

**A BASSC POLICY MONOGRAPH**

**AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE:**

**What Do We Know about Helping Emancipating  
Youth and the Independent Living Programs  
in the Bay Area?**

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## AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE:

### What Do We Know about Helping Emancipating Youth and the Independent Living Programs in the Bay Area?

#### Executive Summary

This BASSC Policy Monograph examines the needs of youth aging out of the foster care system and programs to assist youth with their transitions to independent living. It is based upon a review of the national research and policy literature to identify “what we know” as well interviews with local Independent Living Programs (ILP) staff inside and outside nine Bay Area county social service agencies to identify “what we are doing”.

The monograph is divided into the following six sections (along with an Appendices that includes profile descriptions of each county):

- Description of outcomes for the out-of-home placement of older adolescents who are aging out of care, along with a summary of the major research findings (1994-2000) relate to the capabilities of older foster youth to acquire independent living skills, deal with homelessness, achieve financial self-sufficiency, further their own education, deal with incarceration, and/or deal with special needs. An overall conclusion is that youth leaving placements do, in fact, struggle to survive independently and simply do not do as well as adolescents who are not in foster care. They lack experience in employment and educational skills and therefore are at risk of homelessness, incarceration, and public assistance.

federal legislation for the past two decades.

- Description of independent living programs from a national perspective.
- Identification of gaps in services as well as policy limitations from a national perspective, along with the California guidelines, funding, and pending legislation.
- An analysis of “what we know.”
- Description and analysis of local Bay Area ILP programs related to “what we do”, along with a cross-county comparisons of innovative services and future challenges.

#### Major Research Findings

Most of the research relates to the federal governments efforts, beginning in 1986 with the Transitional Living Program for Older Foster Children, to assist state and local child welfare agencies in responding to the needs of youth aging out of foster care. However, given the limitations of funding and public policy, it was not until 1999 that congress passed the Foster Care Independence Act (known as the Chafee Act) to increase funding (capped entitlement of \$140 million), change the upper age limit for eligibility to 21, and require a 20% state match.

In the most recent national demographic description (1996) of the youth served by ILPs, youth aging out of foster care are living in the following types of settings: group care (32%), family foster care (38%), kinship care (9%), independent living (9%), with birth family (1%), and other arrangements (11%). The array of ILP services across the country can be categorized into two components; namely *training* (daily living skills, employment skills, and education skills) and *transitional support services* (room and board as well as counseling). Research on the outcomes of these ILPs suggest the following gaps: 1) lack of relationships with local employers, 2) lack of affordable housing, 3) lack of legislative mandates for further education or acquiring independent living skills, 4) limited eligibility for those under 16 or over 21, and 5) lack of information on how youth with special needs are being served.

The major research findings on youth aging out of foster care across the country include the following:

*National Demographics*

- There are 175,000 youth in out-of-home placements between the ages of 14 and 21, with only 67,000 being served by ILPs.
- There are approximately 20,000 youth aging out of care every year.

*National Outcomes*

- While most ILPs include skill training (daily living, employment, Local ILP Services: What are we doing in the Bay Area?)

education) and support services (housing and counseling), youth aging out of care continue to face:

- financial hardship
- homelessness
- incarceration
- early pregnancy
- mental health and substance abuse problems
- inaccessibility to health care
- minimal independent living capabilities
- limited employment and education experience

*National Service Gaps*

- Employment (lack of collaboration with employers, with few job coaches or mentors)
- Education (no funding for secondary education tuition and no funding for room and board when in school)
- Housing (lack of affordable and stable housing and few cluster site housing opportunities)
- Personal Growth (difficulty with transportation, no standardized independent living skills training, excessive adult supervision)
- Eligibility (limited to 16-21)
- Special needs (inadequate data to address these needs)

The preliminary findings are categorized as follows: 1) organizational structures, 2) service patterns, and 3) challenges ahead. First, each county has a slightly different

organizational structure for their ILP. Some operate the entire program in-house (Contra Costa, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Sonoma), others subcontract out their ILP program to a community-based organization (Marin and Napa), and still others operate a “hybrid” model with some functions kept in-house and other contracted out (Alameda, San Francisco, and Santa Clara). Second, when it comes to services, most county ILPs provide independent living skills courses at the local community colleges. These courses are supplemented in most counties with special workshops, career counseling and vocational training. A few counties are experimenting with innovative services in the areas of transportation, drop-in centers, youth empowerment programs, emancipation conferences, and aftercare services. Based on a variety of experiences in providing services, a set of lessons learned have been identified in the areas of program philosophy, program design, and program components. Third, there are significant challenges that impact the future of ILPs in each county and the youth that are emancipating out of child welfare services. The local challenges are framed as “A Call for Action” that parallels, as well as amplifies, the needs found in the national research findings.

A Call for Action

**Challenge 1: *Strengthening Program Recruitment and Retention***

Overcoming the resistance of emancipating foster youth to participate in a child welfare  
The lack of foster and group homes in a county forces the use of out-of-county placements, complicating the ability of ILP staff in the county of origin to maintain contact,

supported ILP program and the lack of a steady referral process due to staff turnover. Similarly, keeping track of youth who move from placement to placement is a significant threat to participant retention in the ILP.

**Challenge 2: *Increasing Support for ILP from Foster Care Providers***

There is a need to help providers understand and support the value of the ILP for emancipating youth, including the need for transportation assistance to get the youth to the programs.

**Challenge 3: *Addressing the Need for***

The lack of affordable housing places increased pressure on the Transitional Housing Placement Program operated by some of the ILPs. While some colleges and universities provide dormitory or congregate housing, community colleges do not.

*Housing*

**Challenge 4: *Serving the Special Needs***

There is a need to fully document and address the special needs of youth, especially tutoring to address learning disabilities and counseling to address substance abuse and other emotional/ developmental problems.

*of Youth*

**Challenge 5: *Clarifying Role of Counties in Serving Out-of-county Youth***

facilitate independent living services, and provide the financial resources needed.

**Challenge 6: *Enhancing Database***

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### *Systems*

Since the CWS/CMS information system is not designed to track participation in ILPs or to track youth who have emancipated, it is difficult to determine who is eligible for the program, especially those referred from a Probation Department. In addition, the state ILP reporting requirements continue to change from year to year and therefore it is difficult to develop a consistent county database, let alone one for the Bay Area.

### **Challenge 7: *Pursuing Further Research***

Increased attention is needed to fully understand the relationship of ILPs to the referral sources of county juvenile probation and child mental health programs. Another area of research involves the prospects of recruiting youth younger than 16 into the program in order to begin the planning for emancipation earlier (as young as 14).

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# AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE: What Do We Know about Helping Emancipating Youth and the Independent Living Programs in the Bay Area?

## Introduction

Children of all ages are placed in out-of-home placements for a number of reasons. The placements are intended to offer a supportive family environment to children whose natural parents cannot raise them because: 1) of physical or mental illness of the parents, 2) behavioral difficulties experienced by the child, 3) or problems within the family environment (e.g. child abuse, alcohol and drug use, extreme poverty, or legal issues). Such children are dependents of the state, are in protective custody. They may be placed in a state-licensed foster home, group home, residential treatment centers, or with families who receive some payment towards care for the youth, such as a county-certified foster homes.

The parents of the child may or may not retain their parental rights, and the child may eventually return home, or remain in care if recommended by the child's social worker and authorized by the juvenile dependency court. All dependent children are placed into a permanent plan if reunification with their parents fails. These children then receive a permanent plan: adoption, guardianship, or long-term foster care, with adoption always being the goal.

However, once in their suitable permanent placement, these children face During the 1980s and 1990s there were numerous research studies addressing the outcomes of youth in the foster care system related to employment, housing,

several risks, such as growing up without experiencing the protection, affection, encouragement, and intimate contact associated with a stable family life (Nollan, Wolf, Downs, Lamont, Martine, & Horn, 1997, p. 3). Essentially, these youth are removed from their community of upbringing. As a result, they are often unable to utilize the known support networks in their home or community, or easily access the services available to them in their new community.

Over the past few decades, the child welfare system has experienced an increase in the numbers of adolescents in out-of-home placements. Between 1960 and 1980 the percentage of teenagers in care, over the age of 13 years, increased from 46 percent to 56 percent (Hornby & Collins, 1981). This growth could be attributed to the fact that prior to the permanency planning movement, many youth simply grew up in the system. Or, the increase could have resulted from the significant numbers of youth first entering care as adolescents (Hornby et al., 1981).

Due, in part, to the permanency planning movement less than 40% of youth in care are twelve years and older (Casey Family Programs, 2000; Mech, 1994).

and education (McDonald et al., 1996; Hornby & Collins, 1981; Cook, 1994). A variety of factors are associated with outcomes; type of placement, reason for



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admission, age at placement, number of placements, time in care, and age at discharge, yet isolating their effects is difficult, given the high correlation between each of them (McDonald et al., 1996). These studies have been effective at shaping policies and programs related to out-of-home placements throughout the nation. Consequently, all levels of government (federal, state, and local) have pursued modifications to existing policies such as added funding, changed reporting requirements, and increased services to youth in out-of-home placements, at all ages.

However, in more recent years research has focused on the status of older adolescents aging out of the system. Some refer to this phenomenon as, 'emancipating from the system.' These older youth leave care with the expectation from the foster care system that they have the social skills, educational and vocational experience, money saved, and independent living skills needed to succeed on their own. However, studies have found that a large proportion of youth leave the system without the proper preparation and skill. As a result, the federal government first created and then modified Independent Living Programs (ILP) legislation.

