youth to a given service this distinction does not infer any judgment of the quality of the service. Whether a program directly delivers a service or refers youth to other resources to access a service may be a function of a number of factors, including program size and the availability of resources within the community where the program is located.

Life Skills

Summary

Dorothy Ansell³⁸ describes a four-stage continuum that enables youth in Independent Living Programs to move through a series of phases to acquire tangible and intangible skills. The four stages are Informal Learning, Formal Learning, Supervised Practice and Self-sufficiency. Delivering Life Skills Training throughout the four-stage continuum gives youth the flexibility to move through the continuum based on their own developmental needs and individualized independent living goals.

Caliber Associates³⁹ reported that between FY's 1987 and 1996, state ILPs provided services that addressed both tangible and intangible skills. They defined educational, vocational, money management, home management and the use of community resources as tangible skills. Intangible skills included decision making, problem solving, communication, time management, conflict

³⁸ Cook, R. (1988) “Trends and needs in programming for independent living.” *Child Welfare* 67(6) 497-514.

³⁹ U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. *Title IV-E Independent Living Programs: A Decade in Review*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999).

resolution and social skills, following the typology established in the Westat⁴⁰ evaluation.

The Westat⁴¹ national evaluation of outcomes for former foster youth identified five specific skill areas associated with improved outcomes for youth. The areas are money management, credit, consumer skills, education and employment. The authors also identified that a combination of skills training including the five identified skills was associated with better youth outcomes.

The General Accounting Office⁴² reported that opportunities to practice daily life skills and to develop self-esteem were limited in some of the locations they visited. GAO reports that program officials in two locations and youth in three locations reported that issues such as safety regulations for group homes inhibit or prevent activities such as cooking. Additionally, GAO officials found that:

...esteem-building activities are often limited to a small number of youth. For example, local officials in Texas reported that opportunities for foster care youths to participate in post-secondary school conferences or extended outdoor activities were limited.(p. 10)

Suggested Promising Practices Criteria

Programs should include a clearly defined life skills instruction component that provides youth with...

- **knowledge and understanding of a core set of life skills, and**

Learning life skills is a life time proposition. For most young Americans, the process happens gradually. For youth in out-of-home care, life skills instruction efforts need to be both specific and intentional because most have not had consistent parenting or education and will not be able to gradually assume responsibility for themselves as they move into their mid-20's. For these youth, "childhood" will abruptly end at age 18 or 21. When programs have a clearly defined life skills instruction component, it is more likely that essential life skills will not be overlooked.

- **opportunities to practice skills in a "real world" environment.**

When programs provide real-world practice experiences, youth have the opportunity to internalize and personalize what they have learned about a skill and feel confident in the ability to use this skill in the future.

⁴⁰ Cook, R. (1991) *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth, Phase 2, Final Report*. Rockville, MD: Westat, Inc.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² GAO (1999) *Foster Care: Effectiveness of Independent Living Services Unknown*. GAO/HEHS-00-13.

Survey findings

In our survey, we found that over 90 percent of programs indicated they *directly* deliver services in the following life skills areas:

- Employment skills
- Money management
- Communication
- Decision-making
- Locating housing
- Community resources
- Maintaining housing
- Socialization, and
- Healthy relationships.

Fewer than 30 percent of responding programs *directly* provided services in the following life skills areas:

- Vocational training
- Computer classes
- Driver's education

These last three items are of particular importance to the future of youth today as Barth recently noted at a Casey Family Services Conference in Burlington, MA.⁴³ While many programs are unable to provide these services directly, many programs refer out for the provision of these services. For example, 92 percent of the responding programs either provide or refer youth to vocational training. Seventy-nine percent of responding programs provide or refer youth to driver's education programs, and only 74 percent of programs provide or refer youth to computer/internet training. Given the stated ILP goal of independence and self-sufficiency, less than 100% compliance in these areas may be insufficient.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Casey Family Program San Antonio Division, TX

The program emphasizes the importance of providing a real world component that prepares youth for life after care and continues to support youth after their exit from care. The program also emphasizes the importance of their community links and collaboration with health, mental health and education and vocational programs.

⁴³ Barth, R.D. (1999) "Transitions from Out-of-Home Care: A Researcher's Perspective." Presented at: *Transitioning Youth in Foster Care to Independence*. Burlington, MA. (December 1, 1999)

Good Will-Hinckley Independent Living Program, ME

Good Will-Hinckley uses the Competency Based Assessment (CBA) as a basis for teaching life skills and assessing individual life skills achievement. This two-stage assessment system allows the program to tailor life skills instruction to individual youth needs.

Rhode Island Foster Parents Association, RI

The Association is the contracted provider for life skills instruction in Rhode Island. The life skills training emphasizes the importance of skills acquisition and the importance of education. Youth are constantly reminded that, "Decisions today affect opportunities for tomorrow."

Quakerdale Independent Living-Cluster and Scattered Site, IA

The King's Ranch/Hannah Homes Transitional Living Program, AL

Both Quakerdale and King's Ranch/Hannah Homes programs encourage and support youth in obtaining driver's licenses to help overcome transportation barriers that result from the rural locations of the programs.

Where can I find more information?

Child Welfare League of America (1990) *Child Welfare League of America: Standards for Independents Living Services*. Washington, Child Welfare League of America

Colca, L., Colca, C. (1996) "Transitional independent living foster homes: a step toward independence." *Children Today* v24 n1 p7(5).

Cook, R. (1991) *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth, Phase 2, Final Report*. Rockville, MD: Westat, Inc.

Courtney, M. E., Barth, R. P. (1996) "Pathways of Older Adolescents Out of Foster Care: Implications for Independent Living Services." *Social Work* 41(1), 75-83.

----- (1999) *Foster Care: Effectiveness of Independent Living Services Unknown*. (GAO/HEHS 00-13 November 1999).

Education

Summary

Coordinating educational services for foster youth is one of the most important practices for an independent living program. Coordinating educational services helps youth to prepare for independent living in the short-term and for improved overall life outcomes in the long-term.^{44,45} Multiple studies, even those controlling for the youth's abilities, have found discrepant educational outcomes for youth in foster care⁴⁶. Youth in foster care are more likely to have dropped out of school, less likely to have received a high school diploma or a GED and less likely to participate in post-secondary education. A recent follow-up study out of Wisconsin⁴⁷ found that 12 to 18 months after discharge from the foster care system, 37% of youth had not yet completed their high school education.

Services that may contribute to the youth's positive educational outcomes include:^{48,49,50,51,52}

- educational liaisons (consistent contact person for managing educational information)
- educational tutors/coaches,
- college preparatory activities,
- school-to-work programs,
- and the training of school personnel regarding foster care issues.

Programs that promote educational stability and approach education in a comprehensive, integrated manner are most likely to promote the completion of high school and encourage enrollment in post-secondary education.^{53,54}

⁴⁴Mech, E. V. (1994) "Foster Youths in Transition: Research Perspectives on Preparation for Independent Living." *Child Welfare* 73(5), 606-623.

⁴⁵ Westat (1991) *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth: Final Report*. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

⁴⁶ Blome, W.W. (1997) "What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth." *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 14(1),41-53.

⁴⁷ Courtney, M., Paliavin, I., Grogan-Taylor, A., Nesmith, A. (1998) *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12-18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

⁴⁸ Ayasse, R. H. 1995. "Addressing the needs of foster children: The Foster Youth Services Program" *Social Work in Education* 17(4), 207-216.

⁴⁹ Horn, L. J., Chen, X (1998) *Office of Educational Research and Improvement Toward Resiliency: At Risk Students Who make It To College*. Washington, DC. US Department of Education.

⁵⁰ Kochanek, T. (1998) *The School and Community Support Project: Creating the Context for Opportunities and Success for Foster and Adoptive Children*. Departments of Social Services and Education. Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

⁵¹ Mech, E. V. (1994) op cit.

⁵² Westat, op cit.

⁵³ Ayasse, R. H.(1995) op cit.

⁵⁴ Mech, E. V. (1994) op cit.

Despite the continued advocacy of researchers urging programs to approach education in a comprehensive and integrated manner, the Workforce Strategy Center (WSC)⁵⁵ found that among the programs they reviewed:

...virtually without exception, that programs educational preparation focused on achievement of the GED as the educational outcome for foster care youth. (p. 10)

Supporting the WSC findings, the GAO⁵⁶ reported that:

41 states reported assisting youth with preparing for, or completing education or vocational training. Of these 41 states, 26 offered assistance such as tutoring or remedial training to help youth graduate from high school or receive a GED; 28 states helped youth prepare for vocational school... and 33 states helped youth pursue post-secondary education, such as through educational planning or assessments, assistance in applying for financial aid or college admission, or campus tours. Further, 21 states awarded some tuition aid or scholarships for college or vocational schools, and 20 helped to pay for other educational expenses such as books, training materials, uniforms, college entrance exam fees, or college application fees. (p. 7)

The GAO findings offer evidence of a more comprehensive approach to education of older foster youth on the part of some states. However, the most compelling fact in the above quotation is that only 33 of the 50 states (66%) report providing any form of support for post-secondary education for IL program youth.

In light of their finding and similar findings from other sources the Workforce Strategy Center⁵⁷ recommends that:

Programs for foster care youth should incorporate a clearly defined college preparation component that would ensure youth meet prevailing skills standards for success in postsecondary education and training. This component could be delivered through enhanced or enriched GED programs, or maybe preferably, as a separate educational initiative developed with local community colleges or other educational institutions. (p. 10)

⁵⁵ -----, (2000) Workforce Strategy Center. *Promising Practices: School to Career and Postsecondary Education for Foster Care Youth*. Workforce Strategy Center, Brooklyn, NY.

⁵⁶ GAO (1999) op. Cit.

⁵⁷ Workforce Strategy Center (2000) op Cit.

Suggested Promising Practices Criteria

Programs should include educational supports aimed at helping youth...

- **access necessary educational resources, e.g., educational advocate,**

Because of the disruptions in their lives, youth in out-of-home care are often one or more grade levels behind. Many youth need special education services to catch up with their peers or to cope with a learning disability. Often youth are not placed their home school jurisdiction. The transfer of files and funds, which can be cumbersome and time consuming, creates additional delays for youth who are already behind.

- **increase literacy,**

In order for youth to be able to obtain and maintain employment they must have some ability to read and write. Because of academic disruptions, many youth are reading one or two grade levels below where they should be. Some youth are well below grade level and have difficulty completing even the most basic job application. In our survey of older youth in foster care⁵⁸ we found that one-quarter of youth reported being involved with special education classes in the last five years, while only one-third reported being enrolled in college preparatory classes.

- **select career field or sectors of interest,**

Every young person needs an academic plan that includes information on course-taking, assessments, extracurricular activities, career aspirations and other life goals relevant for adulthood. The plan should include information on a young person's interests, strengths in school, visions for career and personal life and opportunities for career and work experience.

- **begin an educational/vocational program, and/or**

Beginning a post-secondary educational/ vocational program may involve the completion of complicated applications and financial aid forms. It may also involve writing an essay, or taking a qualifying test like the ACT. Special equipment or uniforms may be required. Programs can assist students with all of these entry activities and help youth secure the financial aid needed to pay for the program.

- **complete an educational/vocational program.**

Once youth are enrolled in an educational/ vocational program, they continue to need both emotional and financial support. If the student is living on campus,

⁵⁸ Jones, E. D., Zanghi, M., St. Onge, A., Sheehy, A., Oldham, E., Richards, T. (1998) Improving Economic Opportunities for Young People Served by the Foster Care System: Three Views of the Path to Independent Living: Phase 2: Survey. National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME.

programs can provide places for youth to spend holidays and summer vacations when college housing is not available.

Survey Summary

In our survey of 98 programs, we found that while support through high school is common, support for post-secondary education are only happening in states that support youth through age 21 or in programs with private endowments. When we asked the programs what educational services they are currently providing, we found that 70 percent or more (71%-87%) of the programs provide the following educational supports:

- help youth access necessary educational resources;
- provide assistance with financial aid forms;
- help selecting careers; and,
- provide assistance in beginning an educational/vocational program.

We found that from one-third to more than one-half of programs (36%-57%) provide:

- assistance in completing an educational/vocational program
- tutors to assist with education;
- educational advocates;
- provide postsecondary education/counseling;
- financial aid or assistance; and,
- services to increase literacy.

Our in-depth interviews revealed that programs that provided financial aid or assistance are a combination of public and private programs. These programs provide support to supplement grant and scholarship money youth have been awarded. We also found that most programs depend on local schools to provide post-secondary educational counseling and services to increase literacy.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Casey Family Program, San Antonio Division, TX

Youth receive support to complete high school through Project Quest, a collaborative project involving two other organizations. Youth involvement lasts one to two years and involves an educational/apprenticeship track. The program also employs a part-time vocational consultant. Youth are assessed using the “Discovery Program” assessment tool. Youth follow either a career plan or a post-secondary educational plan. The program also participates in a partnership with the

community college district. Community College representatives come to the Casey offices 2-3 times per month to help youth with financial aid (FAF) forms, admissions and enrollment.

Franklin County Children's Services Emancipation Department, OH

Franklin County depends heavily on the local schools to provide most educational supports. Franklin County makes a grant of \$500 per youth to cover graduation and yearbook expenses. The Program assists youth in completing financial aid forms and provides set-up expenses and personal items to cover youths' first six months in post-secondary programs. The program has supplied youth with items like word-processors and microwave ovens to assist their transition to post-secondary education.

Denver Dept of Human Services, Alive-E Youth in Transition, CO

Alive-E focuses educational supports on preparing youth for post-secondary education. GED support is provided, but youth are required to make a commitment to pursue post-secondary education. Post-secondary supports encompass both college and vocational/technical foci. Colorado does not provide post-secondary educational funding (as of a 1999 interview). Alive-E directs youth to the Orphan Foundation of America for scholarships and to the Governors Opportunity Scholarship, a Colorado-based scholarship available for youth who are or have been in foster care.

Casey Family Services, ME

The program provides individual educational assessments, tutors and active advocacy for youth in the schools. The program will continue to provide support to foster parents for completion of high school education after youth have turned eighteen. Casey Family Services will provide financial support for post-secondary education including financial support and providing mentoring homes for post-secondary students.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Independent Living Program

The program provides educational advocates through both the ILP and Citizens Caring for Children, a contracted service provider. Program youth have access to two scholarship programs through the Youth with Promise Foundation. Citizens Caring for Children (an independent contractor) provides support for youth in post-secondary educational settings including care packages sent to youth during exam weeks. In addition, IL youth in post-secondary educational programs receive an allowance based on their performance.

Crawford County IL Program: Hermitage House Youth Services, PA

Program youth are encouraged to participate in the Shadow Project, a

collaboration with the local School-to-Work Program. Youth participate in job shadowing experiences in areas of possible career interest.

Massachusetts Departments of Social Services and Education

Cross-disciplinary training is provided for care-providers and education personnel. The training enhances the understanding of school staff regarding how to respond to the unique needs of children in care.

Quakerdale Independent Living -Cluster & Scattered Site, IA

Quakerdale connects youth to area community colleges for employment-focused post-secondary education. Quakerdale establishes program youth in scattered-site apartments located in the community college towns.

United Friends of the Children – Bridges to Independence, CA

The Bridges Career Center actively advocates and develops links between youth and entry-level jobs with benefits. They provide extensive supports (e.g., coaches in the workplace) to ensure that the employment experience is positive and that the youth remains in the job as long as possible.

Where can I find more information?

Mech, E. V., Che-man Fung, C. (1999) "Placement Restrictiveness and educational achievement among emancipated foster youth." *Research on Social Work Practice* v9, i2 p213(6).

Lindsey, E.W., Fasih, U. A. (1999) "The North Carolina Independent Living Program: a comparison of outcomes for participants and nonparticipants." *Children and Youth Services Review* v21, i5 p389(24).

Blome, W.W. (1997) "What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth." *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 14(1),41-53.

Courtney, M.E., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Kaylor, A. & Nesmith, A. (1998) *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care*. Madison, Wisconsin: School of Social Work and Institute for Research on Poverty.

Kochanek, T. (1998) *The school and community support project: Creating the context for opportunities and success for foster and adoptive children*. Massachusetts: Department of Social Services and Education.

Employment

Summary

Existing research on youth employment opportunities illustrates a system that has progressed over time in terms of connecting older foster care youth to employment opportunities. However, the existing research points to a series of current shortfalls but also makes a number of recommendations designed to strengthen the ability of programs to enhance the creation of employment opportunities for youth.

