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## Promising Practices Supporting the Transition of Youth from the Foster Care System to Independent Living

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***Promising Practices Supporting  
the Transition of Youth from the Foster  
Care System to Independent Living***

by: Denise E. Riebman

Advisor: Professor Dahlia Bradshaw-Lynn

October, 1999

# The Muskie School Of Public Service

Graduate Program in Public Policy  
and Management

This Capstone Project, entitled

***Promising Practices Supporting the Transition of Youth  
from the Foster Care System to Independent Living***

Denise E. Riebman

is approved and accepted as  
part of the requirements for the

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Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

*Capstone Advisor*

*Promising Practices Supporting the  
Transition of Youth from the  
Foster Care System to Independent Living*

A Capstone by Denise E. Riebman  
in completion of requirements  
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Capstone Advisor:  
Dr. Dahlia Bradshaw-Lynn

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## *Introduction*

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Every year, many youth “emancipate” from foster care when they are no longer eligible to be in the system, usually on either their 18<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. On their own, these former foster youth need to be self-reliant and able to support themselves. The role of independent living programs is to assist the foster youth to develop the tools and skills that will be needed to lead self-sufficient adult lives.

Recent studies have found that foster youth often struggle to achieve self-sufficiency and lag far behind the general population in their educational and economic outcomes. Blome’s (1997) research found that foster care youth were more likely to have dropped out of high school than non-foster youth (37% versus 16%) and less likely to have received either a high school diploma or a GED (77% versus 93%). The Westat study (1991) reported that outcomes for discharged foster youth resemble the 18-24 year old general population that lives below poverty level in terms of education completion, young parenthood and the use of public assistance. Additional research has indicated that other issues facing foster youth include cognitive delays, physical health problems and homelessness.

While further outcome focused research is still needed, the preliminary findings indicate that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. Specifically, there has been a growing awareness of the inadequacy of research that is being relied upon to make programmatic and policy decisions relating to independent living programs. This Capstone was undertaken to provide some of the needed research on the identification of independent living program practices that promote the successful transition of youth from the foster care system to a self-

sufficient adult life. A meta-analysis study was conducted through the following stages:

1. **A review of literature, program studies and expert opinions focused on independent living programs**
2. **An evaluation to determine what practices are supported by the research as "promising practices."**
3. **Identification of recommended practices and areas needing further study.**

This Capstone is part of a larger collaborative project, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, that is conducting a comprehensive, systematic study of independent living programs. Collaborating agencies include the Casey Family Services, The Casey Family Program, the Child Welfare League of America, the National Resource Center for Youth Service at the University of Oklahoma and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement at the University of Southern Maine. The findings of the research conducted for this Capstone will be used in conjunction with other components of this collaborative project.

As part of this research, the following four sections are included to provide pertinent background information: (1) Overview of legislative initiatives effecting foster care, (2) Structure of the foster care system, (3) Background and description of independent living programs and (4) Outcome data for the foster care population.

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### *Legislative Initiatives*

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The first official government recommendation advocating for the use of foster families rather than orphanages was presented at the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children in 1909 (Galaway, Nutter & Hudson, 1995). However, it wasn't until the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 that the federal government assumed a strong leadership role in improving child welfare in this country. The primary focus of the child welfare provisions in the Social Security Act was to provide support and supplementary services to families, with a secondary focus on substitute care services.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was only a modest number of children in foster care situations, which includes institutions, group homes, a non-relative's home and a relative's home; however, as a result of the "child abuse crusade" of the 1960's and 1970's, the number of children in foster care quickly rose (Pelton, 1990). One of the early factors that is cited as prompting this crusade was the 1962 publication of the "Battered Child Syndrome" by C. Henry Kempe, et. al, in the Journal of the American Medicinal Association, which created a greater awareness of the prevalence of child abuse. As a consequence of heightened public vigilance, new child abuse awareness programs and state laws requiring reports from professionals who saw children on an everyday basis, the number of national reports of child abuse rose from 225,514 in 1979 to 929,310 in 1982 (Barth, 1985, GAO, 1995). It is not clear if this merely a result of increased reporting or if there also was a rise in the number of children being abused.

In response to the rising foster care caseload and increasing lengths of stay in substitute

care, Congress passed the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272). One of the primary intents of this act was to keep as many children as possible from having to enter foster care, and for those who did enter care, to keep their stay as short as possible. The legislation shifted the emphasis from finding non-family placements for children, to promoting family preservation and reunification placements. Initially, the family preservation efforts were successful, with the number of children in care dropping from 502,000 in 1977 to 269,000 in 1983 (Ooms, 1990). However, for many families and children the new programs and policies were not sufficient in the long-term and since 1984, the foster care population has been steadily climbing.

By the late 1980's, the country was facing a foster care crisis. The system was struggling to meet the demands of families, both in numbers and service needs. (Craig & Herbert, 1997; Ooms, 1990; Scannapieco & Schagrin, 1995). On the federal level, funding was not sufficient to meet the needs; on the state level, despite many states tripling their expenditures, the child welfare system was still straining at the seams. (GAO/HEHS-95-208) Restrictions on the use of federal funding forced states to focus on short-term needs instead of long-term prevention programs designed to reduce caseloads.

In 1993, Congress created the Family Preservation and Family Support Program, as part of the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-66). This piece of legislation continued to support intensive family preservation services as the answer to this burgeoning foster care crisis. The program reinforced the principles articulated in the 1980 Act and also added additional federal funding to support the family preservation programs.

However, despite this federal legislation, from 1986 to 1996, the foster care population



increased over 80%, from an estimated at 280,000 to 502,000 children (GAO, 1997). This percentage increase far exceeds the growth of the U.S. population of children in general (Craig & Herbert, 1997). The Child Welfare League of America's KidsCampaign attributes the surge in the foster care population to four factors:

**1. Increase in reporting of child abuse and neglect**

Over 3.1 million children were reported as possible abuse or neglect victims in 1995, a 50% increase in ten years

**2. Increase in re-entry rates**

Estimates range from 20-30% of children re-enter the system

**3. Increase in length of stay for a child in foster care**

Children who left care in 1995 had a median length of stay of 10.9 months, children still in care at the end of 1995 had a median length of stay of 22.1 months.

**4. Increase in cases of children with emotional and behavioral issues that were formerly handled by the mental health and juvenile justice agencies**

From 1984 to 1990, there was a 52% increase in the number of children entering foster care after committing status and delinquent offenses.

(Child Welfare League of America, 1998)

In addition to the above mentioned factors, more children are entering care than exiting care each year. This is related to the declining exit rate and increasing entry rate that has been documented for every year since 1983 (GAO, 1995).

With the AIDS epidemic, teenage pregnancy rate and increasing drug use among women, there are justifiable concerns about the continued demand on the foster care system. (Committee on Ways and Means, 1994; Cox, 1998; Craig & Herbert, 1997). It has been projected that by the year 2000, one-third of the 80,000 children that will be orphaned as a result of AIDS will enter the child welfare system (Child Welfare League of America, 1998). It is likely that this will contribute to the already fastest growing group of children needing care, infants with medical conditions and physical and mental limitations (Child Welfare League of America, 1998).

As a result of the heightened awareness to the changing needs of the foster care system, in Congress enacted the Adoption and Safe Families Act (H.R. 867) in 1997. This Act is viewed as a major shift in philosophy for the foster care system; the emphasis is placed on protecting children instead of maintaining family preservation. Major provisions of the Act include:

- ▶ Increased child safety requirements
  - ▶ Increased adoption and permanency planning incentives
  - ▶ Extension of Independent Living Services
  - ▶ Federal waivers to explore new approaches to the child welfare system
  - ▶ Enhanced accountability for safety and permanence
- (Children's Defense Fund, 1998)

Though the methods have changed and the legislation has evolved, ensuring the safety and health of a child has always remained as the centerpiece of the foster care system. It is critical for the half a million children in the foster care system (AFCARS, 1999) that the laws continue to ensure and enhance their safety.

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## *Structure of the Foster Care System*

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Since the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, the federal government has provided a wide range of programs and support through a number of federal agencies. The Children's Bureau, within the Administration for Children and Families, administers the five basic sources of federal support for foster care and child welfare:

1. Title IV-B, Child Welfare Services Program  
Provides matching grants to states for three types of child welfare services: (1) direct services, (2) training and research and (3) demonstration grants
2. Title IV-E, the AFDC Foster Care Program  
Open-ended entitlement program that provides financial payments to states for the purpose of reimbursing a portion of the maintenance costs for foster care to children eligible to receive AFDC
3. Title IV-E, the Adoption Assistance Program  
Open-ended entitlement program that provides funding to states for adoption assistance programs for AFDC and SSI-eligible "special needs" children.
4. Title IV-E, the Independent Living Program  
Entitlement program that provides funding to states to offer services that assist foster care children in their transition to independent living.
5. Title XX, the Social Services Block Grant Program  
Block grant program allocated to states to support social services, child day care and training. (Ooms, 1990)

The federal government funds approximately 35% of all foster care costs, with states and localities funding the other 65% (GAO, 1995). The federal funding provided to the states is contingent upon the state's compliance with an array of federal requirements. However, despite these procedural requirements, the states have a fair amount of latitude with how they develop and implement their own systems.

Each state has their own particular structure, based upon their own child welfare needs and state family law. The majority have a "state-based" decision making structure, with twelve states operating on a "county-based" level (GAO, 1998). While in a "state-based" structure, the

state child welfare agency sets specific policies and procedures for the county levels, in a "county-based" structure, the county has the autonomy to establish their own policies within broader state regulations. Due to the size of the foster care system and complexity of service needs, states depend on private providers and non-profit agencies to provide many of the actual client services. However, this structure has resulted in a fragmented system, often causing delays in receiving appropriate services, service duplication, caseworker oversight and poor record keeping (Ooms, 1990). For example, a GAO study (1995) in three urban areas, found that even after entering care, one-third of the children still had unmet health needs. As a result of the structure, with a multitude of private, public, and government agencies responsible for providing different aspects of service delivery, the overall framework of the foster care system is one of complexity and incongruity.

In addition to the complex organizational structure, the lack of any nationally mandated foster care and adoption information system creates limits on the available information relating to the demographics of the foster care population. The two leading sources of national data on the foster care population are (1) The Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS) and (2) The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). Additional sources of data include the National Center for Health Statistics, National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, Census Bureau and the Annie. E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT data book. In providing a comprehensive report, the Child Welfare League of America aggregates many of the above sources, along with various others, into their Annual Child Welfare Data.

Appendix B provides demographic information which was selected to provide a general picture of the characteristics of the foster care population.

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## *Independent Living Programs*

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Each year, approximately 18,000-25,000 youth emancipate from the foster care system nationwide, either by choosing to leave or by "aging out" of the system. Frequently lacking a family support system, these youth, often at the age of 18 or 19, need to be able to survive on their own. They face a number of issues upon leaving the system, including a lack of independent living skills, inadequate coping techniques, disruption in their education and feelings of rejection and anger (Ryan, McFadden, Rice & Warren, 1988).

Beginning in the early 1980's, increased attention was given to the need for programs and services that help prepare youth to successfully transition out of the foster care system. In the early and mid 1980's, the U.S. Children's Bureau funded several demonstration projects and in 1983, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Development Services issued the RFP, "Study of the Adaptation of Adolescents in Foster Care to Independence and Community Life" (Mech, 1994). By 1985, in response to reports and testimony from child welfare agencies, Congress created the Independent Living Program as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, under Title IV-E of the 1935 Social Security Act.

The initial purpose of the Independent Living Program was to provide states with the resources to develop and implement programs to aid AFDC-eligible youth (age 16 or older) to transition from the foster care system to independent living. In 1989, the program was expanded to allow states to provide independent living services to all foster care youth ages 16-18 and offer

services for up to six months after a youth has left care. Although only given short-term funding initially, in 1993, Congress ensured its long term existence by giving the program permanent entitlement status under Public Law 103-66.

Operating under the auspices of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), within the Department of Health and Human Services, the Independent Living Program provides minimal national guidelines that the states need to follow in their implementation of their programs. These guidelines include population eligibility, service requirements (i.e. transitional living plans, case reviews), application and report procedures (i.e. annual reporting, client outcomes) and fiscal regulations. While the ACF is responsible for the federal funding allocation to the child welfare department in each state, each state has their own discretion to determine how services will be delivered.

The original definition of "independent living services" is credited to Dorothy Ansell, of Independent-Living Resources. "The concept of independent-living services is twofold, comprising both a philosophical approach to delivering services and the specific resources and services that lead to achieving successful transition to independence" (Cook, 1988, p. 500). Ansell developed four major stages of a continuum that enable youth to gradually move through a series of phases to acquire tangible skills (i.e. budgeting, food preparation, resume writing) and intangible skills (i.e. decision making, self-esteem building). The four stages are: Informal Learning, Formal Learning, Supervised Practice and Self-Sufficiency (Cook, 1988).

A similar definition to Ansell's is found in the Child Welfare League of America's Standards for Independent Living Services (1990). "A series of developmental activities that provide opportunities for young people to gain the skills required to live healthy, productive, and

responsible lives as self-sufficient adults" (CWLA, p. 10). With roots as far back as the 1909 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, the Child Welfare League is now an association of almost 1,000 public and not-for-profit agencies dedicated to improving child welfare in this country. Their Standards for Independent Living Services were developed by a committee of leading experts in this field.

In theory, there are two general types of independent living programs; (1) State programs that are officially part of the Federal Independent Living Program and (2) Non-federal independent living programs, including non-profit organizations, private agencies, school based services and foundation run programs. However, in practice, there is little distinction between these two types as the federal independent living programs contract to non-federal programs and the non-federal programs often collaborate with their state's Federal Independent Living Programs.