This monograph examines the needs of youth aging out of the foster care system and Independent Living Programs, created by county and state child welfare systems, to assist these youth with their transition. First, it describes out-of-home placement outcomes of older adolescents aging out of care, followed by the changing legislation of last two decades. Second, independent living programs are described from a national perspective,

taking into account service changes over time, present services offered, as well as gaps in service and policy. Third, this monograph examines the intervention of Independent Living Programs from a State of California perspective, by looking at the state guidelines, eligibility, funding, and pending legislation. Fourth, the work of local Bay Area county ILPs are described and compared. And fifth, specific recommendations are proposed.

### Youth Aging Out of Placements

There are between 600,000 and 700,000 children and adolescents in out-of-home placement in the United States each year (Casey Family Programs, 2000) and many of these youth are older adolescents (Maluccio & Fein, 1985). In fact, in 1998 over 100,000 adolescents ages 16 to 21 years were in care, and another 75,000 were between the ages of 14 and 15 years old (Casey Family Programs, 2000).

Of these older adolescents, approximately 20,000 will age out of the child welfare system each year with the expectation that they will be independent and self-sufficient (Fagnoni, 1999). However, many youth experience significant challenges in making the transition from the out-of-home placement system to independent living (GAO, 1999). Some of the challenges include: 1) lack of employment experience, 2) inaccessibility to medical care, 3) homelessness, 4) financial hardship, 5) lack of affordable, stable housing, 6) increased likelihood of mental health problems and/or substance abuse problems, 7) incarceration, and 8) early pregnancy (Barth, 1990; Fagnoni, 1999).

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Child welfare agencies across the country have the task of providing specific services to meet the transition needs of youth prior to their discharge from care, especially since many will never return home or be adopted (Barth, 1990). To address these challenges, the service goals involve helping the youth obtain adequate housing, complete high school, achieve and retain employment, forge and sustain positive social relationships, perform daily living skills, and live independently upon exit from the system (Cook, 1994).

However, meeting these goals is complicated by the growing numbers of youth in care, the diversity of the youth, and the bureaucracy of the service delivery system.

Unfortunately, many young people released from out-of-home care as adolescents return as adult to the public system through the criminal justice system, the welfare system, or as residents of homeless shelters (Casey Family Programs, 2000). The reason for their lack of self-sufficiency can be traced to limited life skills, education, employment, and social skills. The following section describes the empirical research addressing the outcomes of youth aging out of placements.

### **Outcomes for Adolescents in Placement**

There is a dearth of research in the field of older adolescents aging out of the child welfare system as most studies examine the outcomes of younger youth and children in the child welfare system. Yet, One of the most well-known studies examining outcomes of youth in out-of-home placements is the Festinger study of 1983. This study examined a sample of 277 young people who aged out of care in 1975, and who were between 18

adolescents have unique issues when compared with other children in placements, and therefore, it is imperative to examine youth when they first enter care. According to a recent report by Casey Family Programs (2000) approximately 27% of youth entering care in 1998 were between the ages of 12 and 17 years. And, of these, 33% were 12 to 13, 44% were 14 to 15, and 23% were 16 to 17. A related study of outcomes of adolescents in care found that approximately 70 percent of adolescents that exit from care entered the system as adolescents (Courtney & Barth, 1996). Similarly, it was found that the percentage of youth that exit care, due to reaching 18 years old, increases as the age at entry increases (Casey Family Programs, 2000).

Yet, older youth are the least likely, of all of the youth in care, to be reunified, adopted, or held in guardianship. Fanshel, Finch & Grundy (1990) found that when examining 585 youth in care, with a mean age of first placement being 12.84 years (standard deviation 2.99 years), 55.5% of the youth were emancipated, 20.2% reunified with parents, 20.7% transferred, and 3.9% ran away by the time the case closed. This provides evidence that the majority of youth placed as adolescents do, in fact, remain in care until they reach 18 years old and emancipate.

### **General Outcomes**

and 21 years of age at the time of discharge. All of the participants had been in out-of-home placement for at least five years. The sample was drawn using probability techniques and the study offered information about the life

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experiences of the youth, as well as the challenges they faced after exiting care. Festinger (1983) found that employment rates of the youth in care were lower than in the general population, while receipt of public assistance rates were higher than that of the general New York population.

Most of the youth in this study reported having adequate social support, which was comparable to the youth in the general population, but the youth in care reported being less trusting of their support networks (Festinger 1983, in Buehler, Orme, Post & Patterson, 2000).

And, there were no significant differences between youth in care and those not in care with regard to physical health (Festinger, 1983).

A recent study by Buehler et al. (2000) examined the long-term correlates of family foster care by taking a sample of the 1988 National Survey of Families and Household (NSFH) resulting in three sub-samples of 101 participants each. The three groups of participants were: (1) randomly sampled individuals with no history of foster care, (2) those who reported living with foster parents for at least 6 months before 18 years of age, and (3) those without a history of foster care, selected because each was similar to a respondent in the foster care sample on background and demographic characteristics (Buehler, Orme, Post & Patterson, 2000).

The samples were compared on measures of adult adjustment; adult self-However, a major limitation of the study is that the follow-up participants represented only those youth who were located and agreed to participate in the study, reflecting a possible sampling bias (854 were located and 810 participated). In fact, the differentiating characteristics

sufficiency, behavioral adjustment, family and social support, and a sense of personal well-being (Buehler et al., 2000).

The findings of the study showed that adults with a history of foster care are at risk for adjustment difficulties in several areas of life when compared to adults in the general population (Buehler et al., 2000). And, adults with a history of foster care have similar levels of adult adjustment with those adults matched on background characteristics such as low socio-economic status, gender, age, etc. This study of family foster care extends our understanding not only of foster children and foster families, but to other families who experience significant disruptions in structure and low economic circumstance as well (p. 623).

Another significant study by Cook (1994) examined the preparation of youth in care for independent living and involved 810 respondents, gathered using a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique. The purpose of the study was to measure outcomes in terms of education, employment, economics, parenthood, support network, drug and alcohol use, housing, and health care, as well as the effect of independent living skills training on outcomes at follow-up. The study found that youth with a history of foster care placements were similar to 18 to 24 year olds living below the poverty line on educational completion, the use of public assistance, and premature parenthood (Cook, 1994).

found between groups were: age when discharged from care, receipt of services, and State from which the youth came (Cook, 1994). Other limitations were that the study was based on self-reports and the reliability and validity of the instruments utilized were not provided.

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### Independent Living Skills

Independent living skills training is essential for adequately preparing youth in out-of-home care for emancipation. The skills affect all areas of adulthood such as finding and retaining employment, pursuing further education, maintaining a household, and achieving stable housing. Mech, Ludy-Dobson & Hulseman (1994) examined the life skills knowledge of 534 foster adolescents ages 17 to 19 in three placement settings; foster family homes, group homes, and transitional apartments (scattered site and cluster-site). The study used a purposive sampling design. Life skills knowledge was measured by a 50-item Life Skills Inventory (i.e. a quiz) used to assess knowledge in the areas of: rental/lease arrangements, personal finances, shopping, meal preparation, job seeking, job retention, substance use, contraception, health, consumer rights, and household management. The internal reliability coefficient is 0.881 for this measure, which is statistically significant and the standard error of measurement is 2.71, representing an acceptable error measurement (Mech et al, 1994). Validity measurements are unknown.

The researchers found that youth who live in apartment placements did significantly better on measures of life skills knowledge than youth in foster homes or institutional/ group home placements. A possible limitation to this study is placement selectivity; youth being placed in certain settings might have significantly different functioning levels than youth in other placements. In addition, Barth (1990) found that of 55 former foster youth interviewed, almost 30% reported that there was a time since leaving care where they had no home or were moving almost every other

placed in certain settings might have significantly different functioning levels than youth in other placements. It is not clear the extent to which placement selectivity alone can explain the statistical differences obtained between and among the different placements (Mech et al., 1994).

However, it was found that youth in the transitional apartment settings tended to have the most responsibility for meal planning, apartment maintenance, scheduling daily routines, and saving a portion of their income (Mech et al., 1994). This possibly illustrates that the more responsibility given to older youth in their living situation, such as in moderately supervised apartment settings, the more they learn the skills necessary to live independently.

### Homelessness

Homelessness is another serious outcome for youth aging out of placements. A number of studies have shown that either temporary or permanent homelessness can result after emancipation. Courtney & Piliavin (1998) found that of the 113 youth interviewed, 14% of males and 10% of females were homeless at least once since exiting care. And, the Westat (1991) study found that 25% of the 810 former foster care youth experienced homelessness for at least one night (Cook, 1994).

week. And, thirty-nine percent stated they sometimes or often had issues with housing (Barth, 1990). The relationship between homelessness and prior episodes of systems placement is also

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illustrated in a 1997 study of 400 homeless individuals, where 20% had lived in foster care as children (Homes for the Homeless, 1998).

### Financial Self-Sufficiency

A lack of self-sufficiency is also evident with this population of young people. For instance, Westat (1991) found that 40% of the 810 foster youth surveyed 2.5 to 4 years after leaving care were a cost to the community at the time of the interview (receiving public assistance, incarcerated, etc), 51% were unemployed, and 62% had not maintained a job for at least one year. Similarly, Courtney and Piliavin (1998) found that 39% of 113 youth were unemployed 12 to 18 months after leaving care, 19% had been unemployed since exiting placement, and 32% had received some type of public assistance while on their own.

Additionally, Barth (1990) interviewed fifty-five youth that had exited from foster care for at least one year. It was found that approximately 53% had reported having serious monetary troubles, such as not being able to buy food or pay bills, since leaving foster care, and as a result, about one third reported they had committed a crime to get money. Crimes included living in a car, stealing money for food, prostitution, and selling drugs (Barth, 1990).