The Workforce Strategy Center⁵⁹ describes today's economy as resembling a dumbbell or hourglass with jobs falling into two categories. The categories are:

1. **High-wage positions with a continuing career pathway.** These jobs, in areas such as manufacturing or technology, typically require some form of advanced training and skills and offer continuing career opportunities to successful individuals.
2. **Low-wage entry-level jobs.** These positions, found in areas such as the fast growing service sector, typically require minimum training, pay low wages, and offer little prospect for career advancement. Recent early data from the welfare to work demonstration shows that, contrary to the belief held by some, entry into these low-level jobs does not provide a career ladder into economic self-sufficiency. (p.1)

This description of the economy paints a bleak picture for youth entering the job market with low educational attainment and poor job-readiness skills. WSC identifies five successful elements of a pathway that will support the successful transition of foster care youth to the world of work. These five elements are:

1. **Introduction to career and educational options.** Effective workforce development strategies should acquaint students with regional high-wage, high-demand career opportunities as well as needed training and education.
2. **Preparation for college entry standards.** An effective strategy must prepare youth for the skill levels needed to succeed in these programs.
3. **Career related work experience.**

⁵⁹ Alssid, J. L., Gruber, D. (2000) *Promising Practices: School to Career and Postsecondary Education for Foster Care Youth*. Workforce Strategy Center.

4. **Transition to post-secondary education and career employment.** An effective program should help youth to connect to needed pre-career skills training offered at community colleges and other industry intermediaries (organizations with close ties to industry that provide industry-approved training and connections to employers).
5. **Needed social supports.** Youth counseling, contact with supportive adults and other needed support services are an integral part of program operations. (pp. 2-3)

The WSC presents an approach to preparing young adults for the workforce that recognizes that successful competition in the labor market for jobs earning family-supporting wages will require earning at least a high school diploma or GED. Earning these credentials should be considered an essential outcome for all young people, but getting and keeping high-wage, high-skill jobs will likely require additional skills and knowledge. In contrast, Caliber Associates⁶⁰ report that from FY 1989 through FY 1996, states gradually increased the depth and scope of employment support services provided to youth in IL programs. The following table, excerpted from their report, displays the increase in support in three specific areas of employment support services between FY 1989 and FY 1986.

Table 1
Career Planning and Employment Services
Percentage of States Reporting Services*
FY1989 and 1996

	FY 1989 (%)	FY 1996 (%)
Career Planning and Employment Services	92	98
Job Search and Preparation	73	89
Job Maintenance	45	70
Purchase of Career Resources	8	37

*These data represent the proportion of states that reported providing these services to at least one youth in their state. More states may have provided such services but it was not clearly evident in the review process.

Caliber Associates report that state ILPs have increasingly implemented collaborations with outside organizations such as JPTA, Job Corps, and Offices of Employment Training. Among the examples they cite are summer employment and training programs in Maryland, Virginia, New York State, and Michigan. These examples all consisted of collaborations between the state ILPs and other public sector initiatives. They also provide examples of collaborations with private employers, community agencies, nonprofits and social service agencies. IL programs in Virginia, California, Washington, DC and New Jersey were cited in reference to these types of collaborative initiatives. Interestingly, these

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, op Cit.

collaborations focus on more traditional employment development paths, with more stress on job readiness and preparation than education.

Ansell et al.⁶¹ list the following activities as necessary elements of an effective IL Program employment component:

- Job search training;
- Job skills training;
- Job development;
- Job placement;
- Job coaching; and,
- Career exploration.

While the focus of this list is primarily in the area of job attainment, the inclusion of career exploration points to the authors' emphasis on a comprehensive approach to employment. This approach includes both job acquisition skills and a focus on future goals through career exploration.

DeJesus⁶² interviewed a sample of youth employment program graduates who had been continually employed for at least one year. His research identified a change in mentality, attitude or outlook on life as a critical element in the successes of sample youth. He listed several activities that youth cited as contributing to these changes:

1. Activities that engage and expose young adults with successful role models;
2. Activities that build self-confidence and self-esteem;
3. Activities that teach interpersonal and communication skills;
4. Activities in which young adults feel support and genuine concern;
5. Activities that help young adults realize their educational objectives; and,
6. Activities that allow young adults to be of service in the larger community.

DeJesus findings again emphasize the relationship of educational attainment and successful employment outcomes.

⁶¹ Ansell et al, op Cit.

⁶² DeJesus, E. (1997) Tales from the bright side: Conversations with graduates of youth employment programs. In Sum, A. et al (Eds.) A Generation of Challenge: Pathways to Success for Urban Youth. Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies: Baltimore. MD

The GAO⁶³ reported that 40 of the 50 states (80%) responding to their survey stated that they provide employment services to youth. States reported providing job readiness (28 states), job search (24 states) and job placement activities (18 states). However, in relation to the site visits they performed during their study, GAO reported:

Although all four areas we visited provided assistance with education and employment, we found that ILPs did not provide services that fully matched youth to appropriate employment pathways. (p. 7)

Among the problems programs reported to GAO were a lack of vocational and apprenticeship opportunities, and a lack of sufficient ILP funds to pay for available vocational programs. GAO reported that of the four sites they visited (programs were located in Maryland, Massachusetts, Texas and California) only Texas offers statewide tuition waivers to IL youth for all state-supported vocational, technical and postsecondary schools.

The GAO's findings illustrate that while the states are making progress toward better employment support programs there is room for improvement.

Echoing the GAO finding, Workforce Strategy Center⁶⁴ reported that:

Relatively few of the programs interviewed have formal employment training programs. Most of the employment training is focused on immediate employment open to students with relatively little skills training as opposed to longer-term and more intensive career training... (p. 6)

The Workforce Strategy Center⁶⁵ speaks directly to the need to link career and educational options. They assert:

Programs should incorporate a clearly defined educational and career counseling element, developed either internally or in partnership with an educational institution such as a local community college that offers basic labor market and educational information tied to the regional economy. Programs should also seek to work with youth to develop an individual educational and career plan to ensure participants understand the range of opportunities available and are moving forward to achieve them. (p. 10)

⁶³ GAO (1999) op Cit.

⁶⁴ Alssid, J. I., Gruber, D. (2000) op Cit.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Our research confirmed that many programs have difficulty providing a comprehensive employment component. Programs described a number of factors that impeded the establishment of a comprehensive employment component. Among these factors programs listed:

- Rural locations, which result in limited employment opportunities and also impose difficulties with transportation;
- Difficulties in finding stable jobs for youth; and,
- A programmatic focus on establishing employment skills and job stability.

Programs report that they compensate for these difficulties by focusing on job readiness and job skills acquisition. Programs reason that if youth gain basic employment skills, these skills can be built upon when the youth moves to locations with better employment opportunities. All of the programs we interviewed require youth to be employed part-time while enrolled in the program.

Our findings, and the findings and recommendations outlined above, lend weight to our assertion that programs need to include a comprehensive employment component that includes all aspects of employment preparation.

Suggested Promising Practices Criteria

Programs should include an employment component that...

- **provides opportunities for career exploration,**

All youth need opportunities to explore the career and educational options available to them. Such opportunities might include career days, job shadowing, job mentors, and internships. Career exploration can begin as early as age eight and may continue with more substantive experiences during the high school years. Visits to college campuses to learn about courses of study help youth in grades 9-11 explore their career choices.

- **helps youth develop an educational and career plan,**

Every young person needs an academic plan that includes information on course taking, assessments, extracurricular activities, career aspirations, and other life goals relevant to adulthood. The plan should include information on a young person's interests, strengths in school, visions for career and personal life, and opportunities for career and work experience.

- **provides career related work experience,**

Youth who have the opportunity to earn money while working in a field of interest are more likely to pursue their educational and career goals. Recent

studies suggest that “education works best and is most useful for future careers when students apply what they learn to real-life, real-work situations.”⁶⁶

- **helps youth track academic and work experiences,**

Youth need help in keeping track of their academic credits and their work experiences. Some agencies have developed internal tools like portfolios to help youth document their school and work activities and to record progress toward their personal and professional goals.

- **connects youth with career role models,**

Effective youth initiatives connect young people with adults who care about them and who can serve as role models for them. These adults serve as advisors, mentors, coaches, and advocates. They offer wisdom, encouragement, praise, and support. “Committed and skilled adults are essential to guide young people and help them navigate the world on their own.”⁶⁶

- **builds and manages partnerships with local educational institutions, industries, and employment programs, and**

Regular discussions with local community college and university faculty and staff can help youth prepare for postsecondary education. These sessions can begin with youth as young as 13 or 14 thus providing them with information about academic requirements before they enter high school. Partnerships with local industries can produce career mentors and lead to career related work experiences for youth. Partnerships with employment programs can create opportunities for youth to obtain specialized supports and services that the child welfare agency may not be able to provide.

- **provides career exploration.**

Even youth who are successfully employed need opportunities to explore possible careers. Such opportunities might include career days, job shadowing, job mentors and internships. Career exploration can begin as early as grades 6 or 8 and may continue with more substantive experiences during the high school years. Visits to college campuses to learn about courses of study are an example of career exploration for young adults in grades 9-11.

Survey Findings

Our survey of 98 programs found that 95 percent of programs report providing and/or referring youth to the following employment services:

- Introduce youth to career opportunities;
- Provide job search training;
- Introduce youth to postsecondary opportunities;

⁶⁶ Brown, David E., “Preparing Youth for the Workforce under Welfare Reform,” <http://www.nga.org/Pubs/IssueBriefs/1998/980728Youth.asp>

- Provide job skills training;
- Provide career exploration.

Additionally, over 80 percent of programs report providing or referring youth to these employment services:

- Provide career related work experience;
- Provide job coaching;
- Provide job placement; and,
- Provide job development (e.g. creating employment opportunities).

Programs reported a number of different collaborative relationships designed to expose youth to work and career opportunities. Examples of collaborative relationships include:

- Collaboration with the JPTA and local business community;
- Hiring an employment coordinator to specifically focus on connecting youth to employment and training opportunities;
- Collaboration with TANF job developers; and;
- A collaborations that includes the local job service, vocational training center and the local state college career services center.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Brighton Center Independent Living Program, KY

The program has relationships with several local businesses who employ IL youth. They bring in employment consultants and also have a relationship with the local university to assist youth with career assessments.

Child and Family Tennessee, Transitional Living Program, TN

The agency operates an economic development program that works closely with area businesses. Transitional Living youth can choose to participate in this program. Youth will be united with an adult who works with various industries. The industries hire the youth and the adult serves a job coach.

The King's Ranch/Hannah Homes Transitional Living Program, AL

The program uses the Career Pathways tool to help youth identify vocational/career interests. They work closely with First Jobs and WorkShops, two area agencies that provide employment opportunities for

youth with specific diagnoses. The program also collaborates with the local JTPA program.

The Casey Family Program, San Antonio Division, TX

The program retains a part-time vocational/educational consultant who helps youth complete the Discovery Program assessment tool. Youth work on either a career path or a secondary educational plan. Program youth are able to participate in Project Quest, a 1-2 year program that works with youth in an educational advocacy/career development case management role. The program also has a relationship with the local Community College District. Representative from the Community College District visit the program office 23 times per month to assist youth with financial aid forms, admissions and enrollment. San Antonio is a regional health care center, the Community College District focuses on training students for jobs in the health care field.

Where can I find more information?

Wagner, C. G. (1999) "Young poor, and forgotten: undereducated youths struggle to survive in a booming economy." *The Futurist* 33(4) p. 14(2)

Lewis, T., Stone J., Shipley, W., Madzar, S. (1998) "The transition from school to work: An examination of the literature." *Youth and Society* 29(3) p259(34).

DeJesus, E. (1997) "Tales from the bright side: Conversations with graduates of youth employment programs." In Sum, A. et al. (Eds.) *A Generation of Challenge: Pathways to Success for Urban Youth*. Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies: Baltimore. MD

Search Institute (1997). *The Asset Approach: Giving Kids What They Need to Succeed*. Search Institute: Minneapolis, MN

Sandler, L. Vandegrift, J. A., VerBruggen, C. (1995) "From desert to garden: reconnecting disconnected youth." *Educational Leadership*, 52(8) p14(3).

Community Linkages

Summary

Community linkages refer to the ability of youth to be aware of and gain access to community resources. These resources include health and mental health care, job and career opportunities, community leadership opportunities, and opportunities to establish connections to adult mentors. While each of these community resources is important in its own right, the literature increasingly points toward the importance of a significant adult relationship in supporting youth during the transition to adulthood.

Ansell et al.⁶⁷ focus on the findings of the resiliency research^{68 69} that focuses on adolescents who are moving from foster care. This research examines the ability of young people exiting foster care to develop a support network and the influence of informal role models and mentors as members of this support network. Mech⁷⁰, in a survey of three different groups of adolescents in foster care, found that mentoring is increasingly being used as a support service to assist older foster youth to make the transition to adulthood. Noble⁷¹ found that one of the key factors of why some foster children succeed when others do not is the presence of a significant adult in the lives of youth who succeed.

Caliber Associates⁷² note that over two-thirds of the reporting states indicated that they attempt to help youth form mentoring relationships. The states listed the following sources for youth mentors:

- Work place mentors;
- Student mentors;
- Cultural empowerment mentors;
- Former foster care youth mentors;
- Peer mentors; and,
- Community volunteers.

⁶⁷ Ansell, et al. (1999) op Cit.

⁶⁸ Mech, E.V., Pryde, J. A., Rycraft, J. R. (1995) "Mentors for Adolescents in Foster Care." *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 12(4) 317-328.

⁶⁹ Rhodes, J. E., Contreras, J. M., Mangelsdorf, S. C. "Natural mentor relationships among Latina adolescent mothers." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 22:211-227.

⁷⁰ Mech, E.V., Lucy-Dobson, C., Hulseman, F. (1994) "Life skills knowledge A survey of foster adolescents in three placement settings." *Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review* 16(3-4) 181-200.

⁷¹ Noble, L. S. (1997) "The face of foster care." *Educational Leadership* 54(7): 26-29.

⁷² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, op. Cit.

However, despite the states' recognition of the importance of mentoring, many states also reported difficulties in finding enough mentors to serve their eligible populations.

The six sources of mentors mentioned cited in the Caliber Associates report suggest the wide variety of sources states utilize to attempt to connect youth with adults. This reflects the findings of our earlier research⁷³ reflecting the shortage of available mentors. In this study, only 18 percent of youth indicated they talked to a mentor about what they wanted to be when they grew up. Our current survey of programs also reflects the difficulty of finding a sufficient number of community volunteers to enable programs to help youth establish mentoring relationships. Programs overwhelmingly indicated their desire to access mentoring resources, however, the programs we interviewed repeatedly mentioned the difficulty of attracting sufficient numbers of suitable adult volunteers.

Community linkages for youth must focus on a larger target than the establishment of mentoring relationships. Caliber Associates⁷⁴ list the following community resources that state IL programs reported referring youth to:

- Job training programs;
- Private industry councils;
- Local businesses;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- Local service agencies;
- Housing agencies;
- School districts;
- Legal services;
- Health and medical organizations;
- Mental health agencies;
- Organizations serving special needs populations;
- Child care agencies;
- Food banks; and,
- Faith-based organizations.

The inclusion of faith-based organizations reflects our current finding of the importance this link can play for youth. The programs we interviewed who mentioned faith-based organizations emphasized several valuable aspects of

⁷³ Jones, E., et Al. Improving Economic Opportunities for Young People Served by the Foster Care System: Three Views of the Path to Independent Living: Phase 2: Survey. Edmund S Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Portland, ME

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, op. Cit.

these resources, including the opportunity to develop peer and adult relationships and the opportunity to participate in community service work.

Suggested Promising Practices Criteria

Programs should establish community linkages that...

- **connect youth with community resources,**

In order for youth to be able to live on their own in the community, they need to know the resources available and how to access them. Prior to leaving foster care, youth should know where they will be addressing their financial and medical needs. Creating community linkages becomes even more challenging when the youth's plan is to return to a home community many miles away.

- **connect youth with adult mentors,**

Community linkages need to extend beyond connecting with businesses and organizations. It must also include personal connections. Each youth needs someone he/she can contact for support and guidance. This person might be a biological family member, an adopted family, a guardian, a former schoolteacher, a former counselor, or a mentor.

- **create job/ career opportunities for youth, and**

When programs reach out to the professional and business community, they often create job and career opportunities for youth. These linkages are created by making program presentations at local business and civic meetings, opening board membership to community leaders, inviting business and professional leaders to meet with youth, and seeking opportunities for youth to spend time with local community leaders.

- **create leadership opportunities for youth.**

Youth can benefit from giving back to their communities through participating in volunteer activities, completing community improvement projects, and serving on community committees.