While in 1989, the Child Welfare League of American published general independent living program standards, there still exists a wide disparity over what practices actual constitute independent living services. This situation is exasperated by the myriad of programs that fall under the category of independent living programs. **As a result, it has been difficult to arrive at a generally accepted consensus on what type of independent living practices should be promoted as enabling youth to make the successful transition to independent living.**

Despite programmatic and policy hurdles, substantiated evidence exists that independent living programs do make a difference, thereby, warranting further study to identify the key components of a successful program. Furthermore, with the Children's Bureau in the Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth and Families reporting that the target

population (16 years and older) served by independent living programs has grown by 15,000 in the past 6 years, determining what factors help these youth succeed is increasingly becoming essential (Boyle, 1999).

In a study of foster care youth in the Independent Living Program in Baltimore County, Scannapeico and Schagrin (1995) reported that the program has had a positive impact on the youth. They compared 44 youth who had participated in the ILP program and 46 youth (with similar characteristics) who did not participate and found the following: 50% of the participants graduated high school, versus 13% of the non-participants; and 47.7% were self supporting at Case Closing versus 17.4%. Although their study size was small, the researchers felt confident enough to conclude that with similar youth, the outcome results are likely to be related to their involvement in ILP (Scannapeico & Schagrin, 1995).

An evaluation of Arizona Young Adult Program, a pilot project focused on providing after care services, reported that youth receiving independent living services had better outcomes than youth who had not been part of the program (Irvine, 1988). Numerous studies on the Foster Youth Service Program in California have indicated significant improvement in educational outcomes for the involved youth (Ayasse, 1995). Results from the Children's Village Work Appreciation for Youth Program comparing youth who were selected for the Scholarship program (providing mentors, intensive skill building opportunities and financial incentives) and those not in the program, show a higher high school or GED completion rate and higher enrollment in some type of further education (Dale, 1997).

The growing awareness of the positive impact independent living programs have upon youth is evident by the recent commitment by the White House. After years of no funding



increasing, on January 29, 1999, it was announced that the President's Fiscal Year 2000 budget designated \$280 million to support youth transitioning out of the foster care system. This allocation increases the Federal Independent Living Program's budget by 50%, creates new competitive state grants, extend Medicaid eligibility of foster care youth to age 21 and increases by 33% the Transitional Living Program (Administration for Children and Families, 1999).

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## *Outcome Data*

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There has been a limited amount of research conducted relating to the foster care system, with most of the studies focused on measuring the outcomes of former foster care youth. Few studies employ longitudinal, experimental or quasi-experimental designs, and even fewer have compared the foster care population with the general population. Although this is a common problem among research in the social science field, the discouraging findings for the foster care population that have emerged from existing studies point to the overwhelming need for more rigorous research.

While a few studies have suggested that outcomes for former foster youth are fairly positive (Fanshel, Finch & Grundy, 1990), the majority of the research indicates that their outcomes place them far behind the general population (Barth, 1990; Blome, 1997; Cook, 1990; Courtney, 1995; Mech, 1994). The Westat study (1991), a federally funded study, provided a comprehensive examination of the Federal Independent Living Programs. Specifically, the study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Independent Living Initiative (P.L. 99-272). The study was conducted from 1988-1991, and followed the outcomes of former foster youth for two and a half to four years after leaving the system.

**Key findings include:**

- ▶ 48% high school completion rate (versus 64% rate for the general population)
- ▶ 30% welfare recipients (versus 5% rate for the general population)
- ▶ 60% of the young woman had a child (versus 26% rate for the general population)
- ▶ 30% were welfare recipients (versus 5% rate for the general population)  
(Cook, Fleishman and Grimes, 1991)

One of the most recent studies, Blome's (1997) research utilized data from the "High

School and Beyond" survey which is administered every two years by the Department of Education. In a comparative analysis between 167 foster youth and a matched group of non-foster youth, the study found that foster care youth were more likely to have dropped out of high school than non-foster youth (37% versus 16%); less likely to have received either a high school diploma or a GED (77% versus 93%); and more than twice as likely to have changed schools at least three or more times since fifth grade. Although the groups were matched according to standardized math and verbal scores and reported similar grades, only 15% of the foster youth were enrolled in college preparatory classes, versus 32% of the comparison group. Blome suggests that since the groups' basic abilities were controlled, this discrepancy has less to do with actual ability and more to do with parent, teacher and caseworkers expectations, along with a lack of finances to support future educational aspirations.

Other areas of concern highlighted by additional studies include cognitive delays, physical health problems, and incarceration rates (Cook, 1991; Courtney, et al, 1995). Even in comparison to non-foster children raised in similar low socioeconomic groups, several studies have found that foster children have three to seven times as many health, developmental and emotional problems. (Rosenfeld, 1997) Furthermore, even after entering the foster care system, a study of young foster children in three urban centers by the U.S. General Accounting Office (1995) found that 12% had not received any routine health care, 34% were not properly immunized and 32% had unmet health needs.

Recent attention has been given to findings that former foster care youth are over represented in the homeless population. (Institute for Children and Poverty, 1993; Roman & Wolf, 1997) While Mangine, Royse, Wiehe & Nietzel (1990) dispute the findings, suggesting that the over-representation could merely be a result of a large portion of foster youth originally

coming from the lowest socio-economic group, additional studies indicate that even taking that into account, those former foster care homeless fare worse than the general homeless population. In a comparison of homeless parents with a history of foster care versus homeless parents without a history, a report by the Institute for Children and Poverty (1993) found that those with a history have their first child at an earlier age; stay on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) longer; and have less work experience. Roman and Wolfe's (1997) study also found that those with a history of foster care tend to become homeless at an earlier age.

These negative outcomes support the necessity of further research focused on programmatic and service needs of the foster care population. With no indication that this country will soon experience a significant decline in the number of children in foster care, the identification of programs and practices that successfully improve outcomes for this population is critical. While this need is true for all children in foster care, for those older youth who are preparing to transition out of the foster care system, the need is especially imminent.

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## *Research Design*

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The prevailing opinion from the foster care experts, supported by an extensive literature review, is that the research relating to promising practices for independent living programs is still in infancy. (D. Ansell, personal communication, 1999; Courtney and Barth, 1996; Pecora, Kingery, Downs and Nollan, 1997) The purpose of this Capstone was to address this need for research focused on identifying practices that promote a successful transition from the foster care system to independent living. Consequently, the meta-analysis conducted for this Capstone was designed as an exploratory, descriptive piece of research that will serve as a foundation for more specific and directed studies.

### *Methodology*

The methodology used for this Capstone consisted of a multi-phased process, involving the following three stages:

#### **1. Preliminary Literature Review**

The purpose of this stage was to collect initial background information on the foster care system, independent living programs and outcome studies. The majority of the materials at this stage were identified out of an initial computer search on the ERIC database. Out of this review of approximately 30 articles, roughly 50 potential promising practices were identified. Examples of these early criteria include: offering a continuum of independent living skills, providing counseling for behavioral and emotional problems, extending independent living skills training to youth younger than 16 years old, and providing mentoring opportunities.

## **2. Extensive Literature Review and Unstructured Interviews with Experts**

At this stage, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, along with unstructured interviews with experts. The information was gathered from the variety of sources: Computer searches on ERIC, PsycINFO (focused on materials from 1985 - 1999) and Expanded Academic ASAP (focused on 1996 - 1999); World Wide Web searches; URSUS, University of Maine on line catalog; a list of identified data sets relating to foster care youth from the National Child Welfare Resource Center; and referenced articles from reviewed literature. Some of the information gathered by the expert interviews was obtained during contacts made in the Fall 1998 while this researcher was involved in the initial groundwork phase of this project. Additional interviews conducted specifically for this Capstone occurred in Spring 1999. The experts were selected based upon their extensive involvement as researchers or practitioners in the foster care field.

While much of the literature supported the earlier findings, as additional criteria were identified, they were added to the initial list. It was also at this stage that a model for coding the evidence from the research was identified in Paula Kohler's (1993) article, "Best Practices in Transition: Substantiated or Implied?" Additional information on the Kohler model will be detailed in phase three.

Although the focus of the review was on information relating directly to foster care youth, the review was expanded in phase two to include supplementary articles on at-risk youth. Although not all foster care youth should be considered at-risk youth, the characteristics of a large percentage of this population do fit the definition of an "at-risk student" provided by the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination and Improvement Act of 1994, as one who "because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, geographic location, or economic

disadvantage, faces a greater risk of low educational achievement or reduced academic expectations" (Sec. 912(1)(2)). The decision to include research on at-risk youth was based on the relevance of the studies that lent supporting evidence to findings from other foster care youth research.

### 3. Coding of Evidence

In identifying which criteria qualified for inclusion in the survey, the information was categorized based upon a method employed by Paula Kohler in the article "Best Practices in Transition: Substantiated or Implied?" There are two fundamental similarities between Kohler's (1993) study on youth with disabilities and the research conducted for this Capstone: (1) Both studies were conducted to identify practices that have a positive impact on a youth's ability to transition to adult life. (2) The research for both studies found a lack of empirical studies supporting specific practices and a multitude of literature with recommendations of effective practices.

The following are Kohler's two categories for the coding of evidence:

- (1) Substantiated by study results – Where there existed a substantiated (empirical) link between results/outcomes and practice
- (2) Implied by authors – where the link between results/outcomes and practice was not specific, but where the author implied that the practice was desirable or effective.

Accordingly, for this Capstone, a matrix was developed with two headings, "Substantiated" and "Implied." (Appendix A) Based upon Kohler's model for categorizing the evidence, the information on foster care practices were placed in either category. Subsequent to the coding of evidence, "promising practices" were identified from the research that had the strongest support for their ability to promote positive outcomes for youth in foster care.

### ***Research Limitation***

One key limitation of this Capstone is that due to the exploratory nature of the project, it was difficult to develop definitive “promising practice” standards. There is a general consensus among those conducting research in this field that there is a lack of scientifically rigorous research. Notably missing are longitudinal studies and either experimental or quasi-experimental studies which seriously hinders the ability to identify key program practices that contribute to improved outcomes ( D.Ansell, personal communication, 1999; Downs, Wolf and Pecora, 1999; Pecora, Kingery, Downs and Nollan, 1997).

Therefore, although key findings were derived based upon the Kohler Model, it is understood that these practices should be viewed as preliminary findings. As the work from this Capstone is incorporated with research from the other collaborating agencies involved with this Annie E. Casey Foundation grant, the recommended “promising practices” will be refined to reflect additional evidence.



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## Defining Promising Practices

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The term often used by researchers, evaluators and practitioners to define model programs and services is "best practice." While commonly used in many fields, the term "best practice" often lacks a concrete definition. The research on the foster care system is no exception, and at this point, there is no standard, definitive set of guidelines upon which to determine whether a practice should be considered "best."

Peters and Heron (1993) established proposed criteria for best practice in The Journal of Special Education article, "When the best is not good enough: An Examination of Best Practice." Although developed for the special education field, the following five questions that they identified as fundamental in determining best practice, are applicable to others conducting "best practice" research:

1. Does the practice have a sound theoretical base?
2. Is the methodological integrity of the research convincing and compelling?
3. Is there consensus with existing literature?
4. Is there evidence that desired outcomes are consistently produced?
5. Is there evidence of social validity?

Since meeting the requirements of all of these five questions generally requires that an extensive amount of rigorous and thorough research exists, which is often lacking in many fields, Peters and Heron (1993) suggest that practices that do not meet these precise standards, should be viewed as "most promising practices." As a result, the practices identified through the research for this Capstone will be considered "promising practices." This decision is based on both the author's conclusion that despite a thorough literature review, there exists an inadequate breadth of research to determine "best practice" and on similar conclusions made by other

researchers. (D. Ansell, personal communication, 1998, Courtner and Barth, 1996; Pecora, Kingery, Downs & Nollan, 1997)

Furthermore, a cautionary notes needs to be added since the recommendations that have emerged out of this research are based on a broad perspective of independent living programs. The specific structure of individual programs are dependent on factors including the circumstances within the communities, the characteristics of the target population, cultural differences and the specific focus of the independent living program. Therefore, these recommended promising practices should not be viewed as a one size fits all model for independent living programs, but rather as a guide for practices that are emerging as promising in improving outcomes for foster youth.

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## *Key findings*

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*The following seven findings are not presented in any particular order of importance.*

**1. Substantiated evidence indicates that the integrated service model is a promising practice. Evidence indicates it has a positive effect on the following:**

- ▶ **Expanding the range of available independent living services**
- ▶ **Facilitating inter-agency collaboration and communication**
- ▶ **Increasing overall financial resources**
- ▶ **Improving youth outcomes**

While variations exist on the specifics components of the integrated service delivery model, the definition by the Urban Institute provides a basic framework: 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, 1992)

The Urban Institute (1992) concludes from their review of programs for at-risk youth that a comprehensive approach to service delivery that looks holistically at a child is an effective method to helping youth avoid negative outcomes. The researchers, Burt, Resnick and Matheson, offer the following recommendations for inter-agency collaboration:

- ▶ Long-term commitment
- ▶ Identification of needed services
- ▶ Common goals and objectives
- ▶ Flexible funding
- ▶ Minimalization of administrative barriers
- ▶ Effectively designed and implemented evaluations
- ▶ Institutionalizing change

The importance of integrated service delivery is reinforced by the American Youth Policy Forum's comprehensive national evaluation (1997) of youth programs. They found that

unsuccessful programs are generally the 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.

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. (Westat, 1991; Barth, 1996; Mech, 1994; Kazis and Kopp, 1997; CWLA interim report, 1998) Based on years of expertise in the foster care field, Dorothy Ansell, is also a strong proponent of the collaboration between the agencies and schools. (D. Ansell, personal communication, 1998)

One component that Cook (1998) 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 will facilitate the flow of information, build both formal and informal relationships and create a foundation of trust and cooperation between agencies.

The CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommends the following components of a successful inter-agency collaboration:

- ▶ Shared purpose
- ▶ Clear definition of roles and responsibilities
- ▶ Joint planning for resource development
- ▶ Client-tracking capabilities
- ▶ Evaluation of service outcomes
- ▶ Advocacy work

An evaluation of the Foster Youth Services (FYS) program in California indicates that positive outcomes have resulted from the application of an integrated service delivery paradigm. Their program utilizes an interagency model in providing four core service components: school placement/student advocacy, tutoring, counseling and employment readiness. One of the six school districts with FYS, the Mt. Diablo Unified School District provides additional support for the FYS program by hiring a "social services liaison" who facilitates the communication between the school and social service agencies.