Financial self-sufficiency and finding stable housing are two of the most important elements to achieving independence. Youth that emancipate from care are clearly at a higher risk, than youth not in care, of not retaining stable housing. Little is known about how the effects of events and transitions during time in out-

housing and not being able to support themselves financially, which can lead to homelessness and dependency on others.

### Education

Educational deficits have also been found in numerous studies among youth who have emancipated from out-of-home placements (Courtney et al., 1998; Festinger, 1983). For example, the Westat study estimated that only about 44% of the 18 year olds who exited care had completed high school (Cook, 1994).

Blome (1997) found that 77% youth in foster care (167 youth, randomly sampled) had completed high school, as compared with 93% of a matched non-foster care group when examining the participants five years after leaving care. And, the study also found that foster youth are two times more likely to have dropped out of high school than non-foster youth (Blome, 1997). However, despite having similar test scores and grades as non-foster youth, foster youth are also less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes in high school (Blome, 1997).

There is clearly a large discrepancy in the educational achievements of youth in care when compared to youth not in care.

Whether these discrepancies are due to a lack of ability due to upbringing, a non-supportive home-life, or minimal residential stability, there is one thing apparent; youth in care fare worse than their peers at home with their families.

### Incarceration

of-home placement are related to the outcome of incarceration (Jonson-Reid &

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Barth, 2000, p. 493). English, Kouidou-Giles, and Plocke (1994) randomly sampled 500 youth ages 16 years and older and found that over one-half (58%) of the youth received additional services from the Juvenile Justice system during their time in care. And, another study by Jonson-Reid et al. (2000) utilized a prospective design to examine incarceration, for felonies and violent offenses, as a long-term outcome for youth in care. It was found that males and females with prior child welfare supervised placements had a higher risk of later incarceration than children in the general population (Jonson-Reid et al., 2000).

Also, researchers specifically found that for youth in care, the rate of entry to the California Youth Authority (CYA), which houses more serious adolescent offenders, was highest for youth who first entered placement between the ages of 12 and 15 years. These youth may have experienced the trauma of being removed from their homes, along with the stressors of pre-adolescence, and therefore might have fewer resources for support than older children (Jonson-Reid et al., 2000).

In addition, youth with multiple entries into care, having two or more different spells in care, and those youth with multiple placements, are at higher risk for later incarceration than youth with only one spell in care (Jonson-Reid et al., 2000). And, there is an increased risk for later incarceration for African-American and Hispanic youth depending on the placement type, as well as for youth who were reunified with their parents following their first spell in care (Jonson-Reid et al., 2000). So, not only are youth in out-of-home care at more risk for future incarceration than youth never in care, but also, specific subgroups of youth are at heightened risk within the total population of youth in placement.

Similarly, English, Kouidou-Giles, and Plocke (1994) randomly sampled 500 youth, and found over one-half (54%) had one or more documented disabilities. Approximately one out of

placement type, as well as for youth who were reunified with their parents following their first spell in care (Jonson-Reid et al., 2000). So, not only are youth in out-of-home care at more risk for future incarceration than youth never in care, but also, specific subgroups of youth are at heightened risk within the total population of youth in placement.

### *Special Needs Youth*

The data documenting special needs of youth aging out of care is largely unavailable, incomplete or unreliable from most states (Casey Family Programs, 2000). As a result, information on clinically diagnosed disabilities is available for only 39% of the total children in care served in 1998. Of the 39% of youth and children with available information, 19% were found to have a diagnosed disability, 61% were not diagnosed, and 20% were not yet determined (Casey Family Programs, 2000).

However, it has been estimated that 38% of all adolescents in care, from 41 states reporting, have an identified special needs problem in 1998 (Casey Family Program, 2000, p. 14). Special needs include a diagnosed disability, vision or hearing impairment, mental retardation, physical disability, emotional disturbance, other medical condition, child behavior problem, substance abuse problem, or receipt of Social Security Insurance (Casey Family Program, 2000).

five youth were identified as developmentally disabled and about one out of four were had emotional disturbance issues. These types of issues can greatly affect the probability of

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success at time of emancipation as behavioral problems and developmental disabilities can limit employment abilities and in turn, affect their ability to be self-sufficient. Essentially, the adolescents least ready for independent living appear to be those who suffer from behavioral and emotional problems (Iglehart, 1994).

### *Issues With Emancipation*

In addition to assessing the outcomes of employment, self-sufficiency, well-being, education, incarceration, and homelessness, it is important to evaluate the emotional adjustment of the youth in the process of terminating services and entering independence. Youth react in specific, identifiable ways and go through similar stages before they can become stable and independent (Anderson & Simonitch, 1981). And, because their placements tend to terminate abruptly (usually on a birthday or achievement of a high school diploma or GED), having proper closure with foster homes can be challenging because foster homes are where dependency needs are met and relationships are built (Anderson et al., 1981).

The loss of a familiar structure can bring about a period of disequilibrium involving regressive and progressive behaviors (Lammert & Timberlake, 1986). Yet, managing the feelings associated with the departure from care can prove to be difficult for the youth (Lammert et al., 1986). As a result, reactive depression appears to be a common reaction to emancipation among the youths aging out of care. It usually involves a four-stage process consisting of anxiety, elation, fear and loneliness, and quiet confidence

(Anderson et al., 1981). However, the response to emancipation is different for all youth depending on their support network, ego strength, ability to adjust to change, and coping skills. Symptoms of reactive depression include despondency, decrease of interest in activities, apprehensiveness, loss of initiative, difficulty in concentration, and overall pessimism (Anderson et al., 1981).

The research on this population, noted in Figure 1, illustrates that youth leaving placements do, in fact, struggle to survive independently. Although some of the studies have clear limitations, it is apparent that adolescents in out-of-home placements simply do less well than adolescents not in foster care (Iglehart, 1994). These youth lack experience and background in areas of employment and educational skills, and therefore are at risk for homelessness, incarceration and reliance on public assistance.

Fortunately, policy-makers have recognized the difficulties that former systems youth face. As a result, they have modified existing policies over time to meet the changing needs of these youth and fill the gaps in service. The next section describes the federal legislative changes in independent living programs serving youth exiting the out-of-home placement system.

**Figure 1**

**Outcomes of Youth in Care**

<b>Outcome Area</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Findings</b>
General Outcomes	Festinger (1983)	Foster care youth felt less trustworthy of their social support networks than non-foster care youth (n=277)
	Buehler, Orme, Post & Patterson (2000)	Foster care youth are at risk for adjustment difficulties in self-sufficiency, behavioral adjustment, family and social support, and sense of personal well-being as adults (n=101 in each sub-sample). Foster care youth were similar to youth matched on demographic characteristics
	Cook (1994)	Foster care youth were similar to youth living in poverty on education completion, use of public assistance, and pre-mature parenthood (n=810)
Independent Living Skills	Mech, Ludy-Dobson, & Hulseman (1994)	Foster youth living in apartments did significantly better on life skills knowledge than youth in foster homes or group homes (n=534)
Homelessness	Courtney & Piliavin (1998)	14% of males and 10% of females were homeless at least one night since leaving care (n=113)
	Cook (1994)	25% of foster youth experienced homeless for at least one night (n=810)
Homelessness	Homes for the Homeless (1998)	20% of homeless adults were surveyed and found to have lived in foster care as children (n=400)
Financial Self-Sufficiency	Cook (1994)	40% of foster youth surveyed were a cost to the community after leaving care (receiving public assistance, incarcerated, food stamps etc.) (n=810)
	Barth (1990)	53% of foster youth reported having serious money troubles (n=55)



<b>Outcome Area</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Findings</b>
	Courtney & Piliavin (1998)	39% of foster youth were unemployed 12 to 18 after leaving care, 19% had been unemployed, and 32% had received some type of public assistance (n=113)
Education	Cook (1994)	44% of youth leaving care had completed high school (n=810)
	Blome (1997)	77% of youth in care had completed high school (n=167) compared with 93% of matched non-foster care youth, foster youth are two times more likely to drop out of high school than non foster youth, and foster youth are less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes in high school.
Incarceration	Jonson-Reid & Barth (2000)	Males and females with foster care histories have a higher risk of later incarceration than non foster care youth, youth with multiple entries into care, having two or more spells in care, and multiple placements are at higher risk for later incarceration than youth with only one spell in care (n=590).
	English, Kouidou-Giles & Plocke (1994)	58% of youth in care receive additional services from the juvenile justice system (n=500).
Special Needs Youth	Casey Family Program (2000)	Approximately 38% of youth have identified special needs problems
	English, Kouidou-Giles & Plocke (1994)	54% of foster youth surveyed have one or more documented disabilities, 1 in 5 are developmentally disabled, 1 in 4 have emotional disturbance issues (n=500).

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## Independent Living Programs

### Legislation

To address the needs of youth in out-of-home placements, Congress passed the Child Welfare Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-608) and Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272). These statutes and their resulting regulations are the major forces shaping out-of-home care programs and services today (McDonald et al., 1996, p. 12). The aim was to ensure that youth were either reunified with their families or placed in well-supervised long-term out-of-home placements. Specifically, P.L. 96-272 prioritized the placement goals for youth in terms of family reunification, adoption, guardianship, or long-term care (in that order). At that time, permanent planning was held to be the most appropriate arrangement for youth.