Survey Findings

Our survey asked programs which of the following community links they provide for youth:

- Connect youth to community resources;
- Connect youth with adult mentors;
- Create job/career opportunities for youth; and,
- Create community leadership opportunities for youth.

We found that all of the responding programs connect youth with community resources. This is the only one of the four community links that is directly provided by the majority (92%) of the programs. We also found that in the majority of the programs we interviewed, this connection involved connecting youth with physical and mental health resources in the community. The linking consisted of placing the responsibility for making and keeping appointments with the youth. Seventy-seven programs, (77%) indicated that they create job and career opportunities for youth either directly through the program or via referral to other programs or resources in the community. Seventy-three programs, (75%) attempt to connect youth with adult mentors either as a component of their program or through referral to other resources. Sixty-eight programs (69%) create community leadership opportunities for youth.

Several themes emerged from our interviews. First, we found an extremely high level of interest in mentoring, nearly three-fourths of the programs attempt to connect youth with mentors. However, we found that in almost every case mentoring connections are created informally and occur in a haphazard manner. The primary reason that programs have difficulty in formalizing mentoring programs and relationships is the shortage of adult volunteers.

The second theme that emerged is the role that the faith community plays in helping youth establish community links. Several programs reported actively connecting youth to the faith community. These links serve as volunteer opportunities, spiritual connections and a route to establish roots within the community.

What are some notable programs and resources?

The King's Ranch/Hannah Homes Transitional Living Program, AL

Mentoring relationships are established in instances when program volunteers and program youth can be matched in terms of interests. Youth do church-based community service.

Supervised Apartments and Independent Living (S.A.I.L.), CT

Youth are referred to community mental health resources in order to help youth establish a community link. The S.A.I.L. Program also has links with employers in the community who hire youth involved in the program.

Denver Department of Human Services Alive-E Youth in Transition, CO

The program connects youth with spiritual community, program graduates serve as Life Skill instructors, informal mentors. The program

director noted that these mentoring relationships occur as an informal outgrowth of the Life Skills instruction. Additionally, the program encourages youth to transition from care to college, reflecting the program's belief that "Education is the best community link."

Volunteer Mobile, Inc. Connections Mentor Program, AL

The mentor program provides mentors to youth "living in and preparing to leave," foster care. The program contact states, "The mentors can provide friendship, support and modeling that will help youth take charge of their own life and become integrated in the community." The mentors are volunteers who are required to commit to a minimum of four hours per month with their mentee. Additionally, mentors are required to submit monthly progress reports, have contact with the youth's case manager and social worker, and attend quarterly meetings. The program asks mentors to recommit to the program on a yearly basis. At the time of the interview, the program had connected 23 youth with mentors, with approximately 45 youth waiting to be matched with a mentor.

Valley Youth House Independent Living Program, PA

The program connects youth to the community based on their needs and interests. The program has established connections with 4H, local employers, and community service projects. Additionally, the program reports occasional successes in linking youth with local contractors/tradesmen to mentor youth and teach them employment skills.

Where can I find more information?

Finn, J. L., Checkoway, B. (1998) "Young people as competent community builders: a challenge to social work." *Social Work* 43(4) p. 335(11).

Royse, D. (1998) "Mentoring High-Risk Minority Youth: Evaluation of the Brothers Project" *Adolescence* v33 n129 p145 (14).

Guetzloe, E. (1997) "The Power of Positive Relationships: Mentoring Programs in the School and Community." *Preventing School Failure* v41 i3 p100 (1).

Dendero, G.M., (1997) "Mentors: Beacons of Hope." *Adolescence* v32 n128 p881 (6).

Supervising Independent Living

Summary

A supervised independent living experience provides youth with an opportunity to live independently while still being able maintaining contact with the supports the child welfare system provides. Supervised independent living arrangements allow youth to make a gradual progression toward full independence. Referring again to Ansell's continuum to independent living⁷⁵, (cited in Cook [1988]) supervised independent living experiences occur when youth have progressed to the third level of the continuum. The continuum of skills acquisition includes:

- Informal learning;
- Formal learning;
- Supervised practice; and,
- Self-sufficiency.

The importance of a supervised independent living experience is demonstrated by examining the outcomes of foster youth without supervised independent living experiences to those of a group of youth who participated in a supervised independent living situation. Courtney et al.⁷⁶ reported on the post-care living arrangements of a group of former foster youth 12 to 18 months after they left care. Twelve percent of the youth reported being homeless at least once since discharge. While 37 percent of the youth reported living in the same place since discharge, 22 percent of the youth reported living in four or more places since discharge. In contrast, Mech et al.⁷⁷ found that supplementing basic placement settings with apartment experiences helps to increase a youth's life skills.

The GAO⁷⁸ reported that their survey revealed that more than 80 percent of the states provided transitional practice living arrangements to *some* (our emphasis) youth while they are still in foster care to allow them an opportunity to experience independent living for a period of time. However, the GAO also found:

Officials in the four areas we visited confirmed that the number of supervised transitional housing sites is very limited and that they could not provided adequate housing for both youths in care and those who have left the system. One transitional housing provider in Texas indicated that

⁷⁵ Cook, R. (1988) "Trends and needs in programming for independent living." *Child Welfare* V. LXVII, n. 6.

⁷⁶ Courtney, M., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Taylor, A., Nesmith, A. (1998) *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

⁷⁷ Mech, E. V., Ludy-Dobson, C. Hulseman, F. (1994) "Foster Youths in transition: Research Perspectives on Preparation for Independent Living." *Child Welfare* 73(5) 603-623.

⁷⁸ GAO (1999) op Cit.

the program has space for only six youths, while an additional 80 to 100 youths with no place to live upon exiting the foster care system could benefit from this type of housing. (p. 12)

Caliber Associates⁷⁹ reported that states increasingly reported supervised living activities supported by both state and federal dollars. States reported that they were severely constrained in these activities by the ILP restrictions prohibiting the use of federal ILP funds for room and board. The report makes the following recommendations to promote “Experiential Learning in Supervised Environments.”

- Allow states to allocate some of their federal funding, matched by state funds, for room and board to enable expanded supervised living programs.
- Develop guidelines on eligibility criteria (e.g. enrollment in school, employment) for youth participating in supervised living programs.
- Conduct evaluation studies to assess the outcomes of different supervised living models.
- Expand the use of tuition waivers that encourage youth to attend college or vocational programs and continue to build valuable educational and independent living skills in a structured environment. (p. VI - 10)

The Chafee Act⁸⁰ explicitly addresses the first of the Caliber Associates recommendations. One of the major changes of the Chafee Act is a provision that reads:

States may use up to 30 percent of their allocation of Federal funds to provide room and board for youth up to age 21 who aged out of foster care.⁸¹ (p. 2)

This change will enable states to expand supervised independent living services without increasing state spending.

Ansell et al.⁸² emphasize that when youth complete “the program,” they should be established in a safe and affordable living arrangement that they can continue to occupy if they choose.

⁷⁹ U.S. DHHS (1999) op Cit.

⁸⁰ ACYF-CB-IM-00-03: Information on Public Law (P. L.) 106-109, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. March 16, 2000. <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/policy/im0003.htm>. (Chafee Act).

⁸¹ U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services *Administration for Children, Youth and Families* <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/policy/IM003.htm>.

⁸² Ansell, D., Charles, K., Copeland, R. (1999) *Promising Practices, Models, and Policies in the Area of Independent Living/Self-Sufficiency: A Review of the Casey Family Program Documents* The University of Oklahoma, National Resource Center for Youth Services, Tulsa, OK

Suggested Promising Practices Criteria

Programs should provide a supervised independent living component that allows youth to...

- **select their own housing,**

Living in a supervised independent living arrangement is challenging for most youth. When the location of the housing unit is in a different school district or away from familiar community resources, it can be even more difficult. Youth who select their own housing are also likely to be proud of it and to maintain it.

- **pay their own bills and maintain their own budget,**

Programs must provide youth with the opportunity to practice budgeting and bill paying while they are living in a less supervised and more private setting even though it is likely that they will make mistakes.

- **work out landlord/ roommate disputes, and**

Programs must anticipate the eventual landlord and roommate problem and have a policy for dealing with both.

- **assume the lease or establish their own housing arrangement at the end of the program.**

When youth complete “the program,” they should be established in a safe and affordable living arrangement that they can continue if they so chose. The program should “walk away” from the youth instead of the youth walking away from the program.

Survey Findings

Our survey found that 76 of our responding programs (78%) include one or more of the criteria Ansell et al.⁸³ list as integral pieces of an effective supervised independent living program. Program responses are summarized below:

- Youth find own housing (someone else is landlord) (76 programs);
- Program assists youth in working out landlord/roommate disputes (71 programs);
- Youth pay their own bills and maintain their own budget (70 programs);
- Youth can assume the lease at program completion (64 programs); and,
- Program provides housing (Agency is landlord) (40 programs).

Overall, we found that:

⁸³ Ibid.

- Programs are more likely to have youth find their own housing (57%) than to provide the housing (41%).
- More than half of the programs allow the youth to assume the lease at the end of the program.

Our telephone interviews revealed that while 40 programs currently own housing resources used for supervised independent living placements, a number of programs plan to try to expand in this area. Our interviews also revealed that agencies struggle with the need to allow youths to make their own mistakes. While agency support and understanding of this need is nearly universal, the practical realities of community impacts can constrain the relationship between the agency and the surrounding community. One rural program noted:

There are occasionally difficulties in knowing how to balance room for youth to make mistakes but still provide sufficient structure. Walking the line of failure-safety can be difficult in a small town and can result in over-parenting.⁸⁴

Our interviews and open-ended comments contained in the surveys both illustrate that agencies are very aware of housing needs of youth. There appears to be a move toward creative housing solutions including:

- new partnerships;
- creative funding; and
- more funds invested in program-owned living spaces.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Denver Dept. of Human Services Alive-E Youth in Transition, CO

The Program works with two agencies recruited to provide supervised apartment living situations for program youth. Three Residential Treatment Centers support youth in supervised apartment living settings.

Casey Family Services, CT

The agency has developed working relationships with landlords who will rent to program youth. The program helps youth to find suitable housing options, (YMCA, YWCA, rooming houses, apartments) and helps youth develop budgets and helps youth furnish their apartments to get started.

Valley Youth House Independent Living Program, PA

⁸⁴ Tanis, Cheryl, personal communication (January 20, 2000).

Offers program leased apartments, youth rented and program supported apartments along with youth-tailored counseling and support provided in apartment settings.

Supervised Apartments and Independent Living (SAIL), CT

Offers a continuum of housing options along with intensive supervision and continuous support offered in relation to youth needs.

Kenosha Human Development Services Independent Living, WI

The agency administers two short-term group homes for younger (16-16 1/2) youth and an array of non-agency owned scattered site locations including boarding houses, and a network of landlords. Youth find their own housing and maintain their own budgets.

Child and Family Tennessee, Transitional Living Program, TN

The agency owns two apartment buildings and is a community housing agent. This allows the program to provide a continuum of housing resources and supports, including both agency owned housing and agency assistance in helping youth establish their own living situations upon program completion.

GAO⁸⁵ cites two examples of supervised independent living programs that provide residential services to youth after they leave foster care.

Challengers Independent Living Program, MD

Foster care youth can reside for 18-24 months in apartments furnished and supervised by the service provider and receive a weekly stipend to purchase clothing, food and household supplies.

Real Solutions Transitional Living Program, TX

This privately funded program provides youth with a group living arrangement for up to three years, normally from ages 18-21 while youth adjust to self-sufficiency.

Where can I find more information?

Kroner, M. J. (1999) "Housing Options for Independent Living Programs." *CWLA Press*, Washington, DC

Cook, R. (1994) "Are we helping foster youth prepare for their future?" *Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for Adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review* 16(3-4) 213-229.

⁸⁵ GAO (1999) op cit.

English, D.J., Kouidou-Giles, S., Plocke, M. (1994) "Readiness for independence: A study of youth in foster care." *Children and Youth Services Review* 16(3-4) 213-229.

Kroner, M. J. (1988) "Living arrangement options for young people preparing for independent living." *Child Welfare* 67(6), 547-562.

Summary

Our survey identified two major health services issues that youth need to be able to understand and manage prior to making the transition out of the foster care system. First, youth must be prepared to understand and manage their own physical, dental and mental health needs. Second, prior to leaving care, programs must help youth to connect with appropriate health care resources in their own community. This is especially important given that studies have identified foster youth as having more health and mental health care needs than non-foster youth. Rosenfeld⁸⁶ estimated that foster youth have three to seven times as many health, developmental and emotional problems as non-foster youth from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Halfon⁸⁷ reported that while children in out-of-home care make up only 4% of the Medicaid eligible population in California, they consumed 41% of the Medicaid mental health services delivered during the study period.

Youth in Independent Living programs receive health insurance through their state Medicaid programs. While youth are in foster care the arrangements for their health care are handled through the programs the youth are involved with. This creates a two-part dilemma. First, unless youth are deliberately taught to understand their health care needs and how to make and keep appointments they will be unable to manage their own health care needs after leaving care. Second, as a result of established relationships, agencies and programs are able to find physical/mental and dental health providers who are willing to work with Medicaid enrollees. Youth are insulated from understanding how difficult it can be to gain access to the healthcare system as a Medicaid insurance beneficiary.

Ansell et al.⁸⁸ assert that the literature on health related outcomes for former foster youth indicate that programs are not adequately preparing youth to access physical, mental and dental health services on their own. The authors emphasize that it is imperative that youth be connected to physical, mental and dental health services in the community where the youth will be living after leaving care, regardless of where that community is located. The authors also place specific emphasis on the need to help youth address substance abuse issues, both while in care and after making the transition from care. The authors cite a

⁸⁶ Rosenfeld, A. (1997) "Foster Care: An Update." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 36(4) 448-458.

⁸⁷ Halfon, N., Berkowitz, G., Klee, L. (1995). "Mental health service utilization by children in out-of-home care in California." *Pediatrics* 89, 1238-1244.

⁸⁸ Ansell, et al (1999) op cit.

General Accounting Office Study⁸⁹ of foster care placements in three major cities that found that 78 percent of the children in foster care in these cities had at least one drug or alcohol abusing parent. The Westat⁹⁰ study reported illegal drug taking in 50 percent of the foster youth population. Ansell et al.⁹¹ point out that although this rate of substance abuse parallels that of the general population for this age group, the additional risk factors foster youth are exposed to make substance abuse a potentially more acute issue for youth in care.

Courtney et al.⁹² found that only 21 percent of sample youth reported receiving mental health services after leaving care, compared to 47 percent of sample youth who were receiving mental health services while in care. The youth reported that access to care was difficult due to lack of insurance and the inability to pay for care out of pocket.

We considered both the physical, dental and mental health needs of youth in foster care. Physical and mental health needs must be met for youth to succeed in other realms. Not only are foster youth more likely to have health and mental health problems than the general population^{93,94,95,96,97} but problems also exist in youth trying to access appropriate medical care.^{98,99,100} Youth are generally eligible for Medicaid while they are in care, however extension of Medicaid benefits after youth leave care is at the discretion of the individual states. Depending on their state of residence, youth may or may not have health insurance after leaving care. In the absence of Medicaid coverage, youth have limited access to health care. This problem is exacerbated by employment that typically does not provide medical, dental or mental health benefits. Given these possibilities, it is extremely important that youth be connected to physical,

⁸⁹ -----, (1994) *Foster Care: Parental Drug Abuse Has Alarming Impact on Young Children* GAO/HEHS-94-89, Apr. 4, 1994.

⁹⁰ Westat (1991). *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth: Final Report*. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

⁹¹ Ansell, et al (1999) op cit

⁹² Courtney, M., Paliavin, I., Grogan-Taylor, A., Nesmith, A. (1998) *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12-18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

⁹³ Courtney, M., Pilaivin, I., Grogan-Taylor, A. (1995). *The Wisconsin Study of Youth Aging Out of Out-of-Home Care: A Portrait Children About to leave Care*. Institute for Research on Poverty: Madison, WI.

⁹⁴ Chernoff, R. Combs-Orme, T., Risley-Curtis, C., Heisler, A. (1994). "Assessing the health status of children entering foster care." *Pediatrics* 93(4) April, 1994, p 549(8).

⁹⁵ Fanshel, D., Finch, S. J., Grundy, J. F. (1990) *Foster children in a life course perspective*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

⁹⁶ Iglehart A. P. (1994) "Adolescents in foster care: Predicting readiness for independent living." *Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review* 16(3-4), 159-169.

⁹⁷ Mech, E.V., Lucy-Dobson, C., Hulseman, F. (1994) "Life skills knowledge A survey of foster adolescents in three placement settings." *Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review* 16(3-4) 181-200.