Although it is likely that irrespective of the presence of the FYS inter-agency collaboration, positive outcomes would have emerged simply as a result of the provision of intensive independent living services, there is additional positive evidence that relates to the utilization of the integrated service delivery model. A study by Seashore in 1985 found that caseworkers judged the districts with FYS better than the districts with FYS in the following areas:

- ▶ Promptness of school placement
  - ▶ Appropriateness of academic placement
  - ▶ Provision of special education needs
  - ▶ Early identification of student problems
  - ▶ Facilitation of academic progress
- (Ayasse, 1995)

Another program that has documented the success of an inter-agency approach is the School and Community Support Project in Massachusetts, a collaborative effort between the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and the Massachusetts Families for Kids. Begun in 1996, the project is focused on providing services to improve the adjustment and integration of foster and adoptive children into their schools and communities. Early outcome studies of this project indicate that it has significantly improved interagency working

relationships, increased trust between professional and foster parents and reduced foster families feelings of intimidation when communication with the schools. (Kochanek, 1998)

One final piece of the integrated service delivery concept is the managed care model. Although part of the health care field for many years, managed care is only recently gaining attention within the child welfare field. "Under managed care, a single entity is responsible for arranging and coordinating the child's care among a network of providers and is reimbursed on a capitated basis rather than for the total amount of services provided." (GAO/HEHS-99-8, p. 20) This GAO report (1998) states that despite the limited outcome information, preliminary data suggests that this approach results in improvements in cost efficiencies and program accountability. Furthermore, in its ability to improve youth outcomes, the GAO research suggests that service delivery is improved through the wider access to services and consequently, more appropriately matched services.

**2. Substantiated and implied evidence had identified the following practices that promote the successfully completion of Independent Living Plan goals:**

- ▶ **Individualized programs based upon assessment results**
- ▶ **Continuum of life skills services**
- ▶ **Training in specific life skill areas**
- ▶ **Hands-on experiences**
- ▶ **Training for youth younger than 16 years old and older than 18 years old**

In 1985, the Independent Living Initiative (PL-99-272) mandated that all youth in out of home care be tested for life skills by 16 years old and that an Independent Living Plan (ILP) be developed to address areas of deficiencies. The following are some of the more commonly used self-assessment tools:

- ▶ Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- ▶ Tests for Everyday Living (TEL)
- ▶ Daniel Memorial Independent Living Assessments for Life Skills
- ▶ Effective Social Skills
- ▶ Ansell-Casey Life Skills (ACLSA)
- ▶ Career Exploratory Skills

In one of the few substantiated studies, the ACLSA was reviewed by Nollan, et al. (1996) and found to be an effective assessment tool. However, due to the limited research focused on determining which types of self-sufficiency assessments are more effective, agencies are dependent on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence on which assessment should be used. (Downs, et al. 1996) Based upon results from a pilot study, Nollan, Downs, Wolf and Lamont (1996) 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.

Despite the above mentioned shortcomings with assessments tools, they still are a necessary prerequisite for the development of the recommended individualized independent living skills program. (Mech, 1994; CWLA, 1990; Cook, 1988) Cook (1988) asserts that the youth need to be involved in the process from the beginning. In the most comprehensive evaluation of the Federal Independent Living Initiative, the Westat study (1991) reports that empirical evidence indicates that independent living services that are targeted towards specified youth needs and outcomes achieve the best results.

By offering life skills in a continuum of independent living preparation phases, the youth have the flexibility to move through the continuum based upon their own developmental needs and individualized independent living plan goals. Cook (1988) defines the continuum in four stages: (1) Informal Learning; (2) Formal Learning; (3) Supervised Practice and (4) Self-Sufficiency. A study of a transitional foster care program in New York that utilizes a multi-level

approach to teaching independent living skills provides empirical support for this practice. The participating youth increased their money management skills through the continuum approach to providing life skills training.

In examining the literature related directly to types of life skill areas, there is a growing body of evidence providing data to support specific practices. The Westat (1991) study provides the most comprehensive examination of the effects of skills training on self-sufficiency. (Self-sufficiency was determined by seven outcome measures: (1) Ability to maintain a job for at least one year; (2) Educational status; (3) Ability to access health care; (4) Cost to community; (5) Avoiding young parenthood; (6) Overall satisfaction; (7) Availability of a social network and; (8) Composite measure of independent living) The following are some of the key findings in their analysis:

- ▶ Providing training in specific skill areas related to specific outcomes (i.e. health training to increase awareness of health care resources) is preferable to providing training in a vast number of skill areas.
- ▶ Five skill areas (money management, credit, consumer, education and employment) were particularly noted for their affect on improving outcomes
- ▶ Combination of skills training (especially the identified 5 areas) produced better outcomes

A study conducted by Nollan, et al. (1997) examined the factors that help foster youth deal with stress and how these factors correlate with self-sufficiency skills. The results from this study indicate that the following variables are predictive of higher life skills acquisition: greater vision for the future, positive relationship with foster mother, higher self-esteem, volunteer and work experience and group involvement. The researchers recommend the promotion of specific practices and life skills training that address the development of these areas.

Nollan, et al. (1997) substantiated finding lends support to the implied evidence supporting the utilization of hands-on, experiential activities to reinforce formal independent



living skills training. (The CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services, 1990) Cook (1988) suggests that this practice is critical to provide the foster youth with opportunities to make mistakes and get frustrated in a supervised setting, so that once on their own, they will be better adept at handling challenges.

Hands-on experience can also occur through volunteer work, community service projects and service learning opportunities. The Search Institute report cites the substantial amount of evidence that indicates that this approach promotes positive outcomes for academic learning, problem-solving ability, social development/maturity, self-esteem, leadership development and educational attainment. (Leffert, et al., 1996)

Finally, more independent living programs are beginning to recognize that in order to improve outcomes for foster care youth, training must begin at an earlier age than 16 and extend beyond 18 years old. (B. Copeland, personal communication, 1998) As more states are keeping older adolescents (18 -21 years old) in the foster care system, extending independent living programs to include the young adults in this age bracket will become imperative. Although at this point there is a lack of empirical studies supporting the recommendation for extending the age range for independent living programs, the implied evidence that emerged from this research is substantial. (Wedeven, et al, 1994; Mallon, 1992; Cook, 1989; Westat, 1991)

In the American Youth Policy's Forum compendium evaluation of youth programs (1997), it was reported that programs that begin working with youth at a young age and follow their development through high school can increase positive outcomes related to high school graduation rates and attendance in college.

Mallon (1992) recommends that use of formal curriculum for latency age children (7-13 years old) that focuses on the development of self-sufficiency and self-esteem. These skill areas

should include both tangible skills (hygiene, safety, money management, personal appearance) and intangible skills (interpersonal behaviors, decision making). Mallon asserts that even if these children do not stay in the foster care system, education in this areas is still valuable for the youth.

**3. Promoting biological and foster family involvement is an important practice for independent living programs. Research findings strongly support the need for practices that focus on maintaining a relationship between youth in foster care and their biological families.**

The role of independent living programs in fostering the relationships between the youth and both their biological and foster family has emerged as a critical component. There is a significant amount of substantiated evidence that supports the identification of this as a promising practice. This practice is important both while the youth are in care and after they have emancipated from the system.

One of the major findings of a New York study of 600 former foster youth from the Casey Family Foster Care Program found that those children who had continued contact with their birth parents while in foster care had better overall outcomes. (Fanshel, 1990) This finding held true even for children whose families had serious problems and whose parents exhibited harmful behaviors. Fanshel suggests that this contact gives the children an understanding of their roots, along with a realization of why their parents can't take care of them right now.

Results of an analysis conducted by Barth (1996) establishes that contact with biological parents and siblings while in care is correlated with improved emancipation outcomes. Festinger (1983) found similar outcomes in his follow-up interviews with 277 youth formerly in foster care in New York City. Inglehart's empirical study (1994) of randomly selected adolescents in Los Angeles County found that contact with biological father is a significant predictor of improved

self-care abilities (measured by their youth's ability to know when and how to get medical care; how to find a place to live and how to get around town).

The importance of these relationships holds true even after youth leave the foster care system. Festinger's (1983) study found that former foster youth who were still in contact with their biological family had better outcomes than youth who were not in contact. (This finding also was true for contact with their foster family) Maintaining a relationship with biological sibling is also important as indicated by the results of a West Virginia study (Jones and Moses, 1984) that found for 78% of the youth, siblings are a major resource for them after leaving care.

Improved youth outcomes are similarly evident from strong relationships with their foster family. A study conducted by Nollan, et al. (1997) of 209 adolescents in the Casey Family Program found that a good relationship with a foster mother is correlated with higher self-esteem. They researchers suggest that this relationship gives youth a greater sense of stability, which allows them to focus on other areas of their life.

Furthermore, implied evidence exists that training the foster family how to teach independent living skills should be an integral component of independent living programs. (Westat, 1991; Burrell and Perez-Ferreiro, 1995; Cook, 1988) Barth (1988) suggests using incentives, such as special room and board rates, to entice foster parents to participate in training efforts.

Ryan, McFadden, Rice and Warren (1988) offer three advantages to using foster parents to teach independent living programs: (1) The home is the natural place for informal learning; (2) The parents see the youth on a daily basis and (3) Parents have a greater ability to tailor the program to the needs of their youth. They recommend that the foster parents are given a structured curriculum that allows for flexibility to individualize the life skills training. In

addition, by using foster parents as a resource, independent living programs "will exponentially increase the hours of service and training available to foster youth." (Ryan, McFadden, Rice and Warren, 1988, p. 571)

A corollary benefit to training foster parents has also been shown in its ability to improve communications between the caregivers and the youth. Nollan, et al. (1999) report that post-test scores from a preliminary study of the Tucson Division Self-Sufficiency Initiative indicate that a consequence of training foster parents to provide life skills work in the home has been a decrease in differences in perception of the youth's mastery of life skills. By teaching the life skills to the youth, interactions between the caregiver and youth increase, thereby increasing the caregivers awareness of the youth's grasp of life skills.

**4. Providing a comprehensive approach to educational services to foster youth is one of the most critical elements for independent living programs.**

"Relationships between education, skill training, job acquisition, and income have been well-documented. An economy saturated with low-paying, part-time, service jobs together with the changing nature of employment structures 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." (Mech, 1994, p. 612)

As indicated by Mech, providing educational services for foster youth is one of the most important practices for an independent living program in order to both prepare them in the short term for independent living and in the long term improve overall outcomes. Some of the identified youth services that programs should provide include: educational tutors/coaches (Ayasse, 1995; Mech, 1994), college preparatory activities (Horn and Chen, 1998), GED programs (CWLA interim report, 1998) and school-to-work programs (Westat, 1991; G.

Eagleson, personal communication, 1998). However, while these practices should be viewed individually as promising practices, an underlying theme that emerged from the substance of the research was the independent living programs need to offer a comprehensive, integrated approach to educational services in order to both promote the completion of high school and encourage the enrollment in post-secondary education. (Ayasse, 1995; Kochanek, 1998; Mech, 1994; D. Ansell, personal communication, 1998)

Foremost, programs need to implement integrated practices and policies that increase the graduation rate for foster care youth. Strong endorsement for this recommendation is evident in the Westat (1991) study which found that regardless of what type of life skills training the youth had, having completed high school increased the youth's likelihood of obtaining steady employment and increased their overall sense of self-sufficiency. An often mentioned expert recommendation that increases the likelihood of high school graduation is that programs provide needed transportation and/or home placement stability that enables youth to have at least one good, complete year in school. (J. Economy, personal communication, 1998; M. Kroner, personal communication, 1998; M. Courtney, personal communication, 1998, R. Nixon, personal communication, 1998)

Maintaining a youth's academic placement will also facilitate their involvement in extracurricular activities, which has been cited as important in a comprehensive effort to improve educational outcomes. (Oden, 1995) Implied evidence shows that through participation in structured activities, clubs, church groups and sports, youth increase their self-esteem and academic performance. (Jordan and Murray Nettles, 1999; Leffert, et al, 1996) Furthermore, for youth in foster care, participation in these type of activities expands their support system by connecting them with new friends and teachers. (M. Kroner, personal communication, 1998)

By promoting this practice, independent living programs will foster the full engagement of a youth in their school.

Finally, independent living programs need to coordinate with the schools in order to provide an integrated approach to service delivery. Utilizing educational liaisons that connect the child welfare agencies and the schools is a recommended practice. (Barth, 1994; Mech, 1994; B. Copeland, personal communication, 1998) These liaisons can also assist with maintaining accurate academic records, ensuring appropriate classroom placement, and providing academic information to the child welfare agencies. In Illinois, where this practice does not occur, a study by George, et al., (1992) found that 30% of the foster youth were receiving special educational services, while the case workers records only indicated a 5% rate. (Ayasse, 1995) Mech (1994) also recommends that the educational liaisons work with the agencies and schools to coordinate development of academic plans, student testing and evaluation procedures.

Along with educational liaisons, independent living programs should take the lead on providing training to school personnel. Noble (1997) recommends that teachers are trained in the following: (1) How to work with foster parents; (2) How to advocate for a foster youth's appropriate academic placement and; (3) How to be aware of potentially sensitive school assignments (i.e. family trees). In an evaluation of the School and Community Support Project in Massachusetts, outcome results from their training of school personnel indicate that the training enhanced understanding from school staff on how to respond to the unique needs of foster children and provided insight to teachers on the operation of the foster care system. (Kochanek, 1998).