In 1986 the Federal Transitional Independent Living Program for Older Foster Children was created to assist child welfare agencies with responding to the needs of youth aging out of care. Congress authorized the program via P.L. 99-272, Section 477 to improve preparation for independent living for federally eligible youth in foster care (Barth, 1990, p. 420). It provided annual federal funding (\$70 million annually since 1992) for states to create and implement ILP services and required that all youth in care be tested for life skills competencies by age 16 (Nollan, Downs, Wolf & Lamont, 1996). Youth aged 16 to 18 years and older were offered services to assist them in the transition to independent living, and states had the option to serve young people up to the age 21. Then, in 1999 the Foster Care Independence Act was signed into law

of 21. The legislation stipulated that state and local governments could create ILPs to offer counseling related to education and employment, as well as training to foster basic living skills and interpersonal and social skills (U.S. GAO, 1999).

However, there were inherent problems with this legislation. For instance, states were not required to match funds if the total allocation for all states was under \$45 million of funding. So, if a particular state did not want to invest its own funds in ILP activities, it would still receive a significant amount of funding, but not have to provide any more for ILP activities. Also, there was no provision requiring youth participate in designing their own ILP activities, and no special funds targeted for young people transitioning from care (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000). Lastly, this Act negatively affected youth aging out of care, as it had no health care provision and no requirement that placement workers receive training to assist young people with their transition to independent living.

Additionally, under this Act of 1986, no funds were authorized for evaluation, technical assistance, performance measurement, or data collection, making it difficult for researchers to evaluate such programs. Although this initiative attempted to alter the child welfare services landscape for youth in care by providing federal funding for ILP services, almost nothing is known about the degree to which its intent has been realized (Courtney et al., 1998, p. 2). This helps explain the present dearth of research examining ILP programs.

(P.L. 106-169), replacing the former Independent Living Initiative established

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in 1986. It was called the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee Act), named after Senator Chafee of Rhode Island, a long-time advocate for children who are victims of abuse and neglect. The Chafee Act allots \$140 million to ILP services and changes the upper age of eligibility for services to 21, for those youth likely to remain in care until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It requires states to provide a 20% non-federal match to receive their full share of the funds appropriated (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000). By requiring this, the federal government is attempting to ensure states be fiscally invested in foster youth as well.

The Chafee Act increases from \$1,000 to \$10,000 the amount of assets that a young person in placement can possess and still maintain eligibility for funding. It gives states the option to provide Medicaid coverage to young people between 18 and 21 years of age who are still in placement on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It also requires states to use a part of their funds for services for youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who leave placement because they have already reached 18; specifically, states can use up to 30% of total program funds for room and board to assist these older youth.

Additionally, states are mandated to certify that funds will be utilized to offer training for placement providers to help them understand and address the issues adolescents are faced with when preparing for independent living (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000). Most importantly, it requires that young people must directly participate in designing their own program activities and accept personal responsibility for achieving

independence (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000, p. 12).

In addition, the Chafee Act increases state accountability over the former Act of 1986. This is a significant change because prior to this program there were no mandates requiring states create evaluation techniques of their Independent Living Programs. Now, as a result of this act, approximately 1.5% of the total funds authorized to states must be used for evaluation, technical assistance, performance measurement, and data collection. The Act stipulates that the following performance measures be examined: educational attainment, high school diploma, employment avoidance of dependency, homelessness, non-marital childbirth, incarceration, and high risk behaviors. Information regarding the scope, intensity and duration of services will be essential when it is necessary to examine ILP services across states (DHHS, 1999, p. ii).

As summarized in Figure 2, the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act makes it clear that independent living services should be seen as a service to young people that will help them as they transition to adulthood, regardless of whether they end up on their own, reunify with family, are adopted, or live in another permanent living arrangement (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000, p. 14). It allows for states and local communities to expand activities and programs to help young people transition from placement and is an important step towards more significant policy reforms affecting youth aging out of care. The following sections describe the youth served by Independent Living Programs,

Figure 2

Chafee Act Program Components

Provision	Description
Amount	\$140 million capped entitlement
State Match	20% state match required on total allocation
Allocation Formula	Based on the proportion of children in both Title IV-E funded and state funded foster care in the state for the most recent fiscal year; no state shall receive less than \$500,000 or its 1998 allotment, whichever is greater
Set-aside for data collection	1.5% of authorized program funds set aside for evaluation, technical assistance, performance measurement, and data collection
Eligible Young People	Young people up to age 21 who are “likely to remain in foster care until age 18” and those who have aged out of foster care, without regard to their eligibility for Title IV-E funded foster care; a portion of funds must be used to serve eligible young people 18 to 21 who left foster care because they reach 18
Benefits to Indian Children	States must make benefits and services available to Indian children in the state on the same basis as other children
Participation in program design	Young people must participate directly in designing their own program activities and accept personal responsibility for achieving independence
Funding for services to older youth	States must use a portion of their funds for assistance and services for young people 18 to 21 who left foster care because they reached age 18
Use of funds for room and board	States may use up to 30% of their program funds for room and board for young people 18 to 21 who have left foster care because they reached age 18, but not 21
Health Care	States given the option to extend Medicaid coverage to young people ages 18 to 21 who were in foster care on their 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday, or some subset of this group
Asset Limit	Asset limit changed to allow young people to have \$10,000 (rather than \$1,000) in assets and remain eligible for Title IV-E funded foster care
Training for staff and parents	States must certify that Title IV-E funds will be used to provide training to help adoptive and foster parents, workers in group homes, and case managers understand and address the issues confronting adolescents preparing for independent living

National Foster Care Awareness Project (2000, p.12-13)

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as well as the specific services offered to youth.

### Youth Served

In 1996, Independent Living Programs throughout the nation served approximately 67,600 youth in care, more than 2.5 times than were served in 1989 (ACYF, 1999). This number was gathered by final reports, submitted by States to the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF); however, only thirty states provided final reports annually, so this amount is probably underestimated. Although it is evident there are far more youth served than 67,600, the final reports submitted still offer a national representation of the youth served by Independent Living Programs.

The number of youth served annually differs greatly between states; some served only 10 youth, and others served as many as 9,000, in 1996 (ACYF, 1999). In fact, ACYF (1999) data showed that of the states reporting, ten states (New York, California, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Texas, Tennessee, Missouri, and Minnesota) provide services to more than 50 percent of the total youth served nationwide. Yet, the amount of actual youth in care eligible for ILP services in each state is unknown at this time.

Data suggest that many of the youth eligible for services between 1987 and 1996 did not receive ILP services, in spite of the groundbreaking 1986 ILP initiative (P.L. 99-272). Of the thirty states that submitted reports to ACYF (1999), more than one-third of the total eligible youth. The youth served by ILP services are extremely diverse in terms of age, race, and placement type. Along with changing demographics, the out-of-home placement

did not receive any services. Additionally, other data gathered from 27 states by a survey of the States' Independent Living Coordinators illustrate that there has been a consistent decrease across states in the total number of youth eligible to receive ILP services between the ages of 18 and 19, signifying that most youth in care at the age of 18 leave prior to their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday (Casey Family Programs, 2000).

It is necessary to investigate the cause of this trend; why a percentage of youth do not access ILP services after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Perhaps the youth were unaware of the services available to them under the ILP of 1986 (P.L. 99-272) and thought that since they had to exit placements, they could no longer access ILP. Or, the trend might have been caused by a decrease in funding per youth. For instance, between 1987 and 1996 estimated funds per youth actually decreased. In FY 1996, the average estimated spending of ILP funding per youth was \$983, yet in 1987 it was \$1,674, over 1.5 times that in 1996 (ACYF, 1999). This discrepancy in funding was due, in large part, to the fact that ILP funds allocated to states between 1992 and 1996 remained unchanged at \$70 million, while states saw an increase in amount youth served per year (ACYF, 1999). A possible result of decreased funding per youth is a reduction of available services, stimulating youth to exit care if they feel there is no benefit to their staying.

### Profiles of Youth Served

types of older youth have changed moderately over time, as seen by the estimated percentages in Figure 3 (Casey Family Programs, 2000; ACYF, 1999).

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Even if averaging the 1988 percentages, it is clear that placements in family foster care and independent living have increased for older youth, while group care has decreased, and kinship care has remained the same over time. When comparing placements in 1988 with placements in 1996 it is evident that older youth have been placed where independent living skills training can be best implemented, in either independent living, foster family care, or kinship care (Mech, Ludy-Dobson, & Husleman, 1994). These percentages also signify that youth with special needs or lower levels of functioning, who are placed in group care, might not participate in ILP services as frequently as foster youth. Consequently, youth in group home placements might not be as prepared for emancipation.

When examining age and ethnicity breakdowns of youth served by ILP, the majority of youth served in 1996 (87%) were between 16, 17, and 18 years old, while the remainder (13%) were between 19 and 21 years old. With respect to ethnicity, there were 50% Caucasian, 38% African American, 9% Hispanic, 1% Asian American, 1% Native American, and 2% Other. These demographic characteristics were consistent from 1987 to 1996 (ACYF, 1999). However, there is no data indicating the relationship between types of placements and ethnicity.

Additionally, of the total youth estimated to be served by ILP in 1996 approximately twenty-six percent were youth with special needs (ACYF, 1999); those youth with development, physical or emotional disabilities, or substance use issues. However, it is unknown if and how any States have made special provisions in the ILP service delivery

system for these youth as this data is not available.

#### Limitations to Data

It is clear that one major limitation is the lack of standardized reporting formats across States and within States (ACYF, 1999). States either did not participate in reporting to the Department of Health and Human Services, or the profiles of youth did not include all of the youth reported by the thirty states. Therefore, it is unknown exactly how many youth have been served by Independent Living Program services in the past fifteen years, thus making it difficult to describe an accurate national picture of Independent Living Programs.