⁹⁸ Dubowitz, et al (1990). *The physical and mental health and educational status of children placed with relatives: Final Report*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland at Baltimore, Department of Pediatrics.

⁹⁹ Moffat, M. E. K., Peddie, M., Stulginkas, Pless, I. B., Stienmetz, N. (1985) "Health care delivery to foster children: a study." *Health Social Work* 10: 129-137.

¹⁰⁰ Risley-Curtiss, C. (1996). *Child Protective Services: The Health Status and Care of Children in Out-of-Home Care*. ASPAC Advisor, 9(4), 1-7.

mental and dental health care in the community they will live in after leaving care. The existence of established relationships with health care providers can be extremely important to youth being able to maintain health care relationships in the face of their potentially changing insurance status.

The Chafee Act¹⁰¹ authorizes states to establish a new Medicaid eligibility group for children who are in foster care under the responsibility of the state on their 18th birthday. A letter from the Health Care Financing Administration to state Medicaid Directors explains the Medicaid options states may choose to enact:

- Providing eligibility for children until they reach age 21 or only until age 19 or 20;
- Not apply an income or resource test for these children. If the state does apply an income or resource test, then the standards and methodologies used cannot be more restrictive than those used for the State's low income families with children under Section 1931 of the act; and,
- Only make those children eligible who were furnished foster care maintenance payments or independent living services under a program funded under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.¹⁰² (p. 1)

These options will enable states to recoup the Federal Medicaid contribution while they provide Medicaid coverage for independent living program graduates.

Suggested Promising Practices and Criteria

Programs should include health services that...

- **prepare youth to manage their own medical/dental/mental health needs, and**

While youth are in care, their medical, dental and mental health needs are the responsibility of their caregivers. Licensing regulations require that preventative health services be provided on a regular basis and often there are standards regarding how needed treatment is administered and by whom. These regulations and standards are a necessary protection while a child is in care but can become a barrier when young people prepare to leave care to live on their own. Programs must help youth to understand the importance of continuing their medical/dental/mental health care, learn how assess their on-going health needs and learn how to administer their own medication.

¹⁰¹ Chafee Act, op Cit.

¹⁰² Department of Health and Human Services, Health Care Financing Administration. *Medicaid Director Letter: Foster Care Independence Act of 1999*. December 14, 1999.

- **connect youth with appropriate health resources in their own communities.**

When youth leave care, they should already be connected with the health care resources they will be using in the community where they will be living, regardless of where that community is located.

Survey Findings

In our survey, we found that the majority of programs (96%) connect youth with health resources in the community and that the majority state that they prepare youth for dealing with their health needs (93%). In addition, nearly half (47%) of the programs have a therapist on staff, while the remainder of programs connect youth to mental health resources in the community. Programs listed several other health care resources including:

- A full service health care clinic operated by the agency;
- A “Medical lifeline,” that provides health history and health care referral information for youth; and,
- A nurse available for youth living in supervised independent living arrangements.

Programs that participated in telephone interviews emphasized that the loss of health insurance coverage is a critical difficulty during the youth transition to adulthood.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Casey Family Services, Hartford, CT

The program will purchase health insurance for program graduates (through age 25) in order to assure health care coverage. The program noted that Connecticut continues Medicaid benefits for IL youth through age 21 if their case remains open.

Child and Family Tennessee, Transitional Living Program, TN

Provides access to substance abuse and mental health treatment. They have a full-service clinic and a separate substance abuse program.

Oklahoma Dept. of Human Services, Independent Living Program, OK

Youth are provided with a “Medical Lifeline” when they leave care. The “Medical Lifeline” lists their doctor, dentist, therapist, medical information and immunization history.

Where can I find more information?

Courtney, M.E., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Kaylor, A. (1999). *The Wisconsin Study of Youth Aging out of Out-of-Home Care: A portrait of children about to leave care*. Madison, Wisconsin: Institute for Research on Poverty.

Simms, M. D., Freundlich, M., Battiselli, E. S., Kaufman, N. D. (1999) “Delivering Health and Mental Health Care to Children in Foster Family Care After Welfare and Health Care Reform.” *Child Welfare* 78(1) 166(18).

Fanshel, D., Finch, S. J., & Grundy, J. F., (1990). *Foster children in a life course perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Preparation for Adulthood Counseling Activities

Summary

Youth are required to face a number of difficult issues during the transition from care to independence. Some of these issues include developing personal support systems to replace the supports provided by the child welfare system, working through the emotional stages of the transition process, returning to their home communities and preparing to reunite with family members. Nollan et al.¹⁰³ document that the disruptions and traumas suffered by youth in out-of-home care can result in delays or interruptions in the development of life skills. The effects of these disruptions and traumas to the emotional well-being of youth must be addressed by programs.

Ansell et al.¹⁰⁴ place special emphasis on helping youth reunite with family members. The authors cite a number of studies that found a positive relationship between youth in care who have contact with their birth parents and positive post-care outcomes.^{105,106,107} Fanshel et al.¹⁰⁸ reported that over 20 percent of the foster children discharged from a program designed for children in "permanent foster care" returned to their biological or adoptive families after discharge from care. Ansell et al.¹⁰⁹ quote Landsman et al.:¹¹⁰

...the process of reconnecting with a family or significant other represents an important step toward emancipation and healthy functioning in the community, solidifying the adolescent's identity, affirming family connections, clarifying personal history, and re-integrating past trauma. (p.2)

Focusing on a different set of transition needs, Caliber Associates¹¹¹ emphasize the importance of helping youth develop/expand personal support systems and

¹⁰³ Nollan, K., Austin, J., Choca, M., Pesce, M. Stern, E (1999) Tuscon Division: Self-Sufficiency Initiative Summary 1996-1997 Seattle: The Casey Family Program.

¹⁰⁴ Ansell, et al, op Cit.

¹⁰⁵ Fanshel, D., Finch, S. J., & Grundy, J. F., (1990). *Foster children in a life course perspective*. Columbia University Press: New York.

¹⁰⁶ Courtney, M. E., Barth, R. P. (1996) "Pathways of Older Adolescents Out of Foster Care: Implications for Independent Living Services." *Social Work* 1 (1) 75-83.

¹⁰⁷ Iglehart, A. P. (1994) "Adolescents in foster care: Predicting readiness for independent living." *Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review* 16(3-4), 159-169.

¹⁰⁸ Fanshel, D., Finch, S. J., & Grundy, J. F., (1990). *Foster children in a life course perspective*. Columbia University Press: New York.

¹⁰⁹ Ansell, et al, op Cit

¹¹⁰ Landsman, M. J., Malone, K., Tyler, M., Black, J., Groza, V. (1999) "Achieving permanency for teens: lessons learned from a demonstration project." *Prevention Report* 2: 14-21. Iowa City: The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice.

¹¹¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. *Title IV-E Independent Living Programs A Decade in Review*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999.

the need for programs to help youth promote cultural identity development. Caliber Associates makes the following recommendations in these areas:

1. Conduct assessments within States to identify the specific needs of various sub-populations of youth (e.g., youth with disabilities, minorities, parents, youth with substance abuse issues) and tailor ILP programs to meet those needs.
2. Increase outreach to mentors from the same racial/ethnic backgrounds as youth in care.
3. Provide training to ILP staff in cultural competency and integrate more formal cultural awareness activities into ILP services. (VI - 11)

Suggested Promising Practices and Criteria

Programs should include preparation for adulthood counseling activities that help youth...

- **“make peace with the past” - trauma counseling,**

Many youth lack information or have inaccurate information about why they were removed from their families and came into care. Preparing to transition out of care often brings these unresolved issues to the surface and youth are often receptive to counseling at this time.

- **re-unite with family members,**

Many youth will return to their families regardless of whether the plan is to return home or not. Without preparation, re-uniting with family can be disappointing and even dangerous.

- **return to their home communities,**

Without preparation, going back to the “old neighborhood” can also be disappointing and difficult for youth. Expectations of “things being the way they were” can make it hard for youth to adjust. Ideally, counseling activities would include return visits and opportunities to make new community connections.

- **consider and prepare for adoption,**

Many older youth who have wanted to have a family do not realize that adoption is still an option that is available to them.

- **develop/expand personal support systems,**

Developing and maintaining a personal support system is an essential life skill. Some youth may need assistance beyond what is provided in basic life skill instruction.

- **work through the emotional stages of transition,**

Many youth experience the stages of reactive depression as they leave what is familiar and move to the unknown.

- **promote cultural identity/development, and**

Some youth experience conflict between how they define themselves and how the family, community or cultural group defines them.

- **work on substance abuse issues.**

Some youth have difficulty resolving substance abuse issues while in care and need on-going counseling. Some youth will use alcohol and other substances to deal with loneliness and other emotional issues when they move out on their own.

Survey Findings

In our survey of 98 programs, we found that 87 or more of the programs (=89%) provide or refer youth to the following counseling activities:

- Help youth address substance abuse issues;
- Help youth work through the emotional stages of transition;
- Address trauma counseling - “helping youth make peace with the past”;
- Help youth develop/expand personal support systems;
- Help youth reunite with family members;
- Help youth promote cultural identity development; and,
- Prepare youth to return to their home communities.

Fifty-three programs, (54%) reported providing or referring youth to counseling to help youth consider and prepare for adoption. Additional counseling activities that programs described include:

- Family counseling;
- Counseling through staff and outside therapists;
- Support groups;
- Mentors as supports; and,
- Weekly meetings to discuss IL needs.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Home-to-Home Aftercare Program, KY

The program includes the “Cornerstone” therapeutic support group. The program is facilitated by two therapists but the focus of the program is that “the older girls take the younger ones under their wing.” The group

focuses on providing older youth with an opportunity to educate the younger youth about what lies ahead.

Oklahoma Dept. of Human Services, Independent Living Program, OK

Oklahoma ILP youth participate in “Making peace with the past,” a program designed by an IL graduate. Program graduates will also provide support to program youth having difficulties.

Quakerdale Independent Living Cluster and Scattered Site, IA

Youth living in scattered-site apartments are generally paired up for mutual support. The cluster site program has a weekly two-hour meeting in which program youth help each other with life skills and problem solving.

Caliber Associates¹¹² cites the following states for including culturally-specific programming in their IL Programs:

Michigan

The Higher Heights Opportunity Project, a culturally specific program designed to empower African-American adolescent males between the ages of 18 and 22. The Project includes three components – 'Rites of Passage' curriculum (cited in connection with Youth development), mentorship, and job training – combined with a supervised ILP.

Ohio

Ohio's ILP has held culturally specific programs for African-American, Appalachian and Hispanic young men and women since FY 1992. The programs emphasize self-development, mentoring, career development, community/volunteer services and employment readiness.

Where can I find more information?

Simms, M. D., Freundlich, M., Battiselli, E. S., Kaufman, N. D. (1999) “Delivering Health and Mental Health Services to Children in Family Foster Care After Welfare and Health Care Reform.” *Child Welfare* 78(1) 166-183.

Blatt, S. D., Saletsky, R. D., meguid, V., Critz, C., O'Hara, M. T., Haller-Peck, S. M., Anderson, J. M. (1997) “A comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to providing health care for children in out-of-home care.” *Child Welfare* 76(2) 331-348.

¹¹² *ibid.*

Youth Development

Summary

At its most basic level, a youth development philosophy implies that youth are involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of their programs. Ansell, Charles and Copeland¹¹³ consider youth development philosophy as a core principal for programs serving older youth in foster care. Ansell et al. go on to assert, “This is done by creating an environment where young people feel supported and safe in practicing skills, learning about relationships and connecting with their communities.”(p. 31) Nixon¹¹⁴, commenting on youth development, refers to “...programs that promote development by building on strengths, creating opportunities to learn and practice real life skills and facilitating mutually beneficial participation in programs and communities.”(pp. 571-572) Caliber Associates,¹¹⁵ in a review of 10 years of independent living programs, makes the following recommendations for involving youth in helping to shape program activities:

First, states should be encouraged to embrace a youth development approach that moves beyond occasional youth involvement to ongoing engagement of youth in planning, development, and delivery of ILP services. Second, training and technical assistance (including peer-to-peer TA) should be provided. This training and technical assistance should focus on integrating youth development approaches, emphasizing youth strengths rather than deficits, and keeping youth engaged. (p. VI - 12)

Focusing on the state level, Caliber Associates¹¹⁶ found:

Over the decade, ILP staff steadily increased their efforts to involve and engage youth in multiple ways....This trend coincided with the increased focus on youth development in the youth services field, and with child welfare reform which has underscored the need to involve service recipients in the service delivery process. (p. IV - 20)

Caliber Associates examined the following youth involvement activities and traced the changes that have occurred in these areas between fiscal years 1989

¹¹³ Ansell, D., Charles, K., Copeland, R. (1999) *Promising Practices, Models, and Policies in the Area of Independent Living/Self-Sufficiency: A Review of Casey Family Program Documents*. University of Oklahoma, National Resource Center for Youth Services.

¹¹⁴ Nixon, R., ed. (1997) “Introduction” *Child Welfare* 76(5).

¹¹⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. *Title IV-E Independent Living Programs A Decade in Review*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

and 1996. The authors developed the following table to display these changes. (p. IV-21)

TABLE 2
Youth Involvement Activities
Percentage of States Reporting Services* FY 1989 and 1996

	FY 1989 (%)	FY 1996 (%)
Youth Involvement	84	96
Youth Conferences	59	81
Youth Advisory Boards	12	49
Youth Newsletters	18	53
Cultural Awareness Programs	16	36
Mentoring Programs	47	70
Recreational Activities	67	83
General Youth Development and Empowerment Activities	63	77

*These data represent the proportion of states that reported providing these services to at least one youth in their state. More states may have provided such services but it was not clearly evident in the review process.

The increases in youth development activities illustrated in this table are generally reflective of what we found through our survey of programs and our interviews with a subset of programs. The process of incorporating youth development philosophy and activities into programs has been confusing due to the lack of a generally accepted definition of youth development.¹¹⁷

Suggested Promising Practices and Criteria

Programs should include youth development activities that...

- **increase cultural awareness,**

Adolescence is a time when young people are exploring their world and developing a sense of self. Part of the exploration process can include learning about one's culture or "tribe of origin." Participation in rites of passage programs, spending time with elders, learning about one's native music, dance, food, and history are ways for youth to increase cultural awareness.

- **increase personal confidence,**

Activities that challenge youth to use newly learned skills and to demonstrate knowledge and abilities can increase self-confidence.

- **contribute to the community by; and,**

1. providing opportunities for youth to help youth,
2. providing opportunities for youth to advocate

¹¹⁷ Ansell, Et al. OpCit.

- **opportunities for youth advise and educate others.**

There are a variety of ways that programs have found for youth to contribute to their communities. For example, youth are involved in peer mentoring programs, serve as big brother or big sisters to younger children, serve on youth advisory boards, serve on agency boards, meet with administrators to recommend program changes, advocate for legislative change, co-facilitate staff and youth training sessions, and make panel presentations at conferences and meetings.

Survey Findings

With these perspectives in mind, we can move to examining what our research revealed about the concept of a youth development philosophy and program level activities that demonstrate a programmatic commitment to a youth development philosophy.

We found a certain level of confusion about “youth development philosophy,” among our survey respondents. Sixty-five programs (66%) indicated that their program includes a “youth development philosophy,” five programs, (5%) answered “ No,” and 17 programs, (17%) indicated they were “Not sure.” Eleven programs (10%) chose not to answer the question at all. The programs that participated in in-depth telephone interviews further reinforced the confusion. Five of the 20 interviewed programs answered the youth development question “Not sure,” or “No”, while it became clear during the phone interview that each of these programs included one or more elements that are consistent with a youth development philosophy.

Over 85 percent of the programs that responded to our survey provide or refer youth to youth development activities that:

- Increase personal confidence;
- Provide opportunities for youth to advocate for themselves and other youth;
- Increase cultural awareness;
- Provide opportunities for youth to help other youth; and,
- Provide opportunities for youth to advise and educate others.

Additionally, many programs involve youth in their own case planning and encourage youth to play a role at the agency/program. We asked programs to provide a brief description of their youth development philosophy. Fifty-nine programs, 60.2 percent of survey respondents, provided a description. The following are a sample of the descriptions provided.