**5. Both substantiated and implied evidence indicates that effective employment programs offered through independent living agencies can have a positive impact on improving youth outcomes. Recommended components include:**

- ▶ **Focus on employability skills**
- ▶ **Vocational counseling**
- ▶ **Meaningful work opportunities**
- ▶ **Hands on experience**
- ▶ **Long-term programs**
- ▶ **Community/school collaborations**

While some components offered in life skills training are fundamental work skills, employment programs need to focus on teaching specific employability skills. North, Mallabar and Desrochers (1988) describe four skills 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)

The American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of youth programs (1997) offers similar recommendations, and also includes additional job readiness skills such as problem-solving, oral communication and computer literacy. They report that programs that allow youth to direct their own job readiness training result in positive employment and economic outcomes for youth.

Vocational counseling was identified through Mech's aggregations of four independent living program studies as a promising practice for independent living programs. This practice is supported by the Child Welfare League of America both in their 1990 Standards for Independent Living Services and more recently in their 1998 interim report. Furthermore, 70% of the Casey Family Program alumni survey recommended the need for more vocational counseling while in care. (Wedeven, 1994)

The type of work that are promoted has also evidenced as an important programmatic

component. A study by Mortimer, et al. (1996) found that even when background variables were controlled, quality of work is a predictor of decreased depressive effects. This effect was also apparent in males who felt that they work that they were doing would be have a future application.

In addition to meaningful work, research indicates the need for hands-on experience to reinforce the basic skills training. In the American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of evaluations of youth programs (1997), it's reported that successful programs are those that offer hands-on, experiential, occupational training. An additional value of this practice is that it allows the youth to interact in professional settings, which promotes positive employment outcomes. (Leffert, et al., 1996) Kazis and Kopp (1997) report that these experiential experiences are particularly power to those youth who associate traditional training with negative school memories. These opportunities allow the youth to disassociate the employment training with unsatisfactory academic experiences.

A corollary benefit to hands-on experience emerged from an exploratory study of 152 randomly selected adolescents in foster care in Los Angeles County. Inglehart (1994) found that those youth who had experiential employment opportunities had better self-care abilities. (Self care was measured by their youth's ability to know when and how to get medical care; how to find a place to live and how to get around town)

In order to ensure long-term effects on employment outcomes, evidence supports the need for high-intensity programs that offer long-term training. The American Youth Policy Forum (1997) report that short-term programs are not sufficient in their ability to provide the needed skills for youth. Furthermore, Kazis and Kopp (1997) state that programs that only focus on a small number of skill areas for a limited length of time are not adequate to change individual



behaviors.

The most compelling piece of research supporting the need for high intensity, long-term training emerges out of a study of the Children's Village WAY Scholarship program. A group of male youth were selected as scholars and received more intensive work counseling and a five-year commitment of support from the program demonstrated higher outcomes than the comparison group: 68% received their high school diploma or GED, versus 46% of the comparison group and 55% went on to some form of higher education, versus 38% of the comparison group.

The final recommended practice for employment programs is to build community collaborations with other organizations, employment agencies and the school system. (CWLA interim report, 1998; CWLS Standards for Independent Living Service, 1990) North, Mallabar and Desrochers (1988) provide the following suggestions to foster care agencies in accessing community resources:

- ▶ 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), Job Corps and Cooperative Education programs
- ▶ Develop informal networks with businesses, volunteer agencies and career networking groups

Kazis and Kopp (1997) emphasize the role that community connections have in increasing an organization's awareness of what type of employment training fits into their local area's labor needs. They also assert that research and practice indicate that work experience must be combined with the youth's academic course work, in order to maximize the benefits of the employment experience.

**6. The evidence from both substantiated and implied research indicates that independent living programs need to provide support services that are specifically designed to address the instability that often results from being in foster care. Key identified components include:**

- ▶ **Promotion of stable placement**
- ▶ **Integration of case worker responsibility**
- ▶ **Team approach**
- ▶ **Mentor programs/Peer groups**

When children are placed in the care of the foster system, not only are they removed from their homes and family, but often from their school and community. For some, stability is restored upon family reunification or adoption. For others, often the adolescent population, this instability remains a constant issue as they move through the foster care system. The need for programs to provide services that address the need for stability in their lives is clearly supported by a wealth of research.

One of the most important practices that independent living programs need to focus on is the promotion of stable living placements for adolescents. (Ayasse, 1995; Inglehart, 1994; Westat, 1991). Negative outcomes associated with multiple placements include: less likely to receive needed services (Ayasse, 1995), less likely to be prepared for independent living (Inglehart, 1994), more likely to be a cost to the community and have parented a child (Westat, 1991).

Since for many youth permanent or even stable living placements are not a likely option, research suggests that independent living programs should offer services that provide some of the needed continuity in their lives. Based on the results of a study comparing two models for delivering emancipation preparation services in California, Waldinger and Furman (1994) recommend an integration of case worker responsibilities to help counterbalance the instability. Results from the empirical research indicate that when the responsibility of the case worker is

integrated to include tracking academic needs, special needs, independent living services and nurturing relationships with foster/biological families, increased benefits for youth were evident.

Implied evidence points to the value of utilizing a team approach to supplement the support of the individual case workers. (CSLW Standards for Independent Living Services, 1990; Ryan, McFadden, Rice and Warren, 1988, Westat, 1991) Suggested team members include: foster parents, family members, community volunteers, school staff, and other professional service providers. This team approach provides the youth with a wider network of available individuals to turn to for dependable support. Furthermore, an added benefit of including agency staff in the team approach is the development of relationships between the youth and the other staff members at the foster care agency, which has been shown to be positively correlated with achieving a high school diploma or GED. (Downs, Wolf and Pecora, 1999)

Finally, mentor programs and peer support groups have also been suggested as an effective method to providing stability for foster youth. (Mech, Pryde and Rycraft, 1995) While studies on mentoring program and peer groups for foster youth are limited, there is compelling evidence supporting the overall benefits of mentoring for the general population of at-risk youth. (American Youth Policy Forum, 1997) Implied evidence from both experts and foster youth advocate for peer groups activities (i.e. community service, recreational activities, wilderness retreats) that often provide group mentoring opportunities. (The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994; CWLA Interim Report, 1998; CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services, 1990) In addition, group involvement was also shown to be a predictor for a higher percentage of mastery of life skills. (Nollans, et al., 1997)

Some of the strongest research confirming the positive impact of mentoring emerged

from a recent impact study conducted by Public/Private Ventures, of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, the longest running mentoring program in the United States. Using a classic experimental research design, involving 959 boys and girls in eight states, ages 10 through 16, researchers found that after 18 months, those children who had been matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister were:

- ▶ 46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs
  - ▶ 27 percent less likely to begin using alcohol
  - ▶ 53 percent less likely to skip school
  - ▶ 37 percent less likely to skip a class
- (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 1998)

Additional support can be found in the empirical analysis of program outcomes conducted on High/Scope's residential program for talented, economically disadvantaged youth. The research found that role models/experiences is a strong enough influence to minimize some of the risk factors that usually result in a youth not going on for higher education. (Oden, 1995)

Based on his aggregation of four independent living program, Mech (1994) recommends using mentoring programs for foster care youth, particularly those who seem most at-risk of being unprepared for independent living. Furthermore, Noble's (1997) study found that one of the key factors for why some abused and neglected foster children succeed while others don't is that they have had at least one significant adult in their life.

**7. Implied research stresses the importance of independent living programs providing after-care services. Important components include:**

- ▶ **Assistance in providing basic needs (housing, financial, employment)**
- ▶ **Community connections**
- ▶ **Social service support systems**
- ▶ **Continuum of housing options**
- ▶ **Open-door policy**

After-care services are defined as a system of services and resources for youth (age 16-21) in the post-placement phase who are living in an independent arrangement. (Irvine, 1988) Although there is limited substantiated data that documents the impact of these after-care services, there is a growing body of implied evidence that supports the necessity for these types of programs. (Burrell and Perez-Ferreiro, 1995; Wedeven, 1994; CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services, 1990; Festinger, 1983; Irvine, 1988; Cook, 1988) Some of the suggested after-care practices should include employment and educational assistance, legal guidance, financial support, medical care, community resource books and drop-in/resource centers.

The results from an evaluation by Morison-Murphy and Feigenbaum (1994) of the Children's Village, a residential program in New York for youth in foster care, lends empirical support to the need for after-care services. Data indicated that those adolescents who received follow up services, were statistically better than the comparison group in terms of lower drop out rates and higher employment stability. (Mech, 1994) A study of the Arizona Young Adult Program's aftercare project found that those youth who had received these services fared slightly better in terms of employment and education than the non-participants. (Irvine, 1988)

In a CWLA interim report (1998), former foster youth identified community collaborative programs as especially beneficial in linking them to needed resources. One recommended approach to building this community collaboration and extending the resources of an independent living program is the utilization of community volunteers. (Cook, 1988, CWLA Interim Report, 1998) The conclusion by Mech and Leonard (1988) from their study of one hundred Independent Living Programs in thirty states is that volunteers are critical for after-care programs in their role as an advocate for the youth and in linking them with community

resources. Mech and Leonard also suggest that volunteers can supplement staff resources by being given the responsibility to follow-up on youth to track their progress and outcomes.

In addition to providing youth with community connections, Burrell and Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that youth are taught how to make these connections themselves. It is suggested that model programs are doing youth a disservice if they don't instill the necessary skills that empower the youth.

One of the biggest challenges for youth is finding and maintaining a good living situation. Prior to leaving care, independent living programs can best assist youth through this process by providing training in apartment living and offering assistance to find housing. (CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services, 1999; CWLA interim report, 1989) The CWLA (1990) recommends that obtainment of housing be a condition of release from the foster care system. In order to maintain a residence where they have an established community, Irvine (1988) suggests that youth are provided with independent living subsidies thereby giving them increased flexibility to find housing arrangements close to their school, work, friends and family.

Supported by both substantiated and implied evidence, offering a continuum of housing options prior to emancipation is another recommended practice that promotes self-sufficiency. Mark Kroner, the director of Lighthouse Youth Services, a comprehensive independent living program, attests that the key to their program's success in teaching youth to be self-sufficient is largely reliant on the youth moving in both directions through the housing options. (Kroner, M. 1998, Personal Communication) The components to this continuum are as follows:

1. Institutions
2. Residential treatment centers
3. Community-based group homes
4. Foster homes
5. Supervised apartments
6. Shelters
7. Live-in Roommates
8. Host homes
9. Boarding homes
10. Shared homes
11. Semi-supervised homes
12. Subsidized support programs.

An empirical study by Mech, Ludy-Dobson and Hulseman (1994) of 534 older adolescents found that supplementing basic placement settings (foster homes, group homes and institutions), with apartment experiences, helps increase a youth's knowledge of life skills. This finding held constant even within each race/gender sub-group.

Barth (1986) recommends the Hope Center for Youth's Supervised Apartment Living Program as a prototype for other independent living programs. Youth (age 16-18) in this program live in a supervised apartment complex for approximately 6 months and receive comprehensive life skills training. They are given much more responsibility than they would have in typical foster home/group home situations.

An evaluation of the Oregon Children's Services Division's Independent Living Subsidy Program (ILSP) found that 75% of the youth who participated in ILSP achieved their case plans, versus 54% of non-participating youth. The ILSP provides adolescents (16 years and older) with subsidies to find their own living arrangement. Conditions of this program include that the youth must be in school full-time, work full-time or have a combination of both and meet twice monthly with their social workers. (Barth, 1986)

Along with the challenges in getting their basic needs met, many of the youth experience

emotional issues upon leaving care, including loneliness, isolation and potential rejection from attempts to reunify with their biological families. (Ryan, et al, 1988) It is highly recommended that after-care services ensure that youth have the needed support systems to deal with these issues by providing continued and frequent contact with their social worker, volunteer mentors and peer alumni groups. (CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services, 1990; Cook, 1988; Mech and Leonard, 1988; The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)

Finally, Burrell and Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that model after-care programs offer services to former foster youth on an "as-needed" basis. As the youth leave the foster care system, many initially don't want anything to do with they system and are "unable to hear all the options presented to them because of stress." (Wendeven, et al. 1994) However, after an initial period of being on their own, many youth want to return to take advantage of after-care services. Therefore, programs should maintain an "open-door" policy so that youth can feel comfortable requesting these services. (CWLA interim report, 1998; Irvine, 1988)



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## *Recommendations*

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The need for additional, more focused studies has been apparent from the onset of the research conducted for this Capstone. Despite this being a common problem in other social science fields, this shortcoming should not be excused based on this widespread prevalence. It creates major obstacles in identifying "promising practices" that would improve foster youth outcomes. While in this Capstone, "promising practices" were identified based on findings of the meta-analysis, the dependence on less scientifically rigorous studies and research on the general at-risk adolescent population points to the weaknesses of the research in the field of foster care youth. Immediate broad research needs include the following:

1. Longitudinal studies
2. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies
3. Narrowly focused empirical studies examining the impact of specific practices on specific intended outcomes

In addition the above mentioned broad research needs, there are two specific areas where there is a conspicuous lack of information (1) Independent living practices designed to reduce the rate of early parenting and (2) Research and programs relating to adolescent minorities in foster care. The reasons these two specific areas warrant particular attention is outlined below:

### **(1) Independent living practices designed to reduce the rate of early parenting**

The Child Welfare League of America (1997) reports that evidence indicates that foster care youth population are at a higher risk of engaging in premarital sexual activity than the general population. They are sexually active at a younger age and less likely to use contraception. The Westat (1991) study found that 60% of the discharged women and 24% of the discharged men had become young parents. As the Westat (1991) study indicates, early

parenting results in lower educational and employment outcomes than the general foster care population.

While Westat does provide some preliminary data about the characteristics relating to parenthood, with the high percentages of the foster care population becoming young parents there is a need for more extensive research. In the meta-analysis conducted for this Capstone, there was minimal reference found in the literature of independent living practices focused on sexual education and reducing the pregnancy rate. Study is especially needed to determine if the sexual education/prevention programs designed for the general population meets the needs of the youth in foster care, and if not, what types of programs need to be developed.