#### Services Offered

The Chafee Act of 1999 gives states flexibility in creating, implementing and delivering independent living services (Casey Family Programs, 2000). Historically, States have offered a range of youth services in the areas of education, vocation, housing and home management, money management, health care, mental health, and personal growth. Between 1987 and 1996 the concentration of services shifted from teaching primarily concrete, tangible skills (vocational training, job search, and money management) to soft, intangible skills (decision-making, healthy communication, and conflict resolution). Presently, States offer the following combination of tangible and intangible services to youth receiving Independent

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**Figure 3**  
**Percentages of Youth Served by ILP**

	1988 16-17 Years *	1988 18-21 Years *	1996 16-21 Years
Group Care	61%	54%	32%
Family Foster	29%	28%	38%
Kinship Care	8%	8%	9%
Indep. Living	1%	9%	9%
Birth Family	Not available	Not available	1%
Other	Not available	Not available	11%

\*Percentages might not add to 100%

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Living Program services: daily living skills training, education skills training, employment skills training, personal care training, and transitional support services. Daily living skills include home management, money management, and interpersonal communication. Home management is a rather broad topic including such skills as reading a lease, paying bills, grocery shopping, cleaning, and tenant's rights. Personal care training involves health care, mental health support, safe sex, substance use prevention, and choices and consequences. In addition, health care skills involves not only taking care of one's own person, but also gaining access to health care and insurance coverage.

Employment skills include four main skill areas essential to employability: basic education skills (reading, writing, speaking, math), pre-employment skills (job searching, interviewing), work maturity skills (work habits, behavior), and marketable skills (knowledge related to a particular industry or field) (North, Mallabar, & Desrochers, 1988 in Sheehy, Oldham, Zanghi, Ansell, Correia, & Copeland, 2000). Essentially, successful employment experiences for youth leaving care rely heavily on the quality of skills training and experience obtained while in care (Sheehy et al., 2000).

Educational skills include access to completing high school or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), post-secondary educational programs, and vocational training programs. In addition, youth are offered assistance with the post-secondary application and the financial aid application, as well as support with coping with the daily struggles with completing their educational goals.

Transitional support services are on a continuum of services, depending on the State or local jurisdiction. For instance, some agencies offer supervised practice living, where youth can live in a facility and receive case management support depending on their skill level and needs. Other agencies pay for room and board in cluster site or scattered site apartment settings, and yet others provide youth with assistance in saving for start-up costs for when they exit care. Under the Chafee Act, youth between 18 and 21 are now eligible to receive funding for room and board expenses. This is significant given the high rates of homelessness among older youth. All ILP services are summarized in Figure 4.

Clearly there are a number of different ILP services available to older youth in care. It is at the discretion of each county child welfare system to decide what specific services will be offered, and in what timeframe. The following section describes the outcomes of Independent Living Programs in various areas of the country.

### **Independent Living Program Outcomes**

Independent living programs are fairly new, with most starting after 1980 (Mech, 1988, p. 490). In the last fifteen years states have been given flexibility in implementing their Independent Living Programs (ILP), within guidelines specified by both the Foster Care Act of 1986 and the more recent Chafee Act of 1999 (Lindsey & Ahmed, 1999). Since the passage of these two Acts, only a few studies have examined ILP outcomes.



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**Figure 4**

**Independent Living Program Services**

<b>Type of ILP Training</b>	<b>Description of Services</b>
Daily Living Skills Training	Home management (reading a lease, paying bills, grocery shopping, cleaning, tenant’s rights) Money management (budgeting, opening a checking/savings account) Interpersonal communication (conflict resolution, conflict management, anger management) Personal growth (health care, mental health support, safe sex, substance use prevention)
Employment Skills Training	Basic education skills (reading, writing, speaking) Pre-employment skills (job searching, interviewing) Work maturity skills (work habits, behavior) Marketable skills (knowledge of a particular career)
Education Skills Training	Completing high school diploma or GED Assistance with post-secondary education application and financial aid application Developing coping skills for the daily struggles with completing educational goals
Transitional Support Services	Supervised practice living (residential home) Apartment living (scattered or clustered site)

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Most have examined outcomes in terms of employment, education, housing and independent living skills.

Lindsey et al. (1999) examined Independent Living Program outcomes by comparing foster care youth that participated and did not participate in such programs. The sample was gathered using a stratified cluster sampling design from two counties within each of the four regions of the North Carolina Department of Social Services. When located, participants made the decision about whether or not to participate in the survey; there were 44 participants of ILP and 32 non-participants. All measurements were based on self-reports.

The survey instrument explored four outcome areas: housing and living arrangements, education and training, employment and earnings, and financial self-sufficiency (Lindsey et al., 1999). There was a significant difference between the two groups on housing outcomes; the ILP participants reported being significantly more likely to live independently (live alone or with own children, spouse/partner, friend, or an unrelated person) than non-participants. On educational outcomes ILP participants were significantly more likely to complete a technical/ vocational program, to be enrolled in college, and less likely than non-participants to be satisfied with just a high school degree (Lindsey et al., 1999).

On measures of employment, however, there were no significant differences between the two groups. Employment measures were: employed full-time, Another study by Scannapieco & Shagrin (1995), examined the outcomes of youth in care who participated in an ILP program (44 youth) and those who did not (46 youth). On demographic variables the

employed part-time, hours worked per week, experienced unemployment for more than one month since leaving care, episodes of unemployment, and longest time unemployed (Lindsey et al., 1999). When examining financial self-sufficiency, it was found that participants reported being significantly more likely to pay all household expenses, while living with others, than non-participants. It was found that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of usage of public entitlements, even though nearly half of each group utilized Medicaid for health care.

A major limitation of this study is the small sample sizes, due to difficulty in locating study participants. And, an important limitation is that there were significant differences between the groups' mean ages. That is, there is the possibility that some of the favorable outcomes for ILP participants might have been due to the fact that they were slightly older than non-participants (Lindsey et al., 1999, p. 405). However, another research study found that when comparing outcomes for ILP participants and non-participants, age is not associated with significant differential outcomes between the groups on education and employment (Shippensburg University, 1993 in Lindsey et al., 1999). Lastly, another limitation to this study is that it did not take into consideration living arrangement of the youth while in care. That is, it is unclear whether the participants were placed only with foster families, or if they had placements in group homes or institutions.

two groups did not differ, however youth that were involved in the ILP were significantly more likely to have come from a two-parent family than youth that did not participate in ILP (31.8% vs.

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10.9%) (Scannapieco et al., 1995). Yet, other group comparisons were not found to be significantly different; reason for placement, delinquent behavior, and services received during placement.

Variables related to the goals of the Independent Living Program were compared for the two groups of youth and analyzed by examining case records (Scannapieco et al., 1995). The ILP youth were significantly more likely to be high school graduates, have a history of employment, and living on their own, self-supporting, and employed at case closing than youth that did not participate in ILP (Scannapieco et al., 1995).

Limitations to this study are small sample size, as well as the fact that the study does not show the true relationship between the specific ILP objectives and outcomes. In addition, the study did not look at length of time in care, which is an important issue given that some participants came from two-parent families and some did not. So, if the ILP youth had not been in care as long as the non-ILP youth, they might have received more independent living skills from their family of origin. Yet, given the similarities of the groups in areas in terms of age, gender, race, IQ, services received, and delinquency history, it is plausible that the outcomes might be related to participation in ILP.

In addition, Cook (1994) examined the post-discharge outcomes of youth in care and the effects of having independent living skills training. Lastly, Waldinger & Furman (1994) compared two models of delivering emancipation services, the Categorical Independent Living Services (CILS) model and the Integrated Services Pilot (ISP) model. Under the CILS model workers have regular caseloads and enroll

living skills training. Of the 854 youth that were located at follow-up, 810 were interviewed, however, it is unclear how many youth received training and how many did not as this was not clearly stated in the article. There were seven outcome measures; ability to maintain employment for at least one year, education status, ability to access health care, cost to community, avoiding young parenthood, overall satisfaction, and availability of social network (Cook, 1994). Also, there was one composite measure of 'independent living' that summarized the results of the previous seven outcomes.

It was found that there was no significant relationship between having skills training and the seven outcome measures, yet when taking each individual outcome separately, several areas of skills training had positive effects on related outcomes (Cook, 1994, p. 226). For instance, money management skills, education, and employment skills, in combination, had positive effects in a youth's ability to maintain a job, acquire health care, not be a cost to the community, have satisfaction in life, and be self-sufficient. And, it was found that receiving training in any of these skill areas increases the possibility of a successful outcome more than when not receiving training. However, there were three outcomes; change in educational status after discharge, early parenthood, and having a social network, that were not affected by skills training (Cook, 1994).

all eligible and interested youth in a county-run emancipation preparation program. In contrast, the ISP model is a unit of eight social workers who carry a smaller caseload made up specifically of youth ages 16 and older. The unique feature of the ISP is the integration of the

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casework function with the emancipation preparation function (Waldinger et al., 1994, p. 205). ISP caseworkers spend time engaging foster and birth families in the emancipation process and thoroughly assessing education and employment abilities. And, as a result of the smaller caseloads, the workers are also able to build strong relationships with the youth and encourage them to participate in the county independent living services; the same services received by the CILS youth.

The sample consisted of 49 youth participating in ISP and 62 participating in CILS, however, it is unclear how the sample was derived. The reduced and specialized caseloads of the ISP model resulted in more worker contact with the youth and their foster families than the CILS model (Waldinger et al., 1994). Also, topics such as academics, vocational preparation, housing at emancipation and financial plans were significantly more likely to be covered in ISP youth's court reports than in the reports of CILS youth. Significantly more ISP youth participated in services than CILS youth (39% vs. 15%), which is important as ILP services are voluntary (Waldinger et al., 1994). The higher rate of attendance might be a result of the increased monitoring and relationship-building between the ISP youth and their workers. However, when all youth were asked to self-report their readiness to make it on their own, there was no significant difference in their current employment status, and their support network (Waldinger et al., 1994).