Youth establish their own plans for independence, participate in their program and take a leadership role in the agency and the program. (Child and Family Services Transitional Living Program, NH);

Youth design and implement their programs, provide input on day to day issues, input on programmatic changes and participate in the hiring of new staff. (Oasis Center, Inc. TN)

Clients participate in developing their own goals as well as goals for the Program. Youth are responsible for their own space and also for contributing to the development of the agency and the program. (Tumbleweed Young Adult Program, AZ)

We found that many programs do not incorporate a formal youth development model, however, almost all programs incorporate some elements of youth development philosophy. The process of reviewing the surveys, conducting telephone interviews and visiting programs made it clear that programs want to provide a strong youth development focus but need direction and assistance to help fully incorporate a youth development philosophy into their programs.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Home-to-Home Aftercare Program, KY

The program includes the “Cornerstone” therapeutic support group. The program is facilitated by two therapists but the focus of the program is “the older girls take the younger ones under their wing.” The group focuses on providing older youth with an opportunity to educate the younger youth about what lies ahead.

Denver Dept. of Human Services, Alive-E Youth in Transition, CO

Alumni youth return as volunteers to teach IL skills to current program youth. This program was initiated at the request of youth enrolled in the program. The program also established a youth advisory board in 1997.

Epworth Child and Family Services Independent Living Program, MO

“We believe our role is to allow each kid to find his/her strengths and abilities and build on those while being aware of weaknesses. Our job is to fade out of these kids lives and that they are successful when we do.” Program staff also indicated that they plan to incorporate the CWLA Positive Youth Development Model during the year 2000.

Brighton Center Independent Living Program, KY

Choice Theory (empower youth, youth decide their own consequences).

Oklahoma Dept. of Human Services, Independent Living Program, OK
“Making peace with the past,” a program designed by youth.

Baltimore County Dept. of Social Services Independent Living Program, MD
“We have a Youth Advisory Board active in every local jurisdiction. Two representatives from each board attend a state Youth Advisory Board to discuss issues for the entire Maryland IL Program.”

Preparation for Adult Living(PAL), TX
The Youth Leadership Committee encourages young people to take ownership in developing a better program to meet their needs.

Kenosha Human Development Services Independent Living Program, WI
One board position is reserved for a youth being served by the agency.

Lutheran Social Services Transitional Living Cooperative, WI
Program utilizes graduates as experts in training new participants.

Thames Valley Council on Community Action, Inc., CT
Youth guide the program development and invite youth back as role models and mentors.

Where can I find more information?

Training Resources

Child Welfare League of America, Washington, D.C.
National Resource Center for Youth Services, University of Oklahoma,
Tulsa, OK.

Literature Resources

Nixon, R. ed. (1997) *Child Welfare A Special Issue: Positive Youth Development*
Vol. LXXVI, #5, September/October 1997.

Gavazzi, S., M., Alford, K., A., McKenney, P., C. (1996) “Culturally Specific Programs for Foster Care Youth: The Sample Case of an African-American Rites of Passage Program.” *Family Relations* 45, 166-174.

Scales, P., C. (1996) “A responsive ecology for positive young adolescent development.” *The Clearing House* v. 69, n. 4, P 226(5).

Phi Delta Kappa (1995) “Research and findings on the Program on Youth and Caring,” *Phi Delta Kappan* v76, n9 668(4).

Aftercare

Summary

Irvine¹¹⁸ defines aftercare services as “a system of services for youth (age 16-21) in the post-placement phase who are living in an independent arrangement.” Important aftercare components include assistance in providing basic needs such as housing, financial assistance, and employment services and supports. Other important aftercare components are community connections, social service support systems, a continuum of housing options, and an open-door policy. Limited after care studies^{119,120,121} have demonstrated that adolescents who receive follow up services were statistically better than comparison groups in terms of lower educational drop out rates and higher employment stability. Burrell et al.¹²² recommend that aftercare programs offer services to youth on an “as-needed” basis. Often, after an initial period of being on their own, many youth want to take advantage of aftercare services. Several authors^{123,124} recommend that aftercare programs maintain an “open-door” policy so youth can feel comfortable requesting these services after they have formally left care.

The GAO¹²⁵ report states that the 30 states responding to their survey reported providing formal services for a period of time after foster care, serving a total of 7,830 youth during FY 1998. The majority of the responding states indicated that they provide a full range of services including education and employment assistance, training in daily living skills and individual or group counseling. Additionally, GAO noted that 21 states mentioned providing additional services such as mentoring, transportation assistance, medical coverage and clothing.

Caliber Associates¹²⁶ note that, “Aftercare services typically refer to those resources provided to youth under 21 who have been discharged from a foster care setting.” (p IV-28) The authors also noted that, “In many cases, aftercare was provided on an informal, individualized basis, but increasingly, states were

¹¹⁸ Irvine, J. (1988) *Aftercare Services* Child Welfare, 67(6) 587-594.

¹¹⁹ Wetzstein, C. (1999) *Orphans Get the Boot*. Insight on the News, 14(44) p28.

¹²⁰ Burrell, K., Perez-Fereiro, V. (1995) *A national review of management of the federally funded Independent Living Program*. US Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC

¹²¹ Wedeven, T., Pecora, P., Hurwitz, M. Howell, R., Newell, D. (1994) *The Boise Division Alumni Survey: A Summary Report*. Boise, ID The Casey Family Program.

¹²² Burrell, K., Perez-Feirero, V. (1995) op Cit.

¹²³ Child Welfare League of America (1998) *Improving Economic Opportunity for Youth Formerly Served by the Foster Care System: Identifying the Support Network’s Strengths and Needs: Interim Report*. Washington, DC, Child Welfare League of America.

¹²⁴ Irvine, J. (1988) op Cit.

¹²⁵ GAO (1999) op Cit.

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. *Title IV-E Independent Living Programs A Decade in Review*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999.

moving toward more formalized, broader-based aftercare programs. Among the examples of state aftercare programs Caliber Associates cite are:

Connecticut

Formal aftercare activities include alumni newsletters and surveys, mentor networks, support groups, workshops and special events to keep the ILP connected to their program graduates.

Ohio

Five providers were contracted to provide the following array of services:

Employment training programs;

Life skills and college bound services;

Case management, day care and Head Start services, transportation allowances, legal assistance for youth enrolled in job readiness or educational enhancement programs;

A network of support for youth lacking in necessary environmental and personal systems to overcome the barriers to completing education or gaining and maintaining employment.

Nevada

The ILP developed an aftercare medical program, which provided primary healthcare services to youth for up to one year post-discharge.

Despite these examples, Caliber Associates observed that states continue to advocate for more extensive and formalized aftercare programs for youth who have emancipated from care.

Suggested Promising Practices and Criteria

Programs should include aftercare services that provide...

- **temporary medical coverage/health care,**

For most youth, medical coverage ends when they leave foster care. Their jobs often do not offer medical benefits or they are ineligible for these benefits because they are not employed on a full-time basis.

- **temporary financial assistance,**

Most young adults have financial management problems in the first few months on their own, particularly when they experience unexpected expenses.

- **temporary housing,**

Many youth experience at least one period of homelessness, either because of a living arrangement that did not work out or because of a loss of income.

- **help in establishing and maintaining own living arrangements,**
 In many communities, safe and affordable housing is hard to find. Landlords may be reluctant to rent to a young person without a co-signer on the lease. Youth who have not lived in a supervised independent living program may not be sufficiently skilled to maintain their living arrangement without assistance.
- **peer support,**
 Trying to live on your own with usually little more than a minimum wage salary can be frustrating and depressing. Peer support groups provide opportunities for youth to talk to others who can understand what they are going through.
- **advocacy,**
 Dealing with problems can be overwhelming. Sometimes youth need someone to advocate on their behalf with health care systems, legal systems, housing authorities, etc.
- **crisis counseling,**
 Some youth have difficulty coping with life on their own and find themselves in serious life-threatening situations. Having someone to call in times like these is essential.
- **information and referral,**
 Sometimes a youth may just need to know where to go to get the help he/she needs. With the right information, he/she can handle a situation alone.
- **opportunities to share transition experiences with younger youth, and/or**
 Being able to talk about the transition experience can be both therapeutic for the young adult and educational for the younger youth who is listening. Many programs provide opportunities for program “graduates” to come back and share their life lessons with current program participants.
- **support for youth during the transition to permanency.**
 Young adults need emotional support as they make the transition out on their own or back to their families. Having a personal connection with someone who knows them and cares about them is important. This person is the young adult’s lifeline as they go about making new friends and re-establishing family connections.

Survey Findings

We asked programs to describe their aftercare services from two perspectives. First, we asked programs what aftercare services they provide to youth that have made the transition from foster care to adulthood. Eighty-four or more

programs, (=86%) report providing or referring youth to the following aftercare services:

- Crisis counseling;
- Emotional support for youth during the transition to permanency;
- Information and referral services; and,
- Advocacy for youth.

Sixty-six or fewer programs (=77%) provide or refer youth to the following aftercare services:

- Establishing/maintaining living arrangements;
- Opportunities to share transition experiences with other youth;
- Temporary medical coverage of health care;
- Temporary financial assistance;
- Peer support;
- Temporary housing.

Second, we asked programs to report how long they provide aftercare services to youth after they leave care. The program responses are summarized in the following table.

Table 3
Aftercare Services

Length of Aftercare Services	Number of Programs	Percentage of Programs
No aftercare services	17	17%
Less than 3 months	16	16%
3-6 months	12	12%
6-12 months	22	22%
Greater than 12 months	31	32%
TOTAL	98	100%

Further analysis revealed that two-thirds of the programs that provide more than 12 months of aftercare services provide services until youth reach age 21. We also found that 15 of the programs (48%) providing aftercare services for more than 12 months were able to do so utilizing federal or state funding streams. Eleven of the programs providing more than 12 months of aftercare services relied on private funding to supply these services. Additionally, eight programs (8%) indicated providing aftercare services to youth after youth reach age 21. All of these programs provided these extended services through private funding.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Casey Family Services, ME

Youth are eligible for aftercare services until age 23. After youth reach age 23 they are invited to Casey alumni functions.

The King's Ranch/Hannah Homes Transitional Living Program, AL

Aftercare services are funded by donations. Services are available as long as youth remain connected to the program and may include financial/housing support.

Rhode Island Foster Parents Association Life Skills Program, RI

Service lasts "as long as needed." The Department of Children, Youth and Family Services funds the Alumni Aftercare Program. Former youth meet every 6-8 weeks for peer support and to re-connect with friends. The Program also provides recreational activities, and is trying to fund and create an alumni newsletter.

Lutheran Social Services Transitional Living Cooperative, WI

Program aftercare services are funded through foundation dollars and private donations. Services are ongoing. The program conducts home visits to provide support and needs assessments. The program continues to try to find ways to plug program graduates in as teachers, leaders and peer supports resources as part of their aftercare supports. The program hopes to receive federal money to expand the aftercare program.

Casey Family Services, Hartford, CT

The program privately funds aftercare services for youth through the age of 24. In addition to a comprehensive array of services, the program maintains an open-door policy allowing youth to return and access aftercare services despite prior separation from the program. The program also utilizes alumni life skills training facilitators.

Where can I find more information?

Stoner, M. R. (1999) *Life after foster care: services and policies for former foster youth*. Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare 26(4) p159(16).

Child Welfare League of America. (1998). *Improving Economic Opportunity for Youth Formerly Served by the Foster Care System: Identifying the Support Network's Strength and Needs*. Washington, D.C.

Training

Summary

Cook¹²⁷ suggests that an essential element of the operation of integrated service delivery is the inclusion of inter-agency training. She asserts that that needs to encompass all involved parties including administrators, caseworkers, foster parents, and all outside service providers. Many of the programs that responded to our survey utilize integrated service delivery models, that is, the program provides some services directly, while referring youth to other services outside of the program. Caliber Associates¹²⁸ found that in FY 1996, 45 states reported providing some training to ILP staff and also to foster parents. States encouraged foster parents to attend formalized foster parent trainings, youth conferences, and ILP youth service sessions. The authors also report that 38 states provided some training to non-State service providers/contractors, and 15 states provided training to youth mentors. Some states also reported training child welfare and other public agency staff, juvenile corrections/probation staff, school counselors and community volunteers. Among the training topics reported were examples such as:

- Youth Assessments –practice and procedures
- Skills for success
- Separation, Attachment and Bonding
- Handling Grief and Loss issues.

Ansell et al.¹²⁹ specifies the following requirements for a comprehensive independent living program staff training component.

...Organizations must develop an ongoing training plan for new and experienced staff at all levels of the organization. In particular, training should cover but not be limited to independent living/life skills, youth development, cultural diversity, permanency and special needs of adolescents. (pp. 35-36)

Suggested Promising Practices and Criteria

Programs should include an on-going training component that...

- **orients new staff & care providers to IL/ YD philosophy,**

¹²⁷ Cook, R. (1988) Trends and Needs in programming for independent living. *Child Welfare* 67(6), 497-514/

¹²⁸ USDHHS, ACYF. (1999) op Cit

¹²⁹ Ansell, D. et al (1999) op Cit

In order for new staff & care providers to carry out the mission of the program/agency, they need to know and understand the program/agency's IL and youth development philosophy. Without a clear understanding of the intent of the program, personal values and biases may get in the way of helping a youth successfully prepare for adulthood.

- **provides continuing education for experienced staff & care providers,**

All staff and care providers need periodic refreshers to learn about new approaches in working with youth and the promising practices demonstrated by other programs. Because the work is very demanding, continuing education can also serve as an energizer for staff who are experiencing burn out symptoms.

- **encourages staff & care providers to develop new knowledge and skills, and**

With the right knowledge and skills, staff and care providers can initiate program changes and assume responsibilities for program expansion.

- **educates the community, e.g. schools, employers, about the needs of youth while in transition.**

Keeping the community informed about the needs of youth in your program is an on-going responsibility. Business and professional leaders can be called on to help the youth achieve their goals if they are aware of the youth, the program and what both are trying accomplish.

Survey Findings

We focused on three areas of training in our survey. We asked programs to indicate what specific training components they provide to staff, foster parents, or the community. The percentages of programs offering each training component are exhibited in Table 4 below. Ninety-two or more programs, (=94%), indicated offering the following training components:

- Encourage new staff and care providers to develop new knowledge and skills regarding Independent Living;
- Orienting new staff and care providers to Independent Living/Youth Development philosophy; and,
- Providing continuing education regarding Independent Living for experienced staff and care providers.

Nearly three-quarters of programs (74%), reported educating the community. This was the least commonly provided training. This is an interesting finding in light of the fact that a number of programs mentioned community acceptance of

their youth as problematic. Table 4 illustrates the proportion of programs that provide these different training components.

Table 4
Training Components

Training Component that...	Program Provides	Program Refers Out	% of Total Programs
Encourages staff and care providers to develop new knowledge and skills regarding IL	82	15	99%
Orients new staff and care providers to Independent Living/Youth Development philosophy	83	10	95%
Provides continuing education regarding IL for experienced staff and care providers	68	24	94%
Educates the community, e.g. schools, employers, about the needs of youth while in transition	70	4	76%

The survey asked programs to list any other training components they provide to program staff, foster parents or the community. Other training components programs reported include:

- The training is also given to volunteer mentors;
- We educate through Casey projects/Publications; and
- Currently serve on the state ILS committee.

Finally, we asked programs to tell us if they used a specific Independent Living staff and provider-training curriculum. Their responses are summarized below.

- Daniel Memorial Institute (often in combination with other tools) 12 programs (12%);
- Ansell Associates Curriculum/National Resource Center for Youth Services, 5 programs, (5%);
- CWLA Youth Work Resources, 3 programs (3%);
- Own curriculum, no specific curriculum, 42 programs, (44%);
- Combine elements of several programs, 14 programs, (14%);
- Other formal curricula, e.g. PAYA, Open-Inns, Villages, 12 programs, (12%).

What are some notable programs and resources?

Department of Child and Family Services, Independent Living, FL

The program plans to improve training for staff and foster parents through working with Florida's Professional Development Center.

*The Child Welfare League of America*¹³⁰

Positive Youth Development and Independent Living: Building Staff Competency and System Capacity.

The initiative seeks to increase the skills of staff who work with youth. Over four years, CWLA, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Independent Living Association, the National Resource Center for Youth Development and its own member agencies, will:

- support intensive training in all 50 states and the District of Columbia for child welfare staff who are responsible for providing independent living services to young people in foster care,
- provide specific training and follow-up support to the staffs of 100 community-based agencies that serve youth,
- work for changes in federal policy and programs that help youth in foster care, and
- educate public and private sector leaders in the child welfare field about positive youth development.

Where can I find more information?