## **2. Minorities**

As children, minorities account for 41% of the foster care population (Ooms, 1990). This racial/ethnic make-up of the population illustrates an over representation of the minority population as they only account for 19% of the general population (Ooms, 1990). However, although they are disproportionately represented in the system as children, as adolescents they are under represented. Rosenfeld (1997) suggests that this is due to their over representation in jails and psychiatric facilities. This shift from over- to under representation indicates a need for further research to determine (1) What factors are contributing to this shift; (2) At what age is this shift occurring and; (3) If Rosenfeld's theory is true, are these incarcerated foster youth receiving any independent living training. Results from this research could affect independent living programming if it is found that this shift begins to occur at the onset of adolescence, at point at which independent living programs might be able to provide needed support services to divert some youth from the jails and psychiatric facilities.

Further increasing the concern relating to the minority foster care population are the

results from a study conducted by Mech, Ludy-Dobson and Hulseman (1994). This study found that regardless of placement setting, non-white males on average scored lower in life-skills knowledge than white males, white females and non-white females. The researchers suggest that greater attention be given to this population sub-group in ensuring that they are receiving needed independent living services. While there are some programs specifically designed to meet the needs of the minority foster care population, (i.e. The Chicago Area Project Rites of Passage Program, See Daily Living newsletter Volume 12, Issue 4), there is a shortage of similar independent living programs.

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## *Conclusion*

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Independent living programs step in to meet the needs that are traditionally provided for within a family setting. Many foster care youth are dependent on these programs to provide them with the needed support, services and often financial assistance that is otherwise lacking in their lives. As the research for this Capstone indicates, there is strong evidence that independent living programs are emerging as critical in offering these needed services and programs, and emerging evidence points to those specific practices that should be promoted for their demonstrated impact on youth.

This research has provided preliminary information on those practices that contribute to improving outcomes for youth transitioning out of the foster care system. Most notably is the need to collaborate and integrate both the type of services and the mode of service delivery. This includes connecting services between the social service agency, community, school and family. Examples this collaborative approach include Foster Youth Services in California and the School and Community Support Project in Massachusetts. This important finding also extends to the importance of offering various types of services and independent living skills that build upon each other in order to integrate the learning experience. These services need to be defined and focused on the specific needs of the individual youth. Examples of this include Lighthouse Youth Services in Ohio and Children's Village in New York.

It is also important to note the lack of attention that has been given to the significant role that both the foster and biological family have in improving youth outcomes. This key finding warrants closer study, particularly on how to incorporate the family in independent living

programs.

While this research does serve as an initial step in formulating a definitive list of recommended practices, it also substantiates the claims that the lack of research specifically focused on independent living program practices is hindering improvements in foster youth outcomes. Practitioners, researchers and policymakers need to utilize the emerging research on independent living programs in formulating more directed studies. Rather than continuing to reinvent the wheel and conduct broad research, attention now needs to turn to narrowly focused research that can begin to identify how specific practices support specific outcomes. These studies can both be used to examine the identified practices in existing programs and also to test the impact of new programs. This will ensure that the programs, policies and services will meet the needs of those it is meant to serve.

# Appendix A

	Substantiated	Implied
<b>Independent Living Skill Training</b>		
Formal and informal		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation
Independent living skills taught both on an individual and group level	<p>-- According to Westat study (1991), whether skills were taught formally, informally or a combination of both made no difference.</p> <p>-- Study of 133 female and 86 male adolescents (age 12-15) in The Casey Family Program. (methodology: regression analyses) Results indicated that group involvement was a predictor for higher percentage of mastery of life skills. (Nollan, Wolf, Downs, Lamont, Martine and Horn, 1997)</p>	-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation
Experiential learning		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommend experiential learning as a method to reinforce the formal curriculum
	<p>-- In a study of 69 Casey Family Program alumni, the youth indicated that would have liked more experiential activities. (The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)</p>	
Self-esteem building activities	<p>-- Study of 133 female and 86 male adolescents (age 12-15) in The Casey Family Program. (methodology: regression analyses) Results indicated that youth with higher self-esteem have a high correlation with acquisition of life skills. (Nollan, Wolf, Downs, Lamont, Martine and Horn, 1997)</p>	<p>-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) recommends experiential learning that allows for direct participation. This is suggested as important for the youth to obtain needed opportunities to learn that making mistakes and getting frustrated is natural and that they can handle it. (Cook, 1988)</p>
Specific skill areas	<p>-- Westat study found that when the following five skill areas were taught, the most comprehensive effects were achieved: money management, consumer, credit, education opportunities and employment. (methodology: regression modeling techniques) (Westat, 1991)</p>	<p>-- Ryan, McFadden, Rice &amp; Warren (1988) recommend that both tangible (i.e. money management, hygiene, food prep, career planning) and intangible (interpersonal skills, decision making) skills need to be taught.</p>
Multiple skill teaching	<p>-- By teaching independent living skills in a multiple approach, more cumulative results occurred. (methodology: regression modeling techniques) (Westat, 1991)</p>	

	Substantiated	Implied
Continuum of IL Services		<p>-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) recommends that youth need to be able to move through the continuum of IL services (Informal Learning, Formal Learning, Supervised Practice, Self-sufficiency) (Cook, 1988)</p>
		<p>-- In a study of the transitional foster care program in New York that offers a multi-level approach to teaching independent living skills, they report that nearly all youth increased their money management skills. This occurred for youth in participating in either the mentor model (youth living in an apartment with a young transitional living foster parent) or the boarder model (youth living in a traditional foster home but is responsible for their own cooking, shopping, finances and decision making) (Colca &amp; Colca, 1996)</p>
Programs offered in college environments		<p>-- It was stated in a CWLA interim report (1998) that former foster youth identified programs that not only prepare youth for college but also are taught in a college environment are helpful.</p>
		<p>-- Unstructured telephone interview with Chris Steel, California Community College Foundation (1998). She believes that offering their IL services at a community college helps break down barriers and fears the youth might have. Many youth later enroll at the community college where their IL training took place</p>
Volunteer and/or community experience opportunities	<p>-- Study of 133 female and 86 male adolescents (age 12-15) in The Casey Family Program. (methodology: regression analyses) Results indicated that having volunteer experience is a predictor of higher life skills acquisition. (Nollan, Wolf, Downs, Lamont, Martine and Horn, 1997)</p>	<p>-- In a Search Institute report (1996) on youth development programs, Leffert et al. cited the substantial amount of evidence that supports the use of community service and/or service learning opportunities in promoting positive outcomes for: academic learning, problem-solving ability, social development/maturity, self-esteem, leadership development, and educational attainment.</p>
		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group recommended the need for community service opportunities available to the youth.</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
Teen parents programs	-- Outcome evaluation of a parenting program that matched teen parents with women in the community. After five years, the teen in the program were more likely to be employed, have better parenting skills, and children with more cognitive gains and fewer behavior problems, than the teens in the comparison group. (Leffert, et. al, 1996)	
<b>Social Work Services</b>		
Team approach		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</li> <li>- Social work services that are provided in a team approach can be the most effective way of providing independent living services</li> <li>- Recommended team members include: social worker, foster parent/caretaker, community volunteer, family members, other professional service providers</li> </ul>
		-- The Westat (1991) study recommends including the foster parents as part of the social service team based on the reports from the youth that they already are getting trained informally by their caregiver.
		-- Ryan, McFadden, Rice and Warren (1988) recommend it is when the foster parent and case worker cooperate as a team that youth receive the necessary life skills training.
Counseling for behavioral and emotional problems	-- An exploratory study of 152 randomly selected adolescents 16 years or older in foster care in Los Angeles County found that those youth who were least ready for independent living were dealing with emotional and behavior problems. Mental health problems were an obstacle to achieving proficiency in all four areas of independent living that were studied: taking responsibility, taking care of oneself, creating a supportive emotional and physical environment and employment readiness. Inglehart reports that this indicates the strong need for programs specifically designed to address this issued. (Inglehart, 1994)	
Integration of case worker responsibilities	-- In a study comparing two models for delivering emancipation preparation services in California, the researchers found that increased benefits emerge when one consistent person is responsible for academics, special needs, IL services and relationships with foster/biological families. This person tracks the youths needs and ensures that they are met. Waldinger and Furman, 1994)	



	Substantiated	Implied
Building strong relationships with the case worker/agency staff	-- Having a positive relationship with agency staff was positively correlated with achieving a high school diploma or GED (Downs, Wolf and Pecora, 1999)	
Self-sufficiency assessments	<p>-- The Federation Employment and Guidance Service tested four assessment instruments (Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE); Tests for Everyday Living (TEL); Daniel Memorial Independent Living Assessment for Life Skills; Effective Social Skills. Hahn states that the assessments are critical for youth in defining goals, assessing readiness for independent, matching youth with appropriate training and developing exit criteria. The assessments are also important at the systems level for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. (Hahn, 1994)</p> <p>IL initiative (PL-99-272) requires that all youth in out of home care are testing for life skills by age 16 and that areas that are identified as deficiencies be addressed.</p>	
Types of assessments	-- According to the study conducted by Nollan, Downs, Wolf and Lamont (1996), the Ansell-Casey Life Skills (ACLSA) is an effective tool in assisting foster parents and case workers in meeting Independent Living requirement that all youth be tested. They also recommend that the life skills measure testing occur both by the youth and by their caseworker, since pilot work has indicated that there is a discrepancy in how each views the youth's mastery of IL skills, with youth usually rating themselves higher.	-- Downs, Nollan, Wolf and Oxford (1996) report that there has been inadequate research and testing of self-sufficiency assessments which causes agencies to be dependent on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence on which assessments should be used.
Conducted at systematic intervals		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation
		-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) recommends that that the assessment be not only conducted systematically, but that case workers need to have the appropriate measurements tools in order to conduct the tests effectively.

	<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>Implied</b>
Individualized program based on results of assessment	-- Westat study (1991) found that independent living services that are targeted toward specific needs and outcome desires of the youth achieve the best results. (methodology: regression modeling techniques)	-- Recommended by Mech (1994) based on his aggregation of four independent living program studies.
		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation
Development of an Independent Living Plan (ILP)		-- Cook (1998) recommends that programs need to be tailored to the individualized needs of the youth because they don't all need everything and services are best of they focus on the youth's particular needs. -- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.
Youth involved in assessment and development of Independent Living Plan		-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) recommends that by involving the youth in the process they feel more vested. It also ensures that the caseworker knows what areas the youth feels are their strengths and weaknesses. -- Nollan, Downs, Wolf and Lamont (1996) pilot study found that youth and caregivers have different views of attainment of some life skill areas. They recommend that as a result, life skills measures include the participation of both youth and the caregiver. They should also be designed for youth across an age continuum.
Monitoring the implementation of the ILP		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation
Development of a transitional living plan		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation. The transitional living plan should cover all of the information that the youth would need to have or need to know in order to transition out of care. (i.e. rent and utility costs, monthly income, health care providers, family information)
Final case review		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.

Organizational Structure	Substantiated	Implied
Offering a continuum of services tailored to specific development level		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation
		--Based on their literature reviews and formal telephone interviews with eleven state IL coordinators and ten Administration for Children and Family regional staffers, Burrell & Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that model programs need to provide youth with a wide range of services, based upon their developmental needs.
		--Based on their literature reviews and formal telephone interviews with eleven state IL coordinators and ten Administration for Children and Family regional staffers, Burrell & Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that the most effect programs have evaluation components.
		-- Mallon (1992) recommends the use of the intervention model for younger children, in focusing not on independent living, but rather on developing self-esteem and self-sufficiency.
Services available to youth under 16 and over 18	-- In an analysis of 15 youth development program evaluations, Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray and Foster (1998) found that programs that are the most effective follow a youth throughout adolescence.	-- In a study of 69 Casey Family Program alumni, the youth indicated that there should have been a focus earlier on transitioning . (The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)
		-- Mallon (1992) recommends teaching "junior life skills" to the younger foster children
		-- Cook (1988) recommends IL services should start for those under 16 and extend to those over 21.
		-- Unstructured telephone interview with Dr. Michael Olenick, California Community College Foundation. (1998) Recommended that the key time to catch youth is when they are making the transition from middle school to high school.