A limitation to this study is that all of the measures of readiness for independence were based on self-reports. In addition, this study was conducted prior to the Chafee Act of 1999, which provides

increased funding for support of youth in their transition to independent living, including funds for housing support, supervised practice living, and proper program evaluation techniques. Although youth in this study reported not being ready to make it on their own, this research is still enormously valuable in that it shows the need for solid relationships between the caseworker, court attorney, caretaker, and youth in building a strong emancipation plan. The ILP outcome results are summarized in Figure 5.

Undoubtedly, independent living programs offer older youth, aging out care, services to assist them in the life-changing event of emancipation. Yet, given that the Foster Care Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-272) did not stipulate standardized reporting formats and tracking of youth, or require specific timeframes for doing so, there is a limited amount of empirical research that examines the outcomes of Independent Living Programs. Now that the Chafee Act of 1999 has been implemented, an opportunity exists for researchers to examine ILP outcomes slightly better than before as funding is provided for states to do so. Although the Chafee Act allows for more youth to be served by ILP services and has expanded services to include funding for room and board and Medicaid coverage, there remain

**Figure 5**  
**Independent Living Program Outcomes**

Outcome Area	Study	Findings
ILP General Outcomes	Lindesy & Ahmed (1999)	ILP participants (n=44) were significantly more likely to live independently, pay all household expenses, complete a technical/ vocational program, and to be enrolled in college than non-participants (n=32). Employment measures had no significant differences
	Scannapieco & Shagrin (1995)	ILP participants (n=44) were significantly more likely to be high school graduates, have a history of employment, living on their own, self-supporting, and employed at case closing than non-participants (n=46)
	Cook (1994)	No significant relationship was found between having skills training and all outcomes (education, health care, cost to community, avoiding early parenthood, employment, social network, and overall satisfaction) (n=810 total, but unknown as to who received training and who did not)
	Waldinger & Furman (1994)	ILP youth that were in the integrated case management model (ISP youth, n=49) were more likely to have academics, vocational preparation, housing at emancipation and financial plans covered in their court reports than youth in traditionally case managed youth (n=62). ISP youth were significantly more likely to participate in ILP services than non-ISP youth.

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significant gaps in service. The next section offers a description of the present limitations in Independent Living Program services under the Chafee Act.

### **Gaps in Service & Policy Implications**

It is clear that youth aging out of the child welfare system require quality services and support to assist with their education, independent living skills, health and mental health, employment, housing and personal growth. These services and support are essential to their success as independent, self-sufficient adults. Yet, even with the present federal legislation guiding State and local jurisdictions, service gaps continue to exist in the areas of employment, education, housing, personal growth, and special needs. This section includes a description of each of these services gaps, as well as other policy implications such as eligibility and accountability.

### **Employment**

Building an employment history while in care, as well as maintaining employment after leaving care, is essential for these youth to survive independently. In fact, when focus groups with older youth in care were conducted in Santa Clara County, California it was found that employment was the second priority of the youth, behind housing (DFCS, 2000). Yet, successful adult employment experiences for adolescents leaving care rely heavily on the quality of skills training and experience obtained while in care (Sheehy et al., 2000). Although current legislation stresses the need for youth to establish employment skills, ILP employment services are rarely comprehensive.

Employment training (resume writing, job search techniques, and interview preparation) is usually the main focus of ILP employment services. Youth are forced to search for employment on their own county as ILPs lack on-going relationships with local employers and job placement services are scarce. As a result, youth are left vulnerable to employer exploitation and low-paying jobs that make it difficult to achieve self-sufficiency. Therefore, agreements and collaborations need to be built between local employers, volunteer agencies and career networking groups (Sheehy et al., 2000) to provide these youth with employment experiences that offer living wages and support for individualized needs.

In addition, since job retention is an issue for this population (Barth, 1990; Festinger, 1983), job coaching and career guidance are necessary. County ILPs could utilize volunteers as onsite job coaches and employment mentors. Mentoring has been increasingly utilized as an intervention for youth identified as at-risk or likely to be unprepared for adult living (Mech, Pryde, & Rycraft, 1995, p. 317). The focus of employment or career mentoring would be to match youth with adults who are in socio-economic, academic, and social mainstreams of society who can help prepare youth for independent living and career development (Mech et al., 1995). Mentors could bring their mentee to work, assist them with career exploration assignments, and give support and guidance to them when facing different workplace challenges. By building these networks, youth will be given the assistance and support necessary for long-term employability, adulthood, and self-sufficiency.

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### Education

Clearly, youth in care suffer educationally when compared with youth not in care. A significant gap in service regarding education is a lack of funding for youth to further their education. Blome (1997) suggests that scholarship programs be implemented for State dependents and former dependents to help cover tuition, fees, room and board, and books and supplies. Yet, the Chafee Act of 1999 does not specifically require States offer funding for educational activities. The funding is only to provide States with the flexibility to design and implement educational programs as they see fit. As a result of the vagueness of the legislation, States can either choose set aside funding for education, or not.

### Housing

One of the most important changes youth in care will make in the transition to independent living and self-sufficiency is assuming the responsibility for housing (Sheehy et al., 2000). The challenges to accessing housing include cost, willingness of landlords to rent to young tenants, and availability of suitable housing (Sheehy et al., 2000). Without histories of housing, employment, or credit management, it can be extraordinarily difficult for youth to secure stable housing.

Barth (1990) interviewed 55 former foster care youth and found that 37% reported difficulty in finding their first place to live. They frequently commented on the need for transitional housing programs to help develop independent living skills while receiving financial support. The youth felt that it was challenging to cope with the pressure of establishing and maintaining a

residence, as well as learning to manage money (Barth, 1990).

Unfortunately, transitional housing options for youth who have emancipated are rare; few programs offer youth real-life practice opportunities (U.S. GAO, 1999). Yet, supervised or semi-supervised apartments, transitional living programs, live-in roommates, and host homes are all options for county Independent Living Programs (Kroner, 1988). And, now that the Chafee Act has stipulated that thirty percent of State funding can be utilized for room and board for youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who have aged out of care, counties can make transitional housing a higher priority in program development.

However, in areas where rents and property values are rising rapidly, agencies may be prevented from developing supervised or semi-supervised apartment programs (Kroner, 1988, p. 560). Local social service agencies will need to thoroughly research the housing options available, in order to develop the most cost-effective services for older youth in care, thus preventing any future homelessness.

### Personal Growth

No matter what the length of time a youth spends in out-of-home placement, a main goal of Independent Living Programs is that youth exit care after experiencing some personal growth; achieving independent living skills mastery and understanding personal responsibility. This section describes how the Chafee Act of 1999 has gaps with respect to the promotion of personal growth and personal responsibility.

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Independent living skills classes are an integral part of ILPs and help facilitate youth's personal growth. The classes are utilized to teach basic competencies of independent living. Most states recognize that it is imperative for youth to develop the basic skills needed to survive independently (e.g. money management, hygiene, housekeeping, nutrition, grocery shopping, and taking public transportation). These skills are addressed in independent living skills trainings depending on the state. Training sessions are facilitated by staff from outside agencies or community colleges, or are on-site at the residence of the youth, if in residential care. However, curricula, length of trainings, and assessment of youth prior to exiting ILP are not standardized across States, or even counties. As a result, ILP programs offer different services and supportive programs depending on the jurisdiction a youth is placed in; some states offer self-esteem classes, conflict resolution, and decision-making, while others focus on more tangible skills such as money management and grocery shopping.

Yet, the number of youth participating in ILP services is only a fraction of those who may have benefited from such services (ACYF, 1999, p. vii). This raises the issue of whether or not to make independent living skills trainings mandatory for older youth in care. At present these services are voluntary. Since the goal of out-of-home placement is to make certain the children and adolescents At present, youth under the care of the State are required to be under close supervision daily, even those preparing for emancipation that are over the age of 17 years. Yet, a piece of personal growth for older youth is the capacity to understand the importance of personal responsibility

in care are safe and supported, mandatory independent living skills training programs could help to ensure the support and well-being of the older youth in care. Policy-makers and child welfare service providers need to address this issue, given the numbers of youth who emancipate that still lack the skill base needed to survive independently (Mech et al., 1994).

Another issue related to personal growth and independent living skills is the role of transportation in bridging independence and adulthood. Presently, it is extremely difficult for youth in care to obtain a driver's license, and therefore further research is needed to identify the barriers that prevent youth in care from obtaining their driver's licenses (ACYF, 1999). Policy reform is needed in order to remove the barriers that prevent youth from working in certain types of employment where driving is required, or where employment sites are too geographically undesirable. Additionally, youth need assistance with affording and training in navigating public transportation. Collaborative efforts between State child welfare systems and State/local departments of transportation should be created to provide youth with all they need to promptly report to employment, education, and independent living skills classes (ACYF, 1999, xii). Clearly, the issue of transportation remains a significant gap in service for this population and needs to be addressed by State and local policy-makers.

in a world of choices and natural consequences. Given the tasks necessary for successful emancipation (e.g. increased reliance on self and healthy decision-making), Independent Living Programs need to provide increased flexibility for



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youth to learn self-regulation and responsible decision-making.