Child Welfare League of America (2000) *Positive Youth Development and Independent Living: Building Staff Competency and System Capacity.*

<http://www.cwla.org/posyouth/positiveyouthdevelopment.html>

National Resource Center for Youth Services, University of Oklahoma, College of Continuing Education, 700 North Greenwood, Tulsa, OK 74106

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/>

daniel, 4203 Southpoint Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32216

<http://www.danielmemorial.org/>

¹³⁰ Child Welfare League of America (2000) *Positive Youth Development and Independent Living: Building Staff Competency and System Capacity.* <http://www.cwla.org/posyouth/positiveyouthdevelopment.html>

Evaluation

Summary

Lindsey and Ahmed¹³¹ reported several shortcomings with prior evaluation studies of Independent Living program outcomes. The authors focused on three studies; the Westat evaluation,¹³² an evaluation of the Pennsylvania Independent Living Program¹³³ and an evaluation of the Nebraska Independent Living Program.¹³⁴ The authors cited problems with the structure of the three studies which made comparison of the outcomes difficult. The problems include:

- different sampling techniques and methodology; and,
- two of the three studies did not include comparison groups.

Ansell et al.¹³⁵ suggest that ongoing program evaluation measures should include:

- Immediate program outcomes (results at the end of the program);
- Short-term outcome for youth (6-12 months after program completion); and,
- Long term outcomes for youth, (over a year after program completion).

Examining youth outcomes at various periods after program completion will give a more accurate picture of youth outcomes.

Reflecting on their review of state Independent Living programs, Caliber Associates¹³⁶ lists the following data limitations in connection to Independent Living programs research and reporting:

- Non-standardized reporting formats, resulting in reports that vary widely in content, breadth and methodology.
- Inconsistent definition of terms, including “served,” “eligible,” “completed services,” “needs assessment,” “counseling,” and “aftercare.”

¹³¹ Lindsey, E. W., Ahmed, F. U. (1999) The North Carolina Independent Living Program: A Comparison of Outcomes for Participants and Nonparticipants *Children and Youth Services Review* 21(5) 389-412.

¹³² Westat (1991) *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth: Final Report*. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC

¹³³ _____ (1993) *An Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Independent Living Program for Youth*. Shippensburg University Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, Shippensburg, PA.

¹³⁴ _____ (1994) Center on Children, Families and the Law. Independent living skills evaluation: Former state ward – baseline report. Lincoln, NE.

¹³⁵ Ansell, D. et al (1999) op cit.

¹³⁶ US DHHS ACYF (1999) op cit.

- Inconsistencies in data sources across states and within states.
- Differences in the timeframes used for collecting and presenting data.
- Lack of information regarding the scope, intensity and duration of services.
- Difficulties tracking youth to collect post-discharge outcome data. (p. VI-1)

Caliber Associates make the following recommendations to improve program effectiveness and youth outcomes reporting:

- Build state capacity in collecting and analyzing outcome data through training and technical assistance. Help states identify ways to track youth over time.
- Develop guidelines for annual collection of a select and well-defined group of outcomes that reflect mastery of skills, education, employment, housing attainment and other indicators of self-sufficiency.
- Encourage states to track and report the progress of youth in meeting goals specified in their individual needs assessments and case plans related to independent living.
- Support longitudinal studies by external evaluators to provide needed insight into the effectiveness of various ILP services and their long-term impact on youth self-sufficiency.
- Conduct additional research to assess ILP staffing issues, understand causes and consequences of ILP Coordinator turnover, and develop a list of appropriate ILP staff competencies. (p. VI-3)

Although the Caliber Associates recommendations are targeted toward state-level as opposed to individual program level reporting, it is clear that in order for states to be able to report clear and consistent data, individual programs will also be required to fulfill these reporting requirements.

Suggested Promising Practices and Criteria

Programs should include an on-going evaluation component that measures...

- **immediate program outcomes (results at the end of the program).**
- **short-term outcomes for youth (6-12 months after program completion), and**
- **long-term outcomes for youth (over a year after program**

completion).

In order to determine program effectiveness, documentation at different points in time are needed. Each program component should be described in terms of the immediate, short-term, and long-term expected outcome.

Survey Findings

In our survey of 98 programs, we found:

- 74 programs (76%) reported tracking immediate youth outcomes (at the end of the program);
- 53 programs (54%) track short-term outcomes for youth (6-12 months after program completion); and,
- 28 programs (29%) reported tracking long-term outcomes for youth (more than 12 months after program completion).

Programs listed a number of evaluation activities. These activities include:

- Affiliated with and evaluated by Boys Town;
- Alumni Study (two programs);
- One evaluation of our last four years work, hope to do a long-term evaluation;
- Employment is tracked to comply with HUD requirements;
- Evaluate strengths/weaknesses of youth's program experience;
- Evaluate progress of teens through mentor progress reports;
- Done at National level and is difficult apply or utilize in our office; and,
- We track program indicators monthly.

Our in depth interviews indicated that programs are interested in measuring and evaluating youth outcomes. Our interview respondents indicated a number of barriers including:

- Lack of funding dedicated to program evaluation activities; and,
- Difficulty in tracking youth after program discharge.

What are some notable programs and resources?

Casey Family Services

The administrative arm of Casey Family Services completed a comprehensive outcome evaluation of Casey Family Services program graduates¹³⁷

The King's Ranch/Hannah Homes Transitional Living Program, AL

The program is affiliated with Boys Town and is evaluated by Boys Town annually.

Where can I find more information?

McMillan, C. J., Tucker, J. (1999) "The Status of Older Adolescents at Exit form Out-of-Home Care" *Child Welfare* 78(3) p339-359.

Linsdsey, E. W., Ahmed, F. U. (1999) "The North Carolina independent living program: a comparison of outcomes for participants and non-participants" *Children and Youth Services Review*. 21(5) p389(4).

_____ (1993) *An Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Independent Living Program for Youth*. Shippensburg University Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, Shippensburg. PA.

_____ (1994) Center on Children, Families and the Law. *Independent living skills evaluation: Former state ward – baseline report*. Lincoln, NE.

Cook R. (1991) *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth, Phase 2, Final Report*. Rockville, MD. Westat, Inc

¹³⁷ Kerman, B. (1999) *Transitions from Foster Care to Adulthood; The 1998 Foster Care Follow-up Project*. Casey Family Services, Shelton, CT

Observations/Recommendations

This study was limited in its focus to IL programs and their practices in helping youth make the transition to adulthood. Nationally, approximately 160,000 adolescents live in out-of-home care.

The study identified eleven criteria that may affect the outcomes for youth. Although none of the programs surveyed met all of the suggested criteria, many of them had one or more of the elements present.

During the study, the following observations were made.

A. Programming/ Services:

1. Observation: Youth made it very clear that one of the most important things to them prior to discharge is that they have a relationship with a caring person that they can rely on after they have been discharged from a program or from care.

Recommendation: Assist youth in identifying a mentor, relative, or staff member who can provide on-going support after discharge.

2. Observation: Previous studies along with personal reporting by youth expressed that maintaining a connection with birth family/family of origin remains a priority and may actually influence where the youth may ultimately reside.

Recommendation: Assist youth in establishing/re-establishing or working through redefining their relationships with family of origin prior to discharge.

3. Observation: A high percent (67%) of programs identified in the survey that they have a youth development philosophy. We found that although programs as a whole are committed to YD approach many have difficulty identifying what that YD approach is and how to implement and manage it. This is indicated by the fact that 17 programs (18%) indicated they were “not sure” whether they have a YD philosophy.

Recommendation: Assist programs in operationalizing the youth development philosophy in agencies and programs.

4. Observation: Life skills education may need to focus more on helping youth acquire actual work skills through vocational training, computer training and post-secondary education upon completion of a high school diploma or a GED. In addition, programs need to help youth complete driver's education training so that they may obtain driver's licenses, often a key to employment. Only 44 programs (44%) are currently providing or referring youth to other sources to provide these three services.

Recommendation: Expand life skills training to provide greater focus on vocational training, computer training and driver's education.

5. Observation: In a number of programs we found that there was more educational support for youth planning on pursuing post-secondary education than for those youth struggling to complete high school or obtain a GED.

Recommendation: Provide youth who are struggling educationally and who do not plan to pursue post-secondary education with the educational support necessary to complete a high school degree or GED.

6. Observation: When formal life skills assessment information is shared with youth, they seem more confident in their ability to succeed.

Recommendation: Complete and review life skill assessments with youth.

7. Observation: Youth who are involved in "hands-on" daily life skills work seem more confident in their ability to succeed.

Recommendation: Provide "real world" opportunities for youth to practice life skills.

B. Evaluation and Data Collection/Reporting

1. Observation: Program documentation is not complete in some of the programs we visited. It would be hard to replicate the level of effort if key staff were to leave.

Recommendation: Encourage programs to document their activities.

2. Observation: Data collection and evaluation is not a priority or strength of programs.

Recommendation: Assist programs in identifying and utilizing those data collection and evaluation tools that do exist.

3. Observation: Programs report having a difficult time communicating with state and local child welfare agencies about what they do. This affects referrals, funding, and collaborative efforts.

Recommendation: Develop a common language to define the services provided and create uniformity of reporting.

4. Observation: 71 programs reported that they track immediate youth outcomes (at end of program). 48 programs track short-term outcomes for youth (6-12 months after program completion). 22 programs track long-term outcomes for youth (over one year after program completion). Programs identified lack of resources as one of the primary barriers to tracking youth outcomes.

Recommendation: Assist programs in developing and using a standardized reporting tool that measures short-term and long-term outcomes for youth.

5. Observation: Programs related that participation in this study helped them reflect on their program. Staff reported that the process of completing the paper survey, discussing program elements in the phone survey, and participating in the site visits provided good insight into the programs strengths and needs.

Recommendation: Utilize the study instruments to create an assessment tool for programs.

Appendices

Casey 1999 Survey Summary

Three hundred eleven surveys were mailed to programs identified by state Independent Living Coordinators and key informants. We cross-checked our list with the Child Welfare League of America *Resource Directory: Community Based Organizations Serving Former Foster Care Youth and Adults*. (CWLA, 1998). Ninety-eight of the surveys were returned a response rate of 32 percent. This report summarizes the responses furnished by the 98 programs.

The survey is divided into four sections. The summary follows this format. The sections focus in the following areas:

Section 1: Program information, including Program address information, and program contact person(s).

Section 2: The number, gender and racial/ethnic composition of the youth the program serves, program contract structure and program funding sources.

Section 3: This section focuses on services the program provides and includes the following focus areas:

- Life skills
- Education
- Employment services
- Community linkages
- Supervised independent living arrangements
- Health services
- Counseling activities
- Youth development activities
- Aftercare services

Section 4: The focus is on staff training and community education, program evaluation program future plans and additional information programs chose to furnish.

Section 1

Program information provided by the responding programs include address corrections and any changes that may have occurred regarding contact people. Appendix A contains a list of the responding programs.

Section 2

The 98 programs that responded to the survey provided services to 11,870 youth during 1998. Table 1 presents data on the total number of youth served by age group.

Table 1
Age Distribution of Youth Served

Totals of youth served by Age	Number of youth	% of Total
>13 Years old	14	0%
13-15 Years old	1,015	9%
16-18 Years old	9,197	77%
>18 Years old	1,644	14%
Total served	11,870	100%

The majority of programs concentrate their services on youth age 16-18, in keeping with Federal Title IV-E Independent Living Funding guidelines prior to the enactment of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (the Chafee Program.)

The number of youth served by the program covers a very broad range from one youth served to 2,500 youth served per year. The programs serve an average of 121 youth. The median service number is 24 meaning that half of the responding programs serve 24 or more youth per year and half of the programs serve 24 or fewer youth per year.

The survey asked programs to provide breakdowns of their service population by both gender and race/ethnicity. The percentages are presented in Table 2 and Table 3 below. Five programs serve only males, while eight programs serve only females.

Table 2
Gender of Youth Served

Gender	Percent
Female	59%
Male	41%

The proportion of racial/ethnic groups served by the reporting programs are contrasted with the U.S. Census breakdown of the representation of these different racial/ethnic groups. The racial/ethnic breakdown of youth served by the responding programs is in keeping with the long-established patterns of minority youth being over represented in the foster care population, especially apparent for black youth in this sample.

Table 3
Race/Ethnicity of Youth Served

Race/Ethnicity	Sample	National
Percent White	55	72
Percent Black	27	12
Percent Asian/Pacific Islander	1	4
Percent Nat American	3	1
Percent Hispanic	9	12
Percent Other	2	-

The final two items in Section 2 examine programmatic structure from the perspective of contracting relationships and program funding streams. We asked programs if they had formal, informal or no relationship with a series of agencies and funding sources. The results are presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4
Program Relationships**

Program Contracting Relationships	Formal	Formal %	Informal	Informal %
State Department of Human Services	66	66%	20	21%
Private social service agencies	24	25%	57	58%
Community non-profits	24	25%	58	59%
State Department of Corrections	23	24%	31	32%
Local Public/Private Schools	19	20%	60	62%
Other independent living programs	14	15%	66	69%
State Mental Health Agency	13	14%	43	45%
State Department of Education	12	13%	37	39%
Other relationships	10	10%	11	12%
Employment/Labor agencies	7	7%	63	66%
Private sector businesses	5	5%	57	59%

The only state agency a majority of programs have a formal contractual relationship with is the state Departments of Human Services, the agency generally responsible for Child Welfare Services. Sixty-six of the 98 programs, (66%) have a formal relationship with the Child Welfare Agency in their state. Interestingly, the second most common formal contracting relationships reported are with private social service agencies and community non-profits, with 24 (25%) programs reporting formal relationships in each of these areas. Twenty-one programs (32%) of the sample reported formal or informal relationships with other organizations. Some of the other organizations listed include:

- State or county social service agencies, 2 instances
- Post secondary educational/vocational institutions, 2 instances
- Housing authorities, 2 instance
- Homeless Healthcare organization, 1 instance

Program funding sources are listed in Table 5. The funding sources listed are not mutually exclusive; many programs receive funding from multiple sources. The majority of programs 58 programs, (59%) receive Title IV-E Independent Living Funds. Fifty programs (51%) indicated receiving state funding. The third largest funding source “Other funding sources,” (27%) includes the following examples:

- The various Casey Programs, 5 instances
- Agency collaboratives, 2 instances

**Table 5
Program Funding Sources**

Program Funding Sources	# Funded	% of all programs
Title IV-E Federal Independent Living Funds	58	59%
State funds	50	51%
Other funding sources	26	27%
Private contributions	22	22%
Private grants from foundations/corporations	23	24%
Transitional Living Program for Homeless Youth	17	18%
County funds	18	18%
Fee for services	15	15%
Other federal funds	13	14%
Local funds	8	8%

Section 3

The third section of the survey focuses on the different services the programs provide and how these services are provided. The survey directed programs to address service delivery from the perspectives of “Program provides,” which assumes that the program is the direct provider of the service in question; or, “Program refers out,” which assumes that the program serves as a referral broker for the service. Section three focuses on nine service areas identified in the literature (need citations here) as critical components of successful independent living programs. These components include:

- Life skills
- Education services
- Employment services
- Community linkages
- Supervised independent living arrangements
- Health services
- Counseling activities
- Youth development activities
- Aftercare services

Section three focuses on service provision in each of these areas. It should be noted that the responses “Program provides, “ and “Program Refers Out,” are not mutually exclusive, it is possible for a program to have indicated that it provides services both directly and through referral.

The life skills component includes 23 skill areas. Table 6 below summarizes how many programs provide each of these services and how they provide the service. Five life skill components are directly provided by 90 percent or more of the programs, these components are:

- Employment skills
- Money management
- Communication
- Decision making
- Locating housing
- Community resources

Computer/internet, vocational training and driver's education are the life skills components least likely to be directly provided by the responding programs.