	Substantiated	Implied
		<p>-- In the American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of evaluations of youth programs, they found that programs that start working with a youth at a young age and follow their development through high school can increase positive outcomes for high school graduation rates and attendance in college.</p>
Program staff Training		<p>-- Keeping youth in care until the age of 21 is critical (Westat, 1991)</p> <p>-- Cooke (1988) recommends training staff personnel is integral to program success</p>
Outcome evaluations		<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommends using outcome evaluations that include measurable gains in relation to clients, assessments, independent living skills, stable living, employment, education, social support, rates of incarceration, rates of unemployment.</p>
Utilization of outcome data		<p>-- It's insufficient to just collect outcome data unless it is continually fed back to the staff, stakeholders and families to reevaluate the program (Pecora, Adams, Le Prohn and Wolf, 1998)</p>
Funding		<p>-- CWLA Standards</p> <p>- agencies need to look to states, local corporations, foundations, religious organization, civic groups to add to the federal funding</p>
Caseload ratio		<p>-- CWLA Standards</p> <p>-recommends 15-20 cases per worker</p>
Involves youth in program planning and development		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group</p>
		<p>--Based on their literature reviews and formal telephone interviews with eleven state IL coordinators and ten Administration for Children and Family regional staffers, Burrell &amp; Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that model programs need to involve youth in the program planning stage.</p>

Integrated Service Delivery	Substantiated	Implied
<p>Defined 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, The Urban Institute, 1992)</p>		<p>-- An extensive literature review of programs that serve at-risk youth, conducted by the Urban Institute, concluded that service delivery that is provided through a comprehensive approach is more likely to help youth avoid negative outcomes. These programs need to look holistically at the child, and include their parents and neighborhood. (Burt, Resnick and Matheson, 1992)</p>
<p>Inter-agency collaboration (both formal and informal)</p>	<p>-- Evaluation of the School and Community Support Project in Massachusetts, a collaborative effort between the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and Massachusetts Families for Kids. The results indicated that the project significantly improved interagency working relationships, increased trust between professional and foster parents, reduced foster families feelings of intimidation when communication with the schools and increased awareness of the role of each agency. (Kochanek, 1998)</p>	<p>-- The American Youth Policy Forum's looked at evaluations of youth programs and concluded that unsuccessful programs are those that only provide a single focus for intervention that only addresses one dimension of a youth's developmental needs.</p> <p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation. Suggested components of the collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Case managers should be responsible for maintaining the collaboration</li> <li>-Avoidance of service duplication</li> <li>-Agreement on a common purpose</li> <li>-Clear definition of responsibilities and who is providing what service</li> <li>-Joint planning to recognize what is being provided, what needs to be provided and who will do the providing.</li> <li>-Structured to ensure that service referrals are followed up.</li> <li>-External consultants are used if expertise can not be found within the collaborating agencies</li> </ul>
		<p>-- The Urban Institute's recommendations of key components of inter agency collaboration include: coordinated service delivery, follow up on referrals, flexible funding, minimalization of administrative barriers. (Burt, Resnick and Matheson, 1992)</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group, recommendation</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Unstructured interview with Dave Fraser, Director of the Children Come First program (1998). Recommended that the multi-agency funding approach is a key component to program success.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Kazis &amp; Kopp (1997) suggest that despite the limited evaluative research on "comprehensive community initiatives," early results provide enough promise to recommend using this collaborative approach for youth work programs.</li> </ul>
<p>Collaboration between schools and agency</p>	<p>-- Evaluation results from the Foster Youth Service (FYS) Program in California whose agency staff utilizes an interagency perspective to provide four core service components: school placement/student advocacy, tutoring, counseling and employment readiness. In a comparison between districts who did or did not have a FYS program, caseworkers indicated that youth who were in districts with the program were placed quicker and more appropriately, their special education needs met and had their problems identified earlier.</p> <p>A report by the California Health and Welfare Agency concluded that 70% of the youth receiving FYS services graduated high school (versus 50% of general foster care population) (Ayasse, 1995)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Recommended by Mech (1994) based on his aggregation of four studies.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Westat (1991) recommendation</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Barth (1986) recommendation</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- In an unstructured interview (1998) with Dorothy Ansell, of Ansell &amp; Associates and National Resource Center for Youth Services. Dorothy Ansell recommends this type of collaboration.</li> </ul>
<p>Inter-agency training</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) stressed that an integral component of service delivery should include training to administrators, caseworkers, foster parents and other service providers.</li> </ul>
<p>Managed Care Model</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- The GAO report (1998) stated the preliminary data from the limited outcome information suggests that there are cost efficiencies gained and improvement in service delivery though a wider access to services and more appropriately matched services. The report suggests that the managed care model could increase accountability.</li> </ul>

	Substantiated	Implied
		-- Unstructured interview (1998) with Dave Fraser, Director of the Children Come First program. Recommended a wrap-around service provider approach, that uses the managed care approach to providing foster youth services.
<b>Employment Services</b>		
Good work quality that is connected to future aspirations	-- Study found that even when background variables were controlled, quality of work is a predictor of youth mastery orientation and depressive effects. Results also found that males who felt that the work they were doing would be useful in the future, had a decreased depressive effect. (Mortimer, Finch, Ryu, Shanahan, Call, 1996)	
Moderate intensity work levels	- The study found that students who work at a moderate intensity have higher grades than both non-workers and students who work at a higher intensity. (Mortimer, Finch, Ryu, Shanahan, Call, 1996)	
Vocational counseling (i.e. work skill assessment, youth interests)		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.
		-- In a study of 69 Casey Family Program alumni, 70% indicated that would have liked more vocational counseling. (The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)
		- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group, recommendation.
		-- Recommended by Mech (1994) based on his aggregation of four independent living program studies.
		-- Based on their study of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the report by Public/Private Ventures suggests that successful job training programs need to take into account the youth's interests and stages of development.
		-- Kazis & Kopp (1997) conclude that programs are more effective if they are tailored towards individual youth needs. Programs also need to factor in gender differences.

	<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>Implied</b>
Hands-on training	<p>-- An exploratory study of 152 randomly selected adolescents 16 years or older in foster care (methodology: stepwise regression) in Los Angeles County found that those youth who had hands-on employment opportunities had better self-care abilities (Inglehart, 1994)</p>	<p>-- In the American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of evaluations of youth programs (1997), they found that successful programs have intensive, hands-on experiential occupational training.</p>
		<p>-- Kazis &amp; Kopp (1997) report that experiential approaches are powerful, especially since many youth associated traditional training with negative school experiences.</p>
		<p>-- In a Search Institute report (1996) on youth development programs, Leffert et al. Report that giving youth the opportunity to have not only have hands on experience, but also interact with adults in professional settings promotes positive employment outcomes.</p>
Community connections		<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</p>
		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group</p>
		<p>-- In order to have more influence with employment programs, foster care agencies need to first collaborate together. It is also beneficial to them because of their limited resources. Links should be made with JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act), Job Corps, school based cooperative education programs. (North, Mallabar &amp; Desrochers, 1988)</p>
		<p>-- Kazis &amp; Kopp (1997) emphasize that organizations that serve youth need to understand the labor market needs in their community.</p>
		<p>-- North, Mallabar and Desrochers (1988) provide the following suggestions to foster care agencies in accessing community resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop a collaboration between the foster care agencies to create a constituency</li> <li>-Establish formal inter-agency agreements with employment and training programs</li> <li>-Form coalitions to pool financial resources for employment activities</li> <li>-Link with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), Job Corps and Cooperative Education programs</li> </ul>



	Substantiated	Implied
Leadership development		-- American Youth Policy Forum (1997) recommndation
High intensity, long term training programs	-- A study of the Children's Village WAY Scholarship program found that high intensity, long term training raises employment outcomes. -- An evaluation of the WAY Scholarship program found that those youth who were selected as scholars (who received more intensive work counseling, financial assistance and a five-year commitment of support from the program) demonstrated higher outcomes than the comparison group: 68% versus 46% received their HS diploma or GED; 55% versus 38% went on to some form of higher education. (Research Bulletin, 1(1))	-- Short term (3-6 month) programs do not provide the needed skills (American Youth Policy Forum, 1997)
		-- Kazis & Kopp (1997) report that short-term programs only focus on limited skill areas and are not adequate to change individual behaviors.
Youth directed		-- In the American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of evaluations of youth programs, they found that programs that allowed the youth to direct their own job readiness resulted in positive outcomes for employment and economic success.
Job readiness skills		-- In the American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of evaluations of youth programs (1997), they found that programs need to focus on job readiness skills (mathematics, problem-solving, reading, working effectively in a group, oral and written communication skills and computer literacy) -- Four components essential to employability: (1) Basic education skills (reading, writing, speaking, math), (2) Pre-employment skills (job finding, interviewing), (3) Work maturity (work habits/behavior) and (4) Marketable skills (knowledge/skills related to a particular trade/field) (North, Mallabar & Desrochers, 1988)
		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation
Paid experiences		-- In the American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of evaluations of youth programs (1997), they found that financial incentives and paid work/internships motivate the youth and should part of employment programs.
School-based "school to work" programs		-- Kazis & Kopp (1997) conclude that work experience is maximized if combined with school based programs

	Substantiated	Implied
<b>Education Programs</b>		
Comprehensive approach to providing educational services	<p>-- Evaluation of the Foster Youth Services (FYS) Program in California found that foster youth who received the intervention services earned 10.1 credits more per semester than youth in school districts without this program. They also had a graduation rate of 70%, versus 50% of the general foster youth population.) Services provided include: school placement/student advocacy, tutoring, counseling, employment readiness programs, ensuring that required education testing assessments are provided, track location and accuracy of school transcripts and Individualized Educational Plans. (Ayasse, 1995)</p>	
Training for school personnel	<p>-- Evaluation of the School and Community Support Project in Massachusetts, a collaborative effort between the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and Massachusetts Families for Kids. Outcome results from their training indicated enhanced understanding from school staff on how to respond to the unique needs of foster children and provided insight to teachers on the operation the foster care system. (Kochanek, 1998)</p>	<p>-- Noble (1997) recommends that teachers are trained in the following: how to work with foster parents, how to advocate for a foster youth's appropriate academic placement and sensitivity of school assignments (i.e. family trees)</p>
Education tutors/coaches	<p>-- Of the youth who were provided tutoring through the California Foster Youth Services program, 92% gained at least one month of academic growth for every month of tutoring. (Ayasse, 1995)</p>	<p>-- Recommended by Mech (1994) based on his aggregation of four studies.</p>
		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group, recommendation.</p>
Methods of tracking academic records		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), recommended this based on survey responses and large focus group</p>
College preparatory activities (i.e. financial aid info, how to fill out an application)	<p>-- Nearly all college prep activities increased the odds of a moderate to high-risk youth attending some type of post secondary education. (Horn and Chen, 1998)</p>	<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</p>
Program emphasis on post-secondary education		<p>-- Based on his aggregation of four independent living program studies, Mech (1994) indicates this an important element.</p>
Educational liaisons		<p>-- Barth (1985) recommended that not only are educational liaisons to the child welfare agencies important for the youth, ultimately they are cost effective to the schools.</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
		<p>-- Based on his aggregation of four independent living program studies, Mech (1994) indicates program connections between the foster care agency and the schools need to be strengthened. This focus needs to include development, testing and evaluation issues.</p>
		<p>-- Barth (1995) states that this is essential with the number of foster youth in special education. He suggests that schools agree to annual send the child welfare agencies a copy of a youth's Individualized Educational Program (IEP).</p>
System of ensuring appropriate classroom placement		<p>-- Important component based upon a 1992 study of school records in Illinois found that 30% of the foster children were getting special education services, while the case worker's records indicated that only 5% of the youth were in special education. (George, Van Voorhis, Grant, Casey and Robinson, 1992)</p>
Programs that promote completion of high school	<p>-- Regardless of what type of like skills training occurred, the Westat study found that having had completed high school enabled these youth to be more likely to obtain steady employment and have a higher sense of self-sufficiency. (methodology: regression modeling techniques) (Westat, 1991)</p>	<p>-- Unstructured interview (1998) with Mark Kroner, Lighthouse Youth Services. Recommended that a key factor in success is for youth to have one good, complete year in one school.</p>
	<p>-- Garansky (1996) found that having graduated from high school on time was positively related to teen age employment, which was in turn related to labor force participation as adults.</p>	<p>-- Unstructured interview (1998) with Mark Courtney, University of Wisconsin. Stressed the importance of maintaining a youth's academic placement even if their home placement changes.</p>
	<p>-- Negative side note. With young black men, getting a high school diploma or community college education has limited value in their ability to obtain even an entry level job. This is an important factor for those programs whose clients are black males. (Skinner, 1995)</p>	
Promote involvement in school and community activities		<p>-- Research indicates that involvement in extracurricular activities (i.e. clubs, church groups) promotes academic achievement. (Oden, 1995)</p>
		<p>-- Unstructured interview (1998) with Mark Kroner, Lighthouse Youth Services. Recommended that getting the youth to have an academic connection involved getting them connected with people and activities in school.</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
		<p>-- In a Search Institute report (1996) on youth development programs, Leffert et al. support the belief that overall participation in sports can lead to improved self-esteem and academic performance.</p> <p>-- A national, longitudinal study (1999) of high school students found empirical evidence that participation in structured activities, religious activities, and time spent with adults had a positive effect on school engagement and achievement. (Jordan &amp; Murray Nettles, 1999)</p> <p>-- Unstructured interview (1998) with Glen Eagleson, New Ways Workers. Stressed the importance of applying school learning to work experience in keeping a youth interested in staying in school.</p>
Connection with employment experience	<p>-- Westat study found that those youth who had worked while in foster care completed more education than those who didn't. (Westat, 1991)</p>	
Parental involvement	<p>-- In a study by the Office Of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education on at-risk students, the researcher's found that parental involvement had some of the most significant effects on increasing the odds of enrolling in post-secondary education. Students whose parents had expectations of even some college had nearly three times greater odds of attending some form of post-secondary education, than those whose parents had expectations for no more than high school graduation.</p> <p>Students whose parents frequently talked to them about school related matters had more than double the odds of enrolling in a 4 year college. (Chen and Horn, 1998)</p>	
Availability of GED programs		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group. Suggested creative, enhanced GED programs.</p>
After-care Services	<p>-- A study at the Children's Village, a residential program for foster care youth, those clients who received follow-up services were statistically better than the control group, with lower drop out rates and greater employment stability. (Mech, 1994)</p> <p>-- A study of the Arizona Young Adult Program's aftercare project found that those youth who had received these services fared slightly better in terms of employment and education than the non-participants. (Irvine, 1988)</p>	<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation</p>
Minimum 1 year		<p>-- Festinger (1983) recommends one year of services</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
Ensure that the youth has all pertinent information upon leaving care		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</li> <li>(includes things like driver's license, social security card, contact names, legal information, resume)</li> </ul>
Celebrate the transition		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</li> </ul>
Mentors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) recommends matching a youth with a volunteer while in foster care that will provide support after the youth has left care.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group recommendation.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- In a study of information from 100 IL programs in 30 states, Mech and Leonard (1988) conclude that volunteers can provide a critical piece of after-care services. They can be utilized for mentoring, responsible for follow-up for a youth and serving as an advocate for the youth in linking them to community resources.</li> </ul>
Providing community connections		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) recommends the giving emancipated youth a community resource book.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group recommendation.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- It was stated in a CWLA interim report (1998) that former foster youth identified community collaborative programs that provide after care services as especially beneficial.</li> </ul>
Assistance with obtaining employment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation</li> </ul>
Assistance with educational issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Service (1990) recommendation</li> </ul>
Assistance with obtaining and maintaining housing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Service (1990) recommendation</li> </ul>
Social worker support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Service (1990) recommendation</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- In a study of 69 Casey Family Program alumni, the youth indicated that one area they would have especially liked was more contact with social workers after leaving the program.</li> <li>(The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)</li> </ul>