Modifications in State policy should permit child welfare agencies to help adolescents in care with the separation and individuation processes associated with emancipation from care by providing the space to enact adult roles, while offering support with coping with the pressures and struggles from those roles (Lammert et al., 1986). By transforming the adolescent's daily life experiences into a microcosm of independent living, the social worker can help the adolescent assess the known, as well as experiment with the new and unknown (Lammert et al., 1986, p. 33). As a result, the adolescent will be given a valuable opportunity to take an inventory of himself/ herself, taking into account all assets and liabilities, strengths and weaknesses. However, this type of personal growth will only be feasible if the tightly mandated supervision over the adolescent is loosened.

#### Eligibility for ILP Services

Presently, states are required to offer Independent Living Program services to youth between the ages of 16 and 21 years, either in out-of-home care or those that were in care on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, who are younger than 21 years old. States now have the flexibility to define their own age guidelines for services and they may differ. As noted earlier, 38% of all adolescents (based on data available from 41 states) have one or more of the following special needs: a diagnosed disability, vision or hearing impairment, mental retardation, physical disability, emotional disturbance, other medical condition, child behavior problem, substance abuse problem, or receipt of Social Security Insurance (Casey Family Program, 2000). Given the added

in various parts of the states (NFCAP, 2000). In fact, some States have opted to lower the age of eligibility to fourteen or fifteen years of age, and have subsequently created programs for pre-emancipation services. For instance, Texas has implemented specific life skills classes for youth ages fifteen and under. Similarly, Los Angeles County's Early Start to Emancipation program currently provides 14 and 15 year old foster youth with tutoring and independent living skills ([www.childsworld.org](http://www.childsworld.org)). In addition, States like Massachusetts and Maine provide services to youth older than 21 years of age (Casey Family Programs, 2000). Given the fact that the 1999 Chafee Act funding is so recent, outcomes of serving youth below 16 years old, or above 21 years old, are not yet available.

There are, however, States that do not spend their entire annual ILP allocation. For example, some States are funded a minimum amount of \$500,000 under the Chafee Act, but do not have enough youth to serve between the ages 16 to 21. These states could raise or lower the ILP eligibility age requirements, as the other States that have set precedents in this area.

#### Youth with Special Needs

challenges that these youth face as they make the transition to independence, specialized services are vital (ACYF, 1999, p. ix). As stated earlier, Mech et al. (1994) found that youth placed in group homes and institutions had the lowest life-skills knowledge, but the highest percentage with adjustment problems. This suggests a need to upgrade the life-skills preparation

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of adolescent dependents in congregate placements (Mech et al., 1994, p. 199).

However, current federal legislation does not specifically stipulate that ILP funds should be utilized to assist youth with special needs. States need to conduct assessments to identify the unique needs of the number of sub-populations of youth and then develop ILP programs and curricula to meet those needs (ACYF, 1999). In addition, ILP staff and youth caregivers should be trained in cultural competency in order to best serve the diverse needs of the all youth.

It is clear there remain many gaps in service under the present structure of ILPs. Although the Chafee Act of 1999 attempted to change programmatic and policy issues, much more needs to be done. Independent Living Programs across the country continue to be limited in the areas of education, employment, housing, personal growth and special needs and these limitations are presented in Figure 6.

#### *Data and Reporting Limitations*

At the present time, most independent living programs, services, and interventions remain untested, as there are many challenges to assessing the effects of Independent Living Programs (Mech et al., 1994). The reporting issues include: a) non-standardized reporting formats among state and local jurisdictions, b) a lack of consistent definitions of terms (such as ‘served, eligible, completed services, needs assessment, counseling, aftercare’), c) differences in timeframes used to provide services, d) difficulty tracking youth to collect outcome data, e) little longitudinal research, and f) a lack of information regarding the scope, intensity and duration

of different types of services and the number of youth served by each (ACYF, 1999, p.ii). Recommendations for data collection and reporting are available in Appendix A.

The next section describes ILP guidelines of the State of California Department of Social Services. The section focuses on the goals of the Independent Living Program, funding allocation and mandates, the eligibility for ILP, reporting requirements, limitations, as well as the collaborations built through the ILP.

#### **State of California Independent Living Programs**

As Congress intended, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has implemented the Chafee Act of 1999 by stipulating only a minimum set of requirements and specifications in order to give the counties the maximum flexibility to design services to meet the local needs of the youth in care (CDSS, 2000). The goal of the CDSS Independent Living Program is to support youth through the continuum of emancipation services and to assist them in achieving self-sufficiency prior to exiting the child welfare system. In the State of California, the continuum of emancipation services include independent living skills training, basic living education, vocational training, job

**Figure 6**  
**ILP Programmatic and Policy Gaps in Service**

<b>Service Area of ILP</b>	<b>Description of Gap in Service</b>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of relationships with local employers</li> <li>• New organized job coaching programs</li> <li>• No career mentoring program</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational programs are not specifically mandated by the Chafee Act</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of affordable, stable housing</li> <li>• Youth have no long-term employment, no rental histories, and no credit management histories</li> <li>• Few ILP programs offer supervised practice living for youth 18 to 21</li> <li>• Property values are high, making it difficult for counties to operate supervised practice living programs</li> </ul>
Personal Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent living skills trainings are not standardized across counties and States and are not mandatory</li> <li>• Obtaining a driver’s license and negotiating public transportation is difficult for youth</li> <li>• Older youth are under close supervision daily</li> </ul>
Eligible Age of Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth under 16 and older than 21 are not mandated to be served</li> </ul>
Youth with Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is unknown what the specific ILP accommodations are made for these youth</li> <li>• The number of these youth is unknown</li> </ul>

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seeking skills, individualized services, and a written Transitional Independent Living Plan to assist each youth in achieving their goals (CDSS, 2000). This section describes the State of California's ILP in terms of the allocation of funds for the State, eligibility, services offered, the relationship between the State and the Community College foundation, current legislation to address gaps in service, and State reporting requirements.

### Allocation of Funds

The 1999 Chafee Act initially allocated approximately \$34.5 million dollars in State Fiscal Year 2000/01 to the State of California (Park, 2000). The state was required to match 20% of this funding amount in order to receive the full amount. The funding amount allotted to California was approximately 25 percent of the total amount of the Chafee Act allotted to all States. An additional \$6.2 million dollars in federal funds was later granted to the state as a supplemental award (Park, 2001), and as such, the total amount awarded to the State in 2000/01 was about \$41 million dollars.

The State's allocation of funds to counties is based upon each counties' proportionate share of total foster care youth ages 15.5 years and older for the 1999 calendar year as reflected in the Medi-Cal eligibility system; there is a minimum allocation of \$10,000 to counties with only a small amount of youth in care (Park, 2000). It is required that 80 percent of county ILP funding be utilized for ILP services, and the remaining 20 percent be used for ILP administrative costs. In addition, it is

4. Involved with probation, age (16 and older) who are in foster care (the term "in foster

anticipated by the CDSS that any county surplus of ILP funds will be redistributed to those counties that overspent their allocation during the State Fiscal Year (Park, 2000). Allocations to all California counties are available in Appendix B.

The State Budget Act of 2000 provided for a \$200,000 set-aside for the Department of Social Services to contract with the California Youth Connection (CYC), an advocacy/youth leadership organization for current and former foster youth to promote needs assessments and to develop, implement and evaluate programs for youth in care across the State (Park, 2000). In addition, another \$200,000 will be set aside for development of a youth-focused curriculum.

### ILP Eligibility

The State of California's ILP serves all youth up until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday who are:

1. Age 16 years old and over who are in foster care (those whom foster care maintenance payments are made under the Title IV-E Program, non Title IV-E eligible, and non Title IV-E eligible youth residing in kinship care who are in receipt of family reunification and/or permanent placement services)
2. In former foster care, who were in foster care after the age of 16.
3. Designated as wards of guardians.

care" is defined as any child or adolescent on whose behalf a State or federal AFDC-FC

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payment is being made and/or who is receiving Family Reunification or Permanent Placement services) (CDSS, 2000)

The Chafee Act of 1999 states that eligible youth are, “children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age” (Foster Care Independence Act, 1999), however, this language does not specifically mandate that the youth be in foster care on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to be eligible for ILP services. In California, youth eligible for ILP are between the ages of 16 and 21 and are either currently in care or were in care on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday (Pizzini, 2000).

Counties in the State are also free to extend ILP services to youth in care under the age of 16 who are likely to remain in care until 18 years of age (Pizzini, 2000). An example of this type of program is the Early Start to Emancipation Program (ESTEP), a youth-centered outreach program being coordinated with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. The program serves youth between the ages of 14 and 15 and provides mentoring, tutoring, pathways to higher education, and is a bridge to the community college independent living programs, to be discussed below (CCF, 2001). The goal of ESTEP is to assist youth with preparing for their futures, such as participating in

ILP, graduating from high school, and entering college.

### Services Offered

*Collaboration with Community College Foundation:* Throughout the State of California there has been a coordinated and collaborative relationship between county ILP programs and the Community College Foundation (CCF) to provide services to youth in care. In fact, the State ILPs have been working in collaboration with the State of California Community College Foundation’s Human Development and Youth Services since 1987 (CCF, 2001). Each county develops its own ILP curriculum and the 52 local community colleges, under the jurisdiction of the CCF, offer the independent living skills trainings. However, the Statewide ILP office remains responsible for ILP program oversight, planning, and quality assurance (Statewide ILP, 2001, p. 1). This collaboration is unique; the State of California is the only state that directs a portion of its Federal and State funds to a college network in order to offer educational training to youth in care, as well as adult care providers, free of charge (Statewide ILP, 2001, p. 1).