Table 6
Delivery of Life Skill Program Components

Life Skill Area (sorted by program provision)	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Employment skills (i.e. how to dress for work)	92	13
Money management (budgeting, banking)	91	12
Communication	91	5
Decision making	90	5
Locating housing (how to find an apartment)	90	11
Community resources	90	17
Maintaining housing (how to take care of your apartment)	88	10
Socialization	88	9
Healthy relationships	88	19
Self-esteem building	87	10
Basic hygiene and nutrition	85	11
Education (i.e. study skills, college applications)	84	22
Consumer skills (how to buy a car and obtain car insurance)	82	9
Career planning (i.e. career assessments, internships)	82	21
Credit (how to obtain and use a credit card)	75	14
Legal rights	74	22
Financial aid	73	31
Health related (medical care, health insurance)	71	29
Family planning/Sexual education	69	47
Parent education	62	40
Vocational training	25	65
Computer classes/Internet	21	52
Driver's education	11	67

Eighty-nine programs, (91%) indicated that youth are provided with the opportunity to practice life skills in a “real world environment.” We asked the programs what format(s) were used to teach life skills. Fifty-seven programs, (58%) indicated life skills are taught in a group format. Fifty-four programs, (55%) teach life skills individually, while 71 programs, (72%) indicated that life skills are taught in both group and individual formats. Forty-eight programs, (49%) indicated that life skills

are taught “at home,” 34 programs, (35%) responded that life skills are taught in other formats. Examples of other teaching formats include:

- In their own apartments, 5 instances
- Mentoring situations, 3 instances
- Teen conferences, 3 instances

Table 7 examines program service patterns in the area of educational services. The three educational services programs provide most frequently are:

- Accessing necessary educational resources, 85 programs, (87%)
- Providing assistance with financial aid forms, 81 programs, (83%)
- Helping youth select careers, 71 programs, (72%)

The three educational services least likely to be directly provided are:

- Post-secondary education counseling, 49 programs, (50%)
- Providing financial aid/assistance, 40 programs, (41%)
- Increase literacy, 35 programs, (36%)

Table 7
Educational Service Delivery Patterns

Educational services (sorted by frequency of provision)	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Help youth access necessary educational resources	85	18
Provide assistance with necessary forms for financial aid	81	27
Help youth to select a career	71	37
Provide assistance in beginning an educational/vocational program	70	32
Provide assistance in completing an educational/vocational program	56	39
Provide tutors to assist with education	55	43
Provide educational advocates	51	28
Provide post-secondary education preparation	49	47
Provide post-secondary education counseling	46	51
Provide financial aid and/or assistance	40	52
Increase literacy	35	54
Other	7	0

Seven programs indicated that they provide other educational services. Examples of the other services provided include:

- Financial support for post-secondary transitions, three programs
- Annual education review for each youth, one program
- Educational seminars for High School students, one program

Program service practices in the area of employment are presented in Table 8. The most frequent employment services programs provide directly are:

- Introducing youth to career opportunities, 84 programs, (86%)
- Providing job search training, 84 programs, (86%)
- Introducing youth to post-secondary opportunities, 72 programs, (73%)

The employment services that are least likely to be provided directly are:

- Provide job coaching, 41 programs, (42%)
- Provide career related work experience, 36 programs, (37%)
- Provide job placement, 24 programs, (24%)

Other employment services that are available to youth include:

- Job shadowing, two instances
- Tokens and bus passes for transportation to work, one instance
- Seminars on jobs and education, one instance

Table 8
Employment Services Delivery Patterns

Employment services	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Introduce youth to career opportunities	84	26
Provide job search training	84	24
Introduce youth to post-secondary opportunities	72	27
Provide job skills training	64	37
Provide career exploration	64	29
Provide job development (e.g., creating employment opportunities)	42	37
Provide job coaching	41	39
Provide career related work experience	36	45
Provide job placement	24	56

Seventy-seven programs, (79%) indicated that their employment component collaborates with community businesses or employment agencies. Examples of the collaborations include:

- Collaborations with state/local employment services, 19 instances
- Partnerships/collaborations with specific businesses, 5 instances
- Collaborations with other programs, 4 instances

The survey asked programs to report on four community linkage services. Interestingly, in three of the four services we asked about the service was provided by only some of the reporting programs. Ninety-two agencies (94%) reported they connect youth with community resources. Fewer than 50 percent of the responding programs directly provide the following links:

- Connect youth with adult mentors
- Create job/career opportunities for youth
- Create community leadership opportunities for youth

Table 9 summarizes community linkage service provision.

**Table 9
Community Linkage Service Provision**

Community linkages that...	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Connect youth with community resources	92	7
Connect youth with adult mentors	44	29
Create job/career opportunities for youth	37	40
Create community leadership opportunities for youth	36	32

Four organizations identified other community linkage mechanisms. They are:

- Church groups
- Matching successful former clients with youth as mentors
- Mentors are used to help youth become aware of community resources
- We are adult mentors- recreational program provides time

The survey polled programs to discover what kind of supervised independent living arrangements exist in the field. Table 10 displays the responses to the five supervised independent living arrangements listed in the survey. Our telephone interviews revealed that while only 40 programs (41%) currently provide housing opportunities in apartments they own, a number of programs are considering moving in this direction.

**Table 10
Housing Arrangements and Service Provision**

Housing Arrangements/Practices	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Program assists youth in working out landlord/ roommate disputes	62	8
Youth pay own bills and maintain their own budget	59	10
Youth finds own housing (someone else is landlord)	56	20
Youth can assume the lease at program completion	47	16
Program provides housing (Agency is landlord)	40	22

A number of programs provide other forms of supervised independent living arrangements. Examples include:

- Host homes
- Counseling for youth provided in their own apartments

- Agreements with the local Housing Authority
- Youth receive a stipend and per diem to help pay bills*
- Recruited two agencies to create supervised apartment living programs

*Youth who receive a stipend are generally required to gradually assume responsibility for all of their living expenses.

Programs were asked to describe how they prepare youth to manage their own health care needs. The responses are tabulated in Table 11.

**Table 11
Health Services Provision**

Health services that...	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Connect youth with appropriate health resources in their own community.	86	8
Prepare youth to manage their own medical, dental, or mental health needs	81	10

Other health services that programs provide include:

- A full service health care clinic operated by the agency
- A “Medical lifeline,” that provides referral information for youth
- A nurse available for youth in supervised independent living arrangements

We asked programs to tell us if they have a therapist on their staff. Forty-four programs, (45%) responded that they employ a therapist on their staff. The survey then asks programs to describe their provision of a series of counseling activities designed to help youth make the transition to independent living. Table 12 describes the responses of the programs.

**Table 12
Preparation for Adulthood Counseling Activities**

Counseling Activities that...	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Help youth to develop/expand personal support systems	85	16
Help youth work through the emotional stages of transition	82	26
Help youth promote cultural identity development	69	22
Prepare youth to return to their home communities	65	22
Help youth address substance abuse issues	63	58
Help youth re-uniting with family members	60	34
Address trauma counseling – “helping youth make peace with the past”	51	53
Help youth to consider and prepare for adoption	23	30

Other counseling activities programs provide include:

- Counseling through staff and outside therapist, support groups
- Family counseling
- Mentoring support

The survey asked programs about youth development activities in two ways. First, we asked programs: Does the fundamental basis of your program include a "youth development philosophy"?

Sixty five programs, (66%) indicated that their program includes a "youth development philosophy." Five programs (5%) responded that their program does not have a "youth development philosophy," while 17 programs, (17%) indicated that they were unsure. Eleven programs (10%) chose not to answer this question. Our telephone interviews revealed that programs are unsure about the definition of "Youth Development," and that the degree of youth development activities varied widely across programs. Next, we asked programs to describe the "youth development philosophy." Summaries of the descriptions are contained in Appendix B.

Second, we asked programs how they provide a number of specific youth development services. Their responses are summarized in Table 13 below.

Table 13
Youth Development Activities Service Provision

Youth development activities that...	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Increase personal confidence	90	13
Provide opportunities for youth to advocate for themselves and other youth	77	11
Increase cultural awareness	74	17
Provide opportunities for youth to help other youth	74	14
Provide opportunities for youth to advise and educate others	69	17

Other youth development activities programs listed include:

- Older youth can become Department volunteers
- Project-based learning experiences
- Providing volunteer opportunities for youth
- Using DHS Program and Peer Leadership Group
- Helping youth to establish community support bonds for teens living on their own

The survey asked programs to describe the aftercare services they provide from four perspectives. First, the programs were whether they provide specific services or refer youth to those services. These responses are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14
Aftercare Service Provision

Aftercare services that:	Program Provides	Program Refers Out
Provide emotional support for youth during the transition to permanency	84	5
Provide information and referral	78	7
Provide advocacy for youth	74	10
Help in establishing/maintaining own living arrangements	65	10
Provide opportunities to share transition experiences with younger youth	63	7
Provide peer support	58	8
Provide crisis counseling	60	36
Provide temporary financial assistance	30	37
Provide temporary housing	22	41
Provide temporary medical coverage/health care	15	53

Other aftercare services programs described include:

- Home visits to provide ongoing support and assessment
- Individual family counseling
- Mentor relationships that last beyond case closure
- Outcome oriented transition planning
- Work with youth after discharge as a courtesy only

Second, we asked programs how long they continue to provide aftercare services. Their responses are shown in Table 15.

Table 15
Length of Aftercare Services

Length of Aftercare Services	Number of Programs	Pct of Programs
no aftercare services	17	17%
less than 3 months	16	16%
3-6 months	12	12%
6-12 months	22	22%
Greater than 12 months	31	31%

Third, we asked programs that provide aftercare services for longer than 12 months how long their aftercare services continued. The services range from 18 months until the youth reaches age 24. The majority of programs with extended aftercare, eight programs, (8%) continued aftercare services until age 21. One program responded,

“In practice, as long as needed,” another characterized their after care services as, “Indefinite.”

Finally, we asked programs how their extended aftercare services are funded. Eleven programs (11%) fund their aftercare services with Title IV-E funds. Nine programs, (9%) indicated that aftercare services are funded through either foundation/grant funding or private donations. Four programs, (4%) reported that they use Federal Transitional Living Program (TLP) funds.

Section 4

Section 4 focuses on three areas, training, evaluation and future plans. We asked programs to describe their training and evaluation processes, and gave programs an opportunity to inform us about their plans for the future.

The survey asked programs to describe their ongoing training programs. The results a contained in Table 16.

**Table 16
Training Component**

Training Component that...	Program Provides	Program Refers Out	Total
Orients new staff and care providers to Independent Living/Youth Development philosophy	83	10	93
Encourages staff and care providers to develop new knowledge and skills regarding IL	82	15	97
Educates community, e.g. schools, employers, about needs of youth while in transition	70	4	74
Provides continuing education regarding IL for experienced staff and care providers	68	24	92

Other training components listed include:

- The training is also given to volunteer mentors
- We educate through Casey Projects/Publications
- Currently serve on the state ILS committee

We also asked programs to tell us if they used a specific Independent Living staff and provider-training curriculum. The responses are summarized below.

- Daniel Memorial Institute (often in combination with other tools) 12 programs (12%)
- Ansell Associates Curriculum/National Resource Center for Youth Services, 5 programs, (5%)
- CWLA Youth Work Resources, 3 programs (3%)

- Own curriculum, no specific curriculum, 42 programs, (44%)
- Combine elements of several programs, fourteen programs, (14%)
- Other formal curricula, e.g. PAYA, Open-Inns, Villages, 12 programs, (12%)

We sought to learn the extent of program evaluation that occurs in the Independent Living Provider field. We asked programs to describe the extent of their evaluation activities based on immediate youth outcomes, short-term youth outcomes (6-12 months from program graduation) and long-term youth outcomes (over a year after program completion.) The responses are displayed in Table 17.

Table 17
Evaluation Component

Evaluation component that...	Program Provides	Program Refers Out	Total
Tracks immediate youth outcomes (at the end of the program)	71	3	74
Tracks short term outcomes for youth (6-12 months)	51	2	53
Tracks long term outcomes for youth (>12 months)	25	3	28

Other evaluation components programs listed include:

- Affiliated with and evaluated by Boys Town
- Alumni Study (two programs)
- One evaluation of our last four years work, hope to do a long-term evaluation
- Employment is tracked to comply with HUD requirements
- Evaluate strengths/weaknesses of youth’s program experience
- Evaluate progress of teens through mentor progress reports
- Done at National level and is difficult apply or utilize in our office
- We track program indicators monthly

We asked programs to briefly describe their future plans. A summary of their responses is presented in Appendix C. Programs were also asked to give us any additional information they would like to share. A summary of these responses are contained in Appendix D.

Appendix A

Programs Responding to 1999 Casey Survey

The King's Ranch/Hannah Homes Transitional Living Prog.	Chelsea	AL
Connections Mentor Program	Mobile	AL
Dept. of Human Services Arkansas IL Program- Area X	Stuttgart	AR
Casey Family Program	Phoenix	AZ
Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development	Phoenix	AZ
Open Inn, Inc. Transitional Apt Living Program	Tucson	AZ
Our Town Family Center Transitional Living Program	Tucson	AZ
Casey Family Program	Walnut Creek	CA
Los Angeles County Dept. of Children & Family Services	Los Angeles	CA
Vista Del Mar Child & Family Services	Los Angeles	CA
ALIVE-E - Youth in Transition	Denver	CO
ALIVE/E (Adoles. Living Ind. via Education & Employment)	Canyon City	CO
ALIVE/E & ILA	Denver	CO
Living in Safe Alternatives, Inc	Plainville	CT
New Britain Independent Living Skills Program	New Britain	CT
Casey Family Services	Hartford	CT
Thames Valley Council on Community Action, Inc.	Norwich	CT
Supervised Apartments & Independent Living (S.A.I.L.)	Bristol	CT
Casey Family Services	Bridgeport	CT
People's Place Stepping Stones	Milford	DE
Department of Child & Family Services	Tallahassee	FL
Chatham Co. Dept. of Family & Children Services IL Prog.	Savannah	GA
Quakerdale Independent Living Cluster & Scattered Site	New Providence	IA
Hillcrest Family Services (Scattered Site)	Dubuque	IA
Casey Family Program	Boise	ID
Cunningham Children's Home Supervised IL Program	Urbana	IL
The Harbour's Transitional Living Program	Park Ridge	IL
Preparing for Adult Life Illinois DCFS	Springfield	IL
Cambridge House, Inc.	Muncie	IN
The Villages, Inc. IL/Transitional Living Program	Indianapolis	IN
Brighton Center - Independent Living Program	Covington	KY
Cabinet for Families & Children Kentucky IL Program	Frankfort	KY
Home to Home- Aftercare Program	Louisville	KY
Baton Rouge Alliance for Transitional Living	Baton Rouge	LA
Center for Human Development Safety Zone-Shelter	Springfield	MA
MA Dept. of Social Services Adolescent Outreach Program	Boston	MA
Casey Family Services Long Term Foster Care	Lowell	MA
Baltimore County Dept. of Social Services IL Program	Towson	MD
Good Will-Hinckley Independent Living Program	Hinkley	ME
Weymouth House, Inc	Newcastle	ME
Rumford Group Homes Semi-Independent Program	Rumford	ME

Casey Family Services	Portland	ME
Genesis Residential Treatment Facility	Lewiston	ME
Wedgwood Community Services	Grand Rapids	MI
Community Recovery Services, Inc. Project Independence	Flint	MI
Wolverine Human Services Supervised Independent Living	Detroit	MI
Spectrum Human Services Semi-Independent Living	Westland	MI
Lutheran Social Services SEARCH Trans.& Comm. Housing	Willmar	MN
Catholic Charities SAIL (Support & Advocacy for IL)	St. Cloud	MN
Epworth Children & Family Services Independent Living	St. Louis	MO
Southern Christian Services for Children & Youth, Inc. PALS	Jackson	MS
IL Resources, Inc. IL Program for North Carolina	Durham	NC
Charles Hall Youth Services Independent Life Skills Program	Bismarck	ND
Dakota Boys Ranch Independent Living Program	Minot	ND
The Casey Family Program: Independent Living Skills Program	Bismarck	ND
Rolfe and Rumford Home	Concord	NH
Child & Family Services Transitional Living Program	Manchester	NH
Preferred Children's Services - Project Independence	Lakewood	NJ
Union Industrial Home for Children	Trenton	NJ
Youth Development, Inc. Casa Hermosa	Albuquerque	NM
Barnabas Independent Living Program for Youth	Syracuse	NY
Gateway-Longview Supervised IL Program	Williamsville	NY
Vanderheyden Hall: Supervised - IL Program	Wyantskill	NY
Franklin Co. Children's Services Emancipation Department	Grove City	OH
Lighthouse Independent Living Program	Cincinnati	OH
Hamilton County DHS: IL Program	Cincinnati	OH
Casey Family Program	Oklahoma City	OK
Department of Human Services IL Program	Oklahoma City	OK
Looking Glass Job Center Independent Living	Eugene	OR
Catholic Community Services	Keizer	OR
Three Rivers Youth Transitional Living Program	Pittsburgh	PA
Adams County Independent Living Program	Gettysburg	PA
Crawford County IL Program, Hermitage House Youth Serv.	Edinboro	PA
McKean Co. Children & Youth Services IL Program	Smethport	PA
Valley Youth House - IL Program	Bethlehem	PA
Communities for People, Inc.	Providence	RI
RI Foster Parents Assoc. Life Skills Program	Warwick	RI
New Transition Homes, Inc. SIL Level I	Aiken	SC
Florence Crittenton Family Development Program	N. Charleston	SC
Casey Family Programs Stepping Stones	Rapid City	SD
Oasis Center Transitional Living Program	Nashville	TN
Child and Family TN, Transitional Living Prog.	Knoxville	TN
Preparation for Adult Living (PAL)	San Antonio	TX
Casey Family Program	San Antonio	TX
Concho Valley Home for Girls Preparation for Adult Living	San Angelo	TX