	Substantiated	Implied
Open-door policy		<p>-- In order to deal with the loneliness that they feel, many youth attempt to reestablish relationships with their families after leaving care. These youth need to be prepared for the potential rejection and/or sadness that might result from these attempts. (Ryan, McFadden, Rice and Warren, 1988)</p> <p>-- Irvine (1988) recommendation.</p>
		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group suggest having a drop in/resource center.</p>
		<p>--Based on their literature reviews and formal telephone interviews with eleven state IL coordinators and ten Administration for Children and Family regional staffers, Burrell &amp; Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that model programs need to have services available to former foster youth on an "as-needed" basis.</p>
Financial assistance		<p>-- Harrari's (1980) study found that former foster youth felt there was need for services that were not available, while the social workers felt that the youth were not taking advantage of the available services.</p>
		<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</p>
Peer Alumni Group		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group, recommendation.</p>
		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group</p>
Community service opportunities		<p>-- In a study of 69 Casey Family Program alumni, the youth indicated that would have liked to have been able to be in an alumni group. (The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)</p>
<b>Family Involvement</b>		<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</p>
Foster family training	<p>-- Preliminary results from a study of the Tucson Division Self-Sufficiency Initiative reported that post-test scores indicate that a consequence of training foster parents to provide life skills work in the home has been increased communication about life skills mastery between youth and the care giver. (Nollan, Austin, Choca, Pesce, and Stern, 1999)</p>	<p>-- The Westat study (1991) strongly supports the training of the foster parent in order to teach the youth many of the informal independent living skills.</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
		<p>-- An evaluation of the School and Community Support Project in Massachusetts, a collaborative effort between the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and Massachusetts Families for Kids, found that all the families involved with the program requested that a written guide of community resources and services was needed. This guide should be available in a variety of forms, such as written materials, video tapes, brochures) (Kochanek, 1988)</p>
		<p>--Based on their literature reviews and formal telephone interviews with eleven state IL coordinators and ten Administration for Children and Family regional staffers, Burrell &amp; Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that model programs need to train foster parents/other substitute care-givers</p>
		<p>-- Based on results from a national survey, Cook (1988) stressing that an integral component of service delivery should include training foster parents.</p>
		<p>-- Recommendation by Ryan, McFadden, Rice &amp; Warren (1988). There are many advantage using foster parents to teach IL skills including: (1) The home is where most informal learning takes places; (2) The parents see the youth on a daily basis and (3) Parents have a greater ability to tailor the program to the needs of their youth. A structured by flexible curriculum is needed for foster parents. In using foster parents as a resource, "they will exponentially increase the hours of service and training available to eligible youth." (p.571) Additionally, when by bringing foster parents together for trainings, they get to build a support system with each other.</p>
Foster parent incentives		<p>-- Barth (1988) recommends the use of incentives (such as special room and board rates) for foster parents to entice them to get trained to provide IL skills.</p>
Foster family counseling		<p>-- In a study of 69 Casey Family Program alumni, the youth indicated that would have liked more foster family counseling. (The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
Relationship with foster mother	<p>-- Study of 133 female and 86 male adolescents (age 12-15) in The Casey Family Program. (methodology: regression analyses) This research found that a good relationship with their foster mother was correlated with self-esteem. It was suggested that this provides the youth with a sense of stability and therefore, allows them the freedom to focus on other areas of their lives. (Nollan, Wolf, Downs, Lamont, Martine and Horn, 1997)</p> <p>-- Contact with biological parents and siblings while in foster care was correlated with improved emancipation outcomes. (Barth, 1986)</p> <p>-- One of the major findings of a New York study of 600 former Casey Foster Care program children, was that those children who had continued contact with their birth parents while in foster care had better overall outcomes. This was true even in situations where the family had serious problems and the parents were exhibiting unhealthy behaviors. They believe that the contact gives the child an understanding of their roots and also why their parents can't take care of them right now. (Fanshel, 1990)</p> <p>-- An exploratory study of 152 randomly selected adolescents 16 years or older in foster care (methodology: stepwise regression) in Los Angeles County found that those youth who had contact with their biological fathers had improved self-care abilities. (Inglehart, 1994)</p> <p>-- Festinger's (1983) study found that those former foster children who had kept in contact with their biological and/or foster family had better outcomes.</p> <p>-- In a West Virginia study by Jones and Moses (1984) it was found for 78% of the youth, siblings are a major resource after leaving care. 52% of the youth stay in contact with their former foster family.</p>	<p>-- Recommended by Mech (1994) based on his aggregation of four studies.</p> <p>-- Barth (1986) recommendation</p> <p>-- In interviews with former foster youth, Festinger (1983) found that those who were kept in contact with their biological parents had improved adult outcomes over those who didn't.</p> <p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation</p> <p>-- Recommended by Barth (1986)</p> <p>-- Recommended by Mech (1994) based on his aggregation of four independent living program studies.</p> <p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group</p> <p>-- Unstructured interview (1998) with Dorothy Ansell, Ansell &amp; Associates and National Resource Center for Youth Services. Recommended that a multi-system, community based approach is a key component of a successful program.</p>
Relationship with biological family while in care		
Relationship with biological and/or foster family after leaving care		
Community Connections		



	Substantiated	Implied
		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998) on improving the economic opportunities for former foster youth states that a common theme from the youth and practitioners is the need for system and networking support, including: Community and employer education about foster youth; increased community mentoring; community partnerships, including within the private sector.</p> <p>--Based on their literature reviews and formal telephone interviews with eleven state IL coordinators and ten Administration for Children and Family regional staffers, Burrell &amp; Perez-Ferreiro (1995) recommend that model programs need to not only build community connections but also teach youth how to make their own connections.</p>
<b>Social Support System</b>		
Peer Group Activities		<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommended peer group activities such as community service projects and recreational activities.</p> <p>-- In a study of 69 Casey Family Program alumni, the youth indicated that would have liked more group activities.</p> <p>(The Boise Division Alumni Survey, 1994)</p>
		<p>-- CWLA interim report (1998), based on survey responses and large focus group, recommendation.</p> <p>-- Recommended by Mech (1994) based on his aggregation of four studies.</p>
<b>Mentors</b>	<p>-- Public/Private Ventures evaluation Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (using a classic experimental research methodology) found that those in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program were 46% less likely to start using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to start drinking.</p> <p>(Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 1993; Benard, 1996)</p>	
	<p>-- Empirical analysis of program outcomes conducted on High/Scope's residential program for talented, economically disadvantaged youth found that role models/experiences was a strong enough influence to minimize some of the risk factors that usually result in a youth not going on for higher education. (Oden, 1995)</p> <p>-- In Noble's (1997) study of the problems of youth in foster care, it was cited that one of the key factors for why some abused and neglected children succeed, while others don't is that they have had at least one significant adult in their life.</p>	<p>-- Dale (1997) cites that extensive literature relating to childhood resiliency and adolescent development shows that the presence of a caring, stable adult was important in future success.</p> <p>-- Kazis &amp; Kopp (1997) strongly recommend the use of mentors with work programs.</p>

	<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>Implied</b>
	<p>-- Vaillant (1993) found that the most important predictor of long term positive outcome for a youth was in their ability to form one good relationship with someone, and it didn't have to be a parent or other relative.</p> <p>-- In an analysis of 15 youth development program evaluations, Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray and Foster (1998) found that evidence supports the importance of a caring adult-adolescent relationship.</p>	<p>-- In the American Youth Policy Forum's compendium of evaluations of youth programs, they found that overall well-run, accessible mentoring programs can have a significant effect on academic performance and delay in age when substance abuse begins.</p> <p>-- Mech, Pyde and Rycraft (1995) recommend that despite the limited outcome data relating to mentoring program, the benefits to youth in foster care still support the need for increasing the use of this practice.</p>
<p><b>Housing Services</b></p> <p>Providing assistance to locate housing</p>	<p>-- In the WAY program evaluation, it was found that youth who upon leaving the program went into a group home situation fared better in terms of high school completion/GED attainment than youth who returned to their biological/kinship home. (Dale, 1997)</p>	<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</p>
<p>Training in apartment living skills</p>		<p>-- The CWLA interim report (1988) identified the Transitional Housing Program for Homeless Youth, which provides up to 18 months of housing and support services, as a model to meet the needs of former foster youth.</p>
<p>Obtainment of housing a condition before release from care</p>		<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommended training areas: tenant's rights, health and safety standards, renter's responsibilities.</p>
<p>Agency advocates to community for housing for former foster youth</p>		<p>-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.</p>
<p>IL Subsidies</p>	<p>-- An evaluation of the Oregon Children's Services Division's Independent Living Subsidy Program (ILSP) found that 75% of the youth who participated in this program achieved their case plans, versus 54% of non-participating youth. The ILSP provides adolescents (16 years and older) with subsidies to find their own living arrangement. Conditions of this program include that the youth must be in school full-time, work full-time or have a combination of both and meet twice monthly with their social workers. (Barth, 1986)</p>	<p>-- CWLA Standards</p>
		<p>-- Providing subsidies allows a youth to live close to their foster/biological family, friends, work and school. Other arrangements often necessitate that the youth moves away from this support system. (Irvine, 1988)</p>

	Substantiated	Implied
Continuum of housing options	-- In a survey of life-skills knowledge of 534 older adolescents in care, adolescents in transitional apartment clusters scored highest, followed by foster family homes and then group home/institutions. This held true even within each race/gender subgroup. Data suggests that by supplementing basic placement settings (foster homes, group homes and institutions) with apartment experiences, life skills knowledge is increased. (Mech, Ludy-Dobson & Hulseman, 1994)	-- An unstructured interview (1998) with Mark Kroner, the director of Lighthouse Youth Services. He believes that based on the feedback of clients, testing pre and post-program attitudes and behaviors and the high percentages of youth who stay in their program, offering a continuum of housing options is key to the ability of this program to teach youth self-sufficiency
Placements Issues		--Barth (1986) recommends the Hope Center for Youth's Supervised Apartment Living Program as a prototype for other independent living programs. Youth (age 16-18) in this program live in a supervised apartment complex for approximately 6 months and receive comprehensive life skills training. They are given much more responsibility than they would have in typical foster home/group home situations.
Promotion of stable placements	-- In the study conducted by Ayasse (1995), it was found that youth with multiple placements are less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities and less likely to be above grade level. Youth who not only had multiple placements, but also had special education needs, were less likely to be receiving these services	
	-- An exploratory study of 152 randomly selected adolescents 16 years or older in foster care in Los Angeles County found that those youth who were least ready for independent living had experienced the most disruption in placements. (Inglehart, 1994)	
	-- Westat study found that those youth with more instability has poor outcomes, including more likely to have parented a child and more likely to be a cost to the community. (Westat, 1991)	
Legal Services	-- Multiple moves in and out of the foster care system are associated with negative outcomes. (Courtney and Barth, 1996)	
Assist youth in access to legal assistance		
Health Issues		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.
Use of a health passport		-- CWLA Standards for Independent Living Services (1990) recommendation.

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## *Appendix B*

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### **Gender**

Male	51%	265,200
Female	49%	254,800

Source: The AFCARS Report: Current Estimates as of January 1999

### **Race/Ethnicity**

White	35%	182,000
Black	45%	234,000
Hispanic*	13%	67,600
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	5,200
Asian Pacific Islander	1%	5,200
Unknown/Unable to Determine	4%	20,000

\*Hispanic can be of any race

Source: The AFCARS Report: Current Estimates as of January 1999

### **Age**

Mean Years	9.5	
Median Years	9.4	
Under 1 year	4%	20,800
1 to 5 years	27%	140,400
6 to 10 years	28%	145,600
11 to 15 years	27%	140,400
16 to 18 years	13%	67,600
19 + years	1%	5,200

Source: The AFCARS Report: Current Estimates as of January 1999

## **Reasons for Entering the Foster Care System**

Protective service reasons	50%
Parental condition or absence (i.e. illness, death, handicap, financial hardship)	21%
Child's status or delinquent offenses	11%
Child's disability or handicap	2%
Relinquishment of parental rights	1%
Other state-defined reasons (i.e. family interaction problem, adoption plan, deinstitutionalization, unwed motherhood)	13%

Source: Child Welfare League of America, January 1988

## **Length of Stay in Foster Care**

Mean Months	33	
Median Months	31	
< 1 month	4%	20,800
1 to 5 months	16%	83,200
6 to 11 months	15%	78,000
12 to 17 months	11%	57,200
18 to 23 months	9%	46,800
24 to 29 months	6%	31,200
30 to 35 months	6%	31,200
3 to 4 years	16%	83,200
5 years or more	18%	93,600

Source: The AFCARS Report: Current Estimates as of January 1999

## **Placement Settings**

Pre-adoptive Home	2%	10,400
Foster Family Home (relative)	29%	150,800
Foster Family Home (non-relative)	50%	260,000
Group Home	6%	31,200
Institution	9%	46,800
Supervised Independent Living	1%	5,200
Runaway	1%	5,200
Trial Home Visit	2%	10,400

Source: The AFCARS Report: Current Estimates as of January 1999

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### *Appendix C*

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As a corollary to the research, an independent living program survey (Appendix C) was developed which is going to be used to survey independent living programs across the nation. The survey has three primary purposes (1) To determine the extent a program utilizes "promising practices" that were identified through this research; (2) To obtain empirical evidence to support the identified "promising practices" and; (3) To collect information on additional "promising practices" that programs are implementing. Using the research matrix, "promising practices" were selected for inclusion in the development of a survey based on the following: (1) Strong substantiated evidence and; (2) Strong combination of substantiated and implied evidence. Additional questions were included in the hopes of garnering information on practices that have emerged as important, but lacked adequate evidence.

The survey was pre-tested on 11 individuals: Three state Federal Independent Living Program coordinators, three independent living program case workers, two directors of independent living programs, one coordinator of a transitional living program and two staff members at an independent living programs. The responses from the pre-test were incorporated into a revised copy of the survey.