Casey Family Program	Tacoma	WA
Kenosha Human Development Services IL Program	Kenosha	WI
Marathon Co. Portage Co. Wood Co ILS	Wausau	WI
Lutheran Social Services Transitional Living Cooperative	Sheboygan	WI
Burlington United Methodist Family Services, Inc.	Keyser	WV
Daymark, Inc. New Connections	Charleston	WV
Pressley Ridge Schools Transitional Living Services	Morgantown	WV
Youth Services System: Joy Barcus Transitional Living Center	Wheeling	WV
West Virginia Youth Advocates	Fairmont	WV
Wyoming Girls School	Sheridan	WY
Casey Family Program	Cheyenne	WY
Wyoming Boys School: Independent Living Skills	Worland	WY

Appendix B

Description of Youth Development Philosophy

"Youth Development Philosophy" described
All youth are served based on an individual Independent Living Case Plan that they develop based on their goals.
Reveal potential. Excite possibilities, plan accordingly.
To prepare youth emotionally, financially, and educationally to live independently.
We value the idea of "choice" in all aspects of the program and feel that our young people transition and develop easier if they understand their choices.
Youth leadership committee encourages young people to take ownership in developing better programs to meet their needs.
Florida has a state teen advisory board that meets quarterly on behalf of youth in foster care.
Youth involved in Youth Advisory Board, their input and leadership guide program development.
Active in training staff in Youth Dev. Model to make youth collaborators in their goal setting with adults. Youth are given opportunities to make choices.
Youth are the central point of case planning. Each sets goals and is responsible for updating their plan. Staff works with them in "choice" making.
Seek to strengthen individual & family life. Committed to instilling hope in those we serve. Teach skills to make choices and gain control of life
see attached mission statement
To provide each boy with mental, emotional and physical strength to overcome problems and to build their character by exposing them to values.
Through helping youth to identify their strengths and need areas, youth are helped to develop IL skills through individually developed plans.
We strive to provide our youth with the assistance, instruction and opportunities to acquire IL skills and knowledge to become self-sufficient.
The program uses the "Reclaiming Youth at Risk - Circle of Courage" as a program design foundation.
Youth as members of the team. Take an active role in their planning. Acknowledge strengths and participation in community programs, service work.
It is a belief that a relationship between Volunteer Mentors and young people living in and preparing to leave the foster care system can be beneficial.
Many program youth are involved in Youth Advisory Board, their input and leadership guide program development.
Our program goals include increasing confidence, responsibility, decision-making skills and cultural awareness.

Follow youth until age 23 with comprehensive case management services and funding for post-secondary education.
That the majority of youth served will be self-supporting within one year of leaving the program. Tangible and intangible skills are involved.
Building a positive, trusting relationship w/clients, our community is one of respect & to give back by volunteering w/other young people.
Self-confidence & reliance are taught during life skills classes and selected youth participate on the statewide youth advisor board to DCES.
Youth establish own plans for independence, participate in their program & take a leadership role in agency & program.
We target children's functioning level to ensure needs are met & skills necessary to mature to independent adult.
For each youth to transition from High School, to further education for living self-sufficiently.
We have a Youth Advisory Board active in every local jurisdiction. 2 reps from each board attend a state YAB to discuss issues for entire MD program.
We operate under a reality therapy foundation.
Working on this.
We use past graduates of TLC as experts in training new participants. We provide opportunities for positive risk taking and advocate for youth.
Being developed
To empower youth to identify their strengths & goals, thus assuming responsibility for their futures. We encourage peer support & youth advisory groups.
Based on program vision & youth's support of this mission to become and be interdependent & independent in their lives.
Developmental activities & supportive services which enable youth to develop skills necessary to live self-sufficient adult lives.
We try to prepare youth by gradually developing their skill base & knowledge of I.L.
Youth development is focused on youth-adult partnerships. Making sure every youth has an adult they can count on. We use older youth to mentor younger
Youth are involved in all aspects of TLP. Goals, plans, program design, evaluation, life skills classes. We work for the youth.
Provide as much opportunity as possible for youth to make own decisions.
Clients participate in developing own goals as well as goals for the program. Respect for their own space & contribute to development. of agency & program.
We emphasize the acquisition of life , intellectual, physical & emotional skills necessary for a youth's transition to live independently in a community
Youth may be involved in individual service plan. We have a Youth Senate to represent the student body. All service plans are individualized.

Youth receive an assessment on educational & skill levels. Starting there, our clients create service plans for themselves. Prepares for IL.
Four goals-permanence; become educated; self-sufficient adults; capable of nurturing relationships. All children have right to be in loving family environment
Youth Assessment Service Plan-this plan involves agency's goals for youth and youth's individual goals.
Help children become "victors"! We use reality therapy in all of our programs.
We have a strong belief in helping our children grow into self-sufficient, productive, emotionally mature adults.
Allowing youth to make own choices-suffer natural consequences. Each case treated individually.
Ages 8-13, volunteer work; 14-16 work experience; 16-18 IL, job, career; 18+ career, scholarship, transition services.
To provide homeless youth safe and healthy living environment to develop and enhance their ind. skills and be ready to transition from dependence to independence
Primary concerns are Independent Living Skills, Education, Housing and Employment.
Youth can return any time until age 24 for transitional living services if case has been closed. We support post-secondary education and job training
We believe youth must be involved at every level of the program. This includes development, ind. planning, peer counseling & comm. service.
Our role is to allow each kid to find their strengths/abilities & build on those while being aware of weaknesses. Our job is to fade out of their lives
We help youth develop: sense of industry & competency; feeling of connectedness to others & society; belief in control over their life; stable identity
Principles of Re-Education
Incorporate youths in as many facets of child welfare as possible; teen panel, co-train, filmed recruitment film, pages in OK House of Reps, ...
Goals developed & achieved through partnership between youth & staff. Youth encouraged to practice IL skills and take charge of their futures.
Our philosophy is the enhancement of self-esteem and positive development through the services we offer.
Youth design & implement their programs; input on day-day issues; input on programmatic changes; participate in hiring new staff.

Appendix C

Description of Future Plans

Do you have plans to do anything different or new regarding your independent living program in the future?
Would like to initiate a mentoring component to the program.
Continuously experimenting with new models, flexible programming, specialized needs.
Developing a parenting support group. A mental health specialist (work with mentally ill)
Would like to open the program to more males, open to boys 16-21.
Develop aftercare services program. Expand college tuition exemption. Implement better training for staff and foster parents through FL Prof. Development Center.
We have applied for transitional living funds to expand our services to non-committed youth.
Currently provide services in a group arrangement, plan to add efficiency apt. units w/on site 24hr. Supervision. This allows an easier transition.
I am trying to set up a transitional living unit in Fremont County for adolescents in this area.
Genesis has a younger group of boys so instead of employment issues we needed to change the focus of the IL skills.
Incorporate more computer-based curriculum for the independent living skills.
I plan to educate more people on our TL Program and recruit applicants from outside our agency. Also, improve career and cultural awareness.
More specific services for Aftercare Youth. Continue offering a new Summer Retreat.
We are planning to expand our college and career planning. Plans for expanding the life books program for foster children. Life skills training also.
We would like to expand day care management services.
We want to provide youth assessments and community-based skills training. Would like to develop a housing component and distinct aftercare services.
We are working on developing an alumni association to assess long term effectiveness of program.
We are always recruiting youth mentors. We offer group development activities for all teens every quarter focusing on self-esteem, team building.
Immediate plans to extend program to a male group and a parallel track for foster parents. Present members part of planning group.
Expand summer wilderness work program for 14-15 year old youth. Partner w/ UPS on School to work program. Begin FP IL involvement at ages 10-13
Add a case manager on staff.
Expanding to 90-120 youth/year and including GH/Residential youth as well

Planning to expand in rural areas as well as in Tucson if funds are granted.
In 1st of a 2yr Self-Sufficiency Project to include youth, foster family and community assessment. Mentoring, volunteer, independent Living Skills and employment experience in works.
Program for State of IL is being changed so undoubtedly, local changes will occur.
We have 5 NH communities, would like to increase # of shared apts. In addition, decrease # of boarding house rooms in communities.
We want to expand services to youth with developmental disabilities, we need an aftercare worker. Thinking of a teen mom shared home.
Integrate a mentoring program partner in a local school district to provide similar services to youth in urban school district.
Review, improve, review, and improve.
We would like to continue to serve 'non-Casey youth' and increase the number of kids served.
Evaluation component-looking at tracking once youth left care; seeking to do more community/business partnerships; job readiness/retention programming.
Hope to apply for Federal dollars to expand aftercare. Continue to find new ways to plug-in postgraduates as teachers, leaders, and peer-support.
Working w/ # of agencies to increase availability of services, such as housing for those who have left care-age 18-21.
Developing a more comprehensive approach. Employed a consultant to help w/philosophy, components and implementation.
Would like to expand services to more youth - larger geographic area; Would like to add housing component.
Making transition to more formal "Youth Development" model over past few months. Demonstration project for youth and staff to co-manage group homes: budgeting, shopping.
We are reviewing programming to look at potential change.
To secure a large home & rent rooms rather than them going completely on their own (in quads on campus or drug infested neighborhoods).
We collaborate w/ another agency in our community, which opened 8/99. Will offer IL skill training. Also loosely supervised training apt. sites.
Development of a new evaluation component.
Conducted a community survey in Tucson @22sites--30% of youth surveyed were homeless currently or in past. Also, develop TLP for young parents & children.
We would like to provide a transitional living house for young females.
We are in the process of developing a statewide curriculum to allow the youth to continue in the same training opportunities when they move within the state.

Expand the employment component to include job shadowing, paid employment.
Will be adding a "Baby-Think-it-Over" Program. Continue w/need closet (household supplies for youth on their own) This is free, items are donated.
Nothing major
I hope to expand to a community based site that accommodates 1-4 18-21yr olds.
Continue to expand the scattered site apartment throughout the state of Maine.
Would love to do mentoring, apprenticeship, emergency services but are limited by funding & personnel. Developing Advisory Council of current and past mentors.
We are always changing as the youth we service change. Always discovering new methods to enhance youth's abilities to lead self-sufficient lives.
Not at this time.
Increase in community involvement; children will need to be connected to their communities to continue to be successful once they leave the program.
Expand transitional housing for emancipating foster youth; research will expand to further assess youth outcomes based on service interventions.
To provide formal training to youth, foster parents and staff on youth self-sufficiency. Monthly groups for older teens as they transition, program for giving to the community.
In process of developing long term follow-up and will try to contact clients as far back as 1981 to determine current status.
More formalized individual and group program, resulting in a curriculum and a list of best practices a year from now.
Working on developing an effective "Outcome Measure".
Try to keep current on info and issues. Considering more soft skill things—relationships, communication, etc.
Experimental day long classes, summer work experience
Recently added a Mother/Baby component. Developed a team meeting (quarterly) therapeutic component to goal setting with youth in program.
Long term follow-up regarding outcomes; increase diversity of program services view IL skills on continuum; provide IL skill development services to younger youth.
None at this time-Its really working great, a great success.
We will be purchasing apartment buildings and we will be landlords for kid 16-17 years old.
Develop continuum of living arrangements for teen moms from group to scattered site; more efficient way of distributing and storing furniture and household goods
We are working on a youth handbook, looking toward tuition waiver or equivalent and definitely need IL Specialists for each area of the state.
We hope to expand the TLP to surrounding counties.
We just started servicing teen parents and their children.
Evaluation is on the table-recently revamped and in the process of standardizing procedures. Didn't check effective practice-we haven't evaluated yet.

Appendix D

Additional Program Information

Do you have any other information about your program you would like to share with us?
Program is the third phase of 3-phase program preparing teens for IL, can work with teen for 5 years.
See attached information.
We are a "home" not a "program". Our girls learn these 'skills' through routine from their first day. We try to make their lives as 'normal' as possible
We collaborate with Charles Hall for IL. Nancy Koenig there is filling out the survey and our answers would be exactly the same.
Please see enclosed brochure.
Federally funded TLP's may not use federal dollars to serve youth currently in custody of a state dept. This made answering some questions difficult.
We are the prime contractor that runs the NC ILP.
Connections helps teens preparing to leave foster care, learn IL skills using volunteer mentors.
Our Take Charge group provides and IL program to youths in foster care. The group is voluntary and has developed a stable membership.
We follow youth until age 23. Each case is developed based on the individual's needs not the structure of a program or agency. Open intake guidelines
PALS has strong community relationships. We have 6 young people nearing \$2500 in savings, preparing to purchase vehicles.
Program can supply results of 97-98 Program year survey.
Conducting focus groups to determine our stakeholders values, beliefs & priorities related to youth self-sufficiency. Will develop programming accord
Program unique because of the "family & community model of care" and use of sound philosophy. 4 young women live w/a resident advisor in an apt.
Please feel free to phone if you have further questions or need more info.
As only TLP in NH, demand has risen. Youth services has directed to expand services in the North Country, seacoast & western regions.
See attached information. (Nothing attached)
Revise curriculum to hold attention, identify "CORE" of info that is essential, intangible skills and informal formats are important.
We hold an annual Teen Conference, 13 so far. These 3 day events are held as adult conferences w/workshops, speakers, activities & free time for youth
We have offices in 4 regions of WV & are affiliated w/ Int. Youth Advocate Program. This info is based on the Fairmont Region. Other 3 approx. same.
Our program is not formally evaluated.

Temp. shelter, host home model for homeless or runaway youth. Some transition into IL situations, but we don't have an IL through Safety Zone.
We primarily focus on behavior changes in youth we serve. IL skills are taught as part of overall program in family-like environment.
Developed a pregnancy prevention curriculum that is used w/ the Baby-Think-It-Over dolls. We use this in public schools and group homes. Very successful.
Our program is one of many offered by our agency. Also GED program on site, Job Skills/Life Skills Counselor. Basic Living Skills, Wellness Group, Teen Moms.
We created our own life book. Community donations provide useful household necessities that we distribute to teens in out-of-home placement and IL.
We feel like the Transitional Living program is very important to our youth. This program is often difficult. The youth struggle w/the freedom offered.
CFP provides support and other services to age 23. In this year, this division expanded these services to begin accepting youth leaving care of state.
Our youth were originally placed in our agencies ~8 years ago & are starting to move into post-secondary school programs. Each was focused on case-by-case.
Will send whatever information you wish.
Please see attached information on program and life skills curriculum.
The Council on Accreditation accredits CCS & our ILP. ILP is 1 of 6 programs that I manage w/in CCS. Integrate these youth throughout the year.
We anticipate serving 30-40 youth through the IL Center any given week. Curriculum is 37 weeks long, 20-30 youth/year may benefit from training apartments.
We have more current and former foster care youth in post secondary training than all other CO counties combined.
By-product of creating community for young people is powerful peer groups, and families of choice. Youth stated "it is the relationship w/staff that impacts."
We currently only serve runaway, throwaway and homeless youth ages 16 and 17 who are not in the foster care system.
I would be happy to arrange a tour at any time!
It is nationally accredited.
We have 2 components-ILS groups & transitional housing. Youth from ILS can apply for the transitional housing program. Paperwork from 5 funding sources is a challenge
We have been in existence since 1984 and serve 3 counties. Our youth reside in the community and scattered throughout the 3 counties. Serve 50 youth daily
We are a child-focused program designed to meet the individual needs of each child. Youth are assessed and Individual Treatment Plans are developed with the youth's input
We administer a 4 tier approach: IL skills training is a responsibility of the agency: formal Pre-Emancipation Program. Formal ILP starts at 16; aftercare ends at 20.

We have live-in staff who stay at the mentor apt. sites. Mentors live on site w/youth to teach them daily living skills. Move to less structured setting after mentor sites.
Enclosed are the Youth Program information handouts.
Have been doing ILA program since 1980 transitional housing since 1986.
Program has never been evaluated by independent team, but by Federal Team and has always passed evaluations. Aftercare after 3 months provided on as needed basis.
Flexible individually tailored program as well as group work and on site work experience.
See attached program description.
Enclosing program summary. It is important to note that we are part of an agency that has 24 hr crisis services for all the community and gatekeeper.
We provide excellent services for IL youth in this state. However, we need workers w/manageable caseloads". Need more families to foster teens.
We have had a great deal of success with youth through a "hands on" apartment living program. Youth are able to make mistakes while still protected by us.
Program is voluntary-youth may stay up to 18 months, but may leave at any time. 'Success' = "youth leaves for stable living situation & is employed."