## Independent Living Programs and Services Survey

Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please answer the following questions based **specifically** upon elements of your independent living program. In this survey, we are not interested in services that are not considered independent living services.

For purposes of this survey, independent living programs are defined as the following:

**Programs and services delivered with the specific intent of assisting youth to transition from the foster care system to independent living. Some examples of independent living service areas could include mental health services, employment programs, academic assistance, educational liaisons, mentor programs and foster parent training.**

1. How many youth receive independent living services through your agency per year? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the percentage of youth served in the following age categories?  
\_\_\_\_ Under 16 years old  
\_\_\_\_ 16-18 years old  
\_\_\_\_ Over 18 years old
3. What is the approximate ratio between youth and independent living program staff who work directly with the youth?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How many youth are male \_\_\_\_\_ and female \_\_\_\_\_?
5. How many youth are in the following race/ethnicity categories:  
\_\_\_\_ White  
\_\_\_\_ Black  
\_\_\_\_ Hispanic (can be of any race)  
\_\_\_\_ Native American  
\_\_\_\_ Alaskan Native  
\_\_\_\_ Asian Pacific Islander  
\_\_\_\_ Unknown/Unable to determine
6. What mental health services are provided to the youth? Please check all that apply:  
\_\_\_\_ Individual counseling focused on independent living  
\_\_\_\_ Individual counseling focused on behavioral and emotional issues  
\_\_\_\_ Team approach (i.e. services provided through a team of individuals such as the social worker, foster parent, family member, mentor)  
\_\_\_\_ Crisis counseling  
\_\_\_\_ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
7. How is the youth's progress and academic records tracked?  
\_\_\_\_ One person (i.e. case worker, liaison) tracks the youth throughout their participation in the independent living program  
\_\_\_\_ Several people track the youth throughout their participation in the independent living program  
\_\_\_\_ Youth track themselves  
\_\_\_\_ Foster parent  
\_\_\_\_ No one specifically tracks the youth  
\_\_\_\_ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8a. What type of self-sufficiency assessment is used?  
\_\_\_\_ Ansell-Casey Life Skills  
\_\_\_\_ Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)  
\_\_\_\_ Tests for Everyday Living (TEL)  
\_\_\_\_ Daniel Memorial Independent Living Assessment for Life Skills  
\_\_\_\_ Effective Social Skills  
\_\_\_\_ Career Exploratory Inventory  
\_\_\_\_ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ None



8b. How is the self-sufficiency or life skills assessment conducted?

- ☐ Completed only by the youth  
☐ Completed only by the caseworker  
☐ Completed by the youth and caseworker together  
☐ Completed by a team (i.e. youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver, mentor)  
☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ No assessment given

8c. How are the results of the self-sufficiency assessment used? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Development of Independent Living Plan  
☐ Tracking progress  
☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Not used

9a. Who develops the Independent Living Plan?

- ☐ Caseworker  
☐ Youth and caseworker together  
☐ Team of individuals, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

9b. How often is the Independent Living Plan monitored?

- ☐ Not at all  
☐ Monthly  
☐ Quarterly  
☐ Bi-annually  
☐ Annually  
☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10. This questions is about the formal (i.e. inter-agency agreements, official collaborative projects) and/or informal (referrals, information sharing) agency collaboration. Please indicate the agencies or programs you work with and check whether they are formal and/or informal agreements.

	Formal	Informal
State Department of Human Services		
State Department of Education		
State Department of Corrections		
State mental health agencies		
Local Public/Private Schools		
Other independent living programs		
Private social service agencies		
Community non-profits		
Employment/Labor agencies		
Private sector businesses		
Other: (please specify)		

11. What types of non-financial collaboration do you participate in? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Referrals
- ☐ Inter-agency projects
- ☐ Collaborating to teach independent living skills
- ☐ Assistance for youth housing
- ☐ Sharing technical resources
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ None

12. What types of financial collaboration do you participate in? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Pooling financial resources to provide services to individual youth
- ☐ Pooling financial resources to provide comprehensive independent living services
- ☐ Sharing training costs
- ☐ In-kind donations
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ None

13. What are the funding sources for your independent living programs. Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Title IV-E Federal Independent Living Funds
- ☐ Transitional Living Program for Homeless Youth
- ☐ Other federal funds: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ State funds
- ☐ County funds
- ☐ Local funds
- ☐ Private grants from foundations/ corporations: Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Private contributions
- ☐ Other: (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

14a. Has your program completed either program or outcome evaluations in the past?

- ☐ Yes ☐ Currently in an evaluation process ☐ No

14b. If so, what type of evaluations are used? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Informal internal evaluations
- ☐ Formal program evaluations
- ☐ Formal outcome evaluations
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ None

## INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TRAINING

15. In what format are the independent living skills taught?

- ☐ Group
- ☐ Individual
- ☐ Combination of group and individual

16a. Where do trainings take place? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Community center
- ☐ Agency/program office
- ☐ Community college campus
- ☐ Four year college campus
- ☐ Group home and/or Institution
- ☐ Foster/kinship home
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

16b. Which sites do the youth prefer? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. Who leads the independent living skills trainings?

- ☐ Independent living skill coordinator
- ☐ Caseworkers
- ☐ Agency staff
- ☐ Hired trainers/consultants
- ☐ Current foster care youth
- ☐ Former foster care youth
- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

18a. Please check the specific skill areas that are included in the training:

- ☐ Money management (budgeting, banking)
- ☐ Consumer (how to buy a car and obtain car insurance)
- ☐ Credit (how to obtain and use a credit card)
- ☐ Education (i.e. study skills, college applications)
- ☐ Career planning (i.e. career assessments, how to find internships, interviewing skills)
- ☐ Employment skills (i.e. how to dress for work, how to get along with co-workers)
- ☐ Vocational training
- ☐ Basic hygiene and nutrition
- ☐ Driver's education
- ☐ Decision making
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Locating housing (how to find an apartment, lease guidelines)
- ☐ Maintaining housing (how to take care of your apartment, renter's rights)
- ☐ Self-esteem building
- ☐ Legal rights
- ☐ Parent education
- ☐ Health related (medical care, health insurance)
- ☐ Socialization
- ☐ Community resources
- ☐ Family planning
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

18b. In what format are the skills taught? Please check all that apply:

☐ Each skill taught by itself

☐ Multiple skill trainings. Please specify which skills are taught together: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Individual/group sessions

☐ Special training events/programs. Please provide additional details: \_\_\_\_\_

19. What types of experiential learning services are offered by or through your program? Please check all that apply

☐ Wilderness outings

☐ Challenge courses (i.e. ropes courses)

☐ Community service experiences

☐ Volunteer experiences

☐ Vocational hands on programs

☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ None

20a. Is specific training to teen parents available by or through your program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

20b. If yes, please provide details: \_\_\_\_\_

21a. Are substance abuse prevention/intervention programs offered by or through your program?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

21b. If yes, please provide details on the program: \_\_\_\_\_

22. Do the youth receive any financial incentives for participating in your independent living program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. If your program has conducted any outcome studies/evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of your independent living program, please provide details below or enclose supporting information (i.e. evaluation results, copy of measurement tool)

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## SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

24. What types of youth development programs does your program offer? Please check all that apply:

☐ Peer support groups  
☐ Youth conferences  
☐ Youth advisory boards  
☐ Cultural programs  
☐ Summer camps  
☐ Leadership development programs  
☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ None

25. What types of mentoring programs does your program offer? Please check all that apply:

☐ Transitional life-skills mentors (mentors serve as role models, teach independent living skills)  
☐ Cultural empowerment mentors (youth from a minority group are paired with an adult from the same group)  
☐ Corporate/Business mentors (mentors provide work experience, job shadowing)  
☐ Mentors for young parents (matching experienced mothers with young parents)  
☐ Mentor homes (a group of youth live in a home with an adult mentor)  
☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ None

26. If your program has conducted any outcome studies/evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of the social support services, provide details below or enclose supporting information (i.e. evaluation results, copy of measurement tool)

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## EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

If your program does not offer employment training, please proceed to **question 36**

- 27a Do the youth complete any type of work skill assessment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

- 27b. If so, what type of assessment and how are the results of the assessment used?

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28. In what format is the employment training offered? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Written materials
- ☐ Classroom training
- ☐ School-based "school-to-work" job training programs
- ☐ Job shadowing
- ☐ Hands-on experience
- ☐ Short-term job placements
- ☐ Long-term job placements
- ☐ Internships
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

29. Does your agency provide transportation for off-site employment programs/opportunities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

30. What skills are taught in the trainings? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Vocational knowledge
- ☐ Basic educational skills (reading, writing, math)
- ☐ Computer literacy
- ☐ Communications skills (oral and written)
- ☐ Work habits/behavior
- ☐ Pre-employment skills (job searching, interviewing, resume writing)
- ☐ Leadership development
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

31a. Does your employment program collaborate with community businesses and/or employment agencies?

☐ Yes ☐ No

31b. If yes, please provide details of this collaboration: \_\_\_\_\_

32a. Does your employment program collaborate with school programs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

32b. If yes, please provide details of this collaboration: \_\_\_\_\_

33. How long, on average, are the youth involved with employment training programs?

- ☐ up to 3 months
- ☐ 3-6 months
- ☐ 7 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1 - 3 years
- ☐ 4 or more years
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

34. Do the youth receive any type of financial incentive or salary for participating in the program?

☐ Yes ☐ No

35. If your program has conducted any outcome studies/evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of the employment services, please provide details below or enclose supporting information (i.e. evaluation results, copy of measurement tool)

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## EDUCATION

If your program does not provide educational support, please proceed to **question 41**

36. What type of educational services does your program offer? Please check all that apply:
- ☐ Education tutors/coaches
  - ☐ Educational liaisons (collaborate between social workers and school staff)
  - ☐ Tracking academic records
  - ☐ Promotion of involvement in school and community activities
  - ☐ Programs that connect school to employment experience
  - ☐ Providing transportation to school if home placement changes
  - ☐ Financial assistance for higher education
  - ☐ College preparatory activities (i.e. how to fill out an application, how to apply for financial aid)
  - ☐ College campus visits
  - ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
37. Are foster parents involved with your educational program? Please check all that apply:
- ☐ Minimally
  - ☐ Informal discussions
  - ☐ Member of educational teams
  - ☐ Tracking youth's academic performance
  - ☐ Monitoring homework
  - ☐ Serving as a "surrogate parent" in Individual Education Plan meetings
  - ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
38. Does your program provide on-site GED tutoring/programs? ☐ Yes ☐ No
39. What type of training does your program provide for school personnel about foster care issues? Please check all that apply:
- ☐ Written materials
  - ☐ One time training sessions
  - ☐ On going training
  - ☐ Inter-agency training (between educational institutions and social service agencies)
  - ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ None

40. If your program has conducted any outcome studies/evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of the educational program/services, provide details below or enclose supporting information (i.e. evaluation results, copy of measurement tool)

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## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

If your program does not offer family involvement services, please proceed to **question 45**.

41. What type of services does your program offer for foster families? Please check all that apply:

☐ Training parents on goal planning and how to teach independent living skills  
☐ Family counseling  
☐ Support groups and/or retreats  
☐ Community resource guides  
☐ Financial incentives for trainings/workshops  
☐ None  
☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

- 42a. Is your program involved with maintaining contact between the youth and their biological parents? ☐ Yes ☐ No

- 42b. If yes, please provide details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 43a. Is your program involved with maintaining contact between the youth and their biological siblings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

- 43b. If yes, please provide details: \_\_\_\_\_  
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44. If your program has conducted any outcome studies/evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of the family services, provide details below or enclose supporting information (i.e. evaluation results, copy of measurement tool)

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## HOUSING SERVICES

If your program does not provide housing services, please proceed to **question 47**.

45. What type of housing services are offered by your program? Please check all that apply

- ☐ Living subsidies
- ☐ Apartment living skills training
- ☐ Assistance finding housing
- ☐ Requiring that a youth has housing prior to being released from care
- ☐ Connections with community housing resources
- ☐ Continuum of housing options (i.e. youth gradually transition from supervised living situations to independent living)
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

46. If your program has conducted any outcome studies/evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of the housing services, provide details below or enclose supporting information (i.e. evaluation results, copy of measurement tool)

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## AFTER-CARE SERVICES

Definition of after-care services: Formal or informal services provided to youth who are no longer in care of the child welfare system, foster care, court or juvenile justice authority.

47a. Does your agency have a procedure for ensuring that a youth has all of their pertinent information (i.e. birth certificate, health information, social security card, resume, legal information) prior to leaving care? ☐ Yes ☐ No

47b. If so, please provide details on this procedure: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

48. How long are your program's after-care services offered?

- ☐ up to 3 months
- ☐ 3 to 6 months
- ☐ 7 months to one year
- ☐ more than one year

49. Please check all the services or types of support that your programs offers to youth after leaving care:

- ☐ Counseling (individual, group or family)
- ☐ Crisis Intervention
- ☐ Financial Assistance for ongoing living expenses other than housing
- ☐ Emergency Financial Assistance other than for housing
- ☐ Non-financial emergency assistance
- ☐ Emergency Shelter
- ☐ Mentoring Services
- ☐ Housing or housing assistance
- ☐ Case management
- ☐ Peer support group
- ☐ Educational assistance (financial)
- ☐ Education assistance (non-financial)
- ☐ Employment assistance (internships, referrals, subsidized employment)
- ☐ Employment preparation (skill building relating to the workplace, interviewing, etc.)
- ☐ Vocational training/education
- ☐ Support in accessing community resources (in areas not related to employment or education)
- ☐ Legal services/education
- ☐ Advocacy
- ☐ Parenting education/support
- ☐ Family planning
- ☐ Assistance with health care
- ☐ Community service opportunities
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

50. Does your program serve youth who have been out of the system for a number of years and are now seeking after care services? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

51. If your program has conducted any outcome studies/evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of the after-care services, please provide details below or supporting information (i.e. evaluation results, copy of measurement tool)

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**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!**

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