Components of the State ILP curriculum, implemented throughout community colleges, include educational planning, job preparation, career assessment and development, personal

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awareness, life skills training, financial aid workshops, computer classes, vocational training opportunities, and community resource linkages (CCF, 2001). Essentially, there are seven core competencies developed by the CCF for the life skills courses Outreach Advisors representing the Community College Foundation visit youth in their residences, describe the ILP program, and try to engage the youth to participate (CCF, 2001). The advisors act as a liaison between the youth, the CCF, college personnel and other community agencies serving the youth. Advisors can also act as mentors and tutors, offering support to youth if and when it is necessary, to assist youth in making a smooth transition to independence and self-sufficiency.

The ILP classes are offered on campus at local community colleges, giving youth their first opportunity to attend classes on a college campus. This experience can help build self-esteem, self-confidence, and an understanding that a college education is achievable and important (CCF, 2001). Along with the ILP services, youth are informed about and invited to take part in other free services available on campus such as: counseling, health care, career planning/ assessment, EOPS services, disabled student programs, tutoring, job placement, financial aid, computer labs, recreational facilities, theatrical

used in all counties; employment, daily living skills, survival skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal skills, education, and computer/internet skills (CDSS, 2000).

productions, and local satellite campuses (Statewide ILP, 2001, p. 1).

*Medi-Cal Coverage:* Due to the implementation of the Chafee Act of 1999, the State of California Medi-Cal eligibility was extended to youth until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, who were in care on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Youth are eligible for this coverage regardless of their living arrangement, with whom they reside, or their income or assets. Under this new program, enrollment in a managed care health plan will be optional for these young people, as with the regular youth in out-of-home placements. In the past, these eligible youth, between 18 and 21 years of age, had to reapply as medically needy and the county would make its determination of eligibility, which was a difficult process for many youth. Now, annual re-determination of eligibility will be limited to verifying age and residency in the county (Mrva, 2000).

Other youth who are eligible include youth from other states (who were in care on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday), youth on probation (but not in custody), youth receiving Social Security Insurance, and

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those that have returned to their natural parents after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (DHS, 2000). However, a number of youth will not be eligible for this Medi-Cal extension program; emancipated minors, undocumented youth, and youth residing in mental institutions or juvenile facilities (while residing in the facility) (DHS, 2000). Youth involved in Kinship Guardianship Assistance Locating youth between the ages of 18 and 21 to notify them of this health care coverage might prove to be difficult. The Department of Human Services is working with the California Department of Social Services on the outreach process to track down eligible youth that aged out of care by examining case files to obtain last known addresses (DHS, 2000). Presently, it is unknown how many of these youth will be located and informed of this new service. Yet, even though many former youth in care might not be located or are exempt from this Medi-Cal coverage, the change still dramatically responds to the health care needs of thousands of youth aging out of care and makes their transition to independence an easier one by assuring health care coverage until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (Mrva, 2000).

*Stipends for Emancipated Youth:* The Chafee Act stipulates that a county may not spend more than 30 percent of its total ILP allocation, both federal and matched state funds, on the room and board needs of youth that

Payment (KIN-GAP) services are also ineligible. Those youth transferred from regular foster care to KIN-GAP will, in fact, be negatively affected by this mandate. As a result, the eligibility requirements for this Medi-Cal coverage could be a disincentive to move children and adolescents out of foster care and into KIN-GAP (DHS, 2000).

have emancipated from care, between the ages of 18 and 21 (room and board needs of youth under the age of 18 is prohibited).

The State of California set aside \$3.5 million dollars for county Emancipated Youth Stipends for Fiscal Year 2000-01. Again, as with the full allocation of ILP funds, the Emancipated Youth Stipend (EYS) funds are distributed to counties based upon each counties' proportionate share of total foster care youth ages 15.5 years and older for the 1999 calendar year in the Medi-Cal eligibility system. There is a \$1,000 minimum EYS allocation per county (Pizzini, 2000). Allocation of EYS funds to counties are found in Appendix C.

The EYS program provides assistance to youth in the areas of finding affordable, stable housing, buying books for educational purposes, searching for employment, transportation costs, food, etc. Specifically, the State's seven allowable expenditures for the stipends include: transportation costs, work-required costs, contract services

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costs, health services costs, costs related to the children of emancipated youth, housing assistance costs, and emancipated youth aftercare costs (Pizzini, 2000). These expenditures have a number of items within them, and are listed in Appendix D. If a county claims an item not listed in Appendix D, a letter is required to justify why the claim is submitted.

*Transitional Housing Placement Program:* In addition to participating in ILP, older youth currently in care can also participate in the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THHP) if they are between 17 and 18 years of age. The following eleven counties in the State presently have THHPs: Butte, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Mendocino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Ventura, and Yolo (CDSS, 2001). These However, for youth that were formerly in care and under the age of 21, transitional housing options in the State are limited. The relatively few programs that currently serve this population are scattered, fragmented and often operate without the knowledge of other, similar programs (CDSS, 2001, p. 1). Examples of such programs that serve former youth in care between 18 and 21 years of age are First Place Fund for Youth in Alameda County and Larkin Street Youth Center's Avenues to Independence Program in San Francisco County. Presently, the California

programs are funded by the participating youth's regular AFDC-Foster Care grants and must be licensed under Community Care Licensing requirements, as the youth are still dependents of the State.

There are several different residential options under THHP: scattered site apartments, cluster-site apartments, and group residential living, with the most common being apartment settings where the youth actually "rent" or "lease" a single apartment with a supervising adult on-site (CDSS, 2001). All THHP options give youth the opportunity to live in real-world environment where they can practice their independent living skills and cope with the daily challenges of adulthood, while receiving extensive supervision on-site and financial support.

Department of Social Services is attempting to ameliorate this problem by gathering information on such programs to inform youth of their availability, as well as to provide information to other agencies that are planning to develop such programs (CDSS, 2001).

#### Current State Legislation

There are a number of different State Assembly and Senate bills pending in the Legislature, as well as recent bills that have failed, that have attempt to meet the changing needs of youth in care.



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Issues that have been addressed are: funding and support for higher education, early start to emancipation programs, pilot program testing for ILPs integrating support, termination of dependency jurisdiction for youth aging out of care, and transitional housing. The essential elements and present status of each bill are noted in Figure 7.

National and State policy makers have introduced and implemented a variety of legislation attempting to address the complex needs of older youth in out-of-home placements. These youth come from all backgrounds and have diverse needs. Policy planning and analysis should address these needs, as well as the youth's different functioning levels. With the assistance of increased funding and federal requirements, local agencies are now able to develop programs that address the specific needs of youth in each particular county. However, there remain significant challenges faced by local jurisdictions and important gaps in services that need to be examined.

### **Overview of What We Know**

Throughout the United States, approximately 20,000 older adolescents emancipate from the child welfare system each year, many without the self-sufficiency skills, educational background and employment history required

to sustain themselves on their own (Fagnoni, 1999). As a result of being removed from their families of origin and communities, these youth do not possess independent living skills, are unaware of support networks, and are therefore not prepared for adulthood upon emancipation.

County and State coordinated Independent Living Programs have offered emancipation preparation as an intervention to address the vast needs of these youth. In the past, limited services failed to address the basic issues confronting most of these youth (Waldinger et al., 1994). These services provided on both the national and state levels were not as comprehensive and extensive as was needed.

The inception of the Chafee Act of 1999 brought about drastic changes to the original Federal Transitional ILP Act of 1986. As a result, youth were able to receive ILP services and health care coverage until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and counties were able to provide funding to emancipated youth for room and board. The legislation allowed States and counties the flexibility to offer services in any fashion, depending on the unique needs of the youth. Programs offered a variety of services including daily living skills, employment and educational training.

Figure 7  
State of California ILP Legislation

State of California Bill Name	Description of Legislation and Status
AB 1119 Educational Support for Older Youth	Authorizes youth who are in foster be eligible for aid between 18 and 23 years old if enrolled in an educational or training program consistent with a transitional living plan CDSS must apply for additional federal funds Currently in State Appropriations Committee
AB 434 Higher Education Grants	Provides guaranteed financial assistance for college (for food and housing) to be utilized for up to four years Currently in State Appropriations Committee
SB 1579 Early Start to Emancipation Pilot Programs	Introduces three-year pilot studies of ESTEP in Sacramento and San Diego Counties Currently in State Appropriations Committee
SB 2091 Post Foster Care Independence Pilot Program	Introduces comprehensive ILP pilot programs in Sacramento, Fresno and San Diego Counties Youth between the ages of 17 and 21 would receive more intensive ILP services, including housing Governor Davis vetoed this bill
AB 686 Termination of Jurisdiction Over Dependent Youth	Requires counties to verify to the court that the youth received specific information and services prior to termination of court jurisdiction Requires the youth be present in the court at the time of termination to verify services were provided Bill was passed and signed by Governor Davis
AB 2278 Alcohol and Drug Treatment	Required alcohol and drug treatment programs give priority to children or parents of children who are in foster care and required programs be integrated into foster care programs Did not pass out of the California Senate
AB 1261 Transitional Housing	Extends the age of youth eligible for transitional housing to include youth at least 16, and not more than 20, years old Programs serving youth between 16 and 18 years old, community care licensing would be required Programs serving only youth 18 and older, licensing would not be required, only fire clearance Youth would be required to participate in ILP Currently being amended in the State Assembly

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However, evaluations of the relative effectiveness of these service interventions are in short supply (Mech, 1994), especially since implementation of the Chafee Act. There remains a dramatic need for research studies that compare the efficacy of present service delivery systems in preparing youth in out-of-home care for independence. These studies need to provide more rigorous designs, comparing youth outcomes after their participation in an ILP, while taking into account mental health issues, reason for placement, and ILP services offered and utilized. In addition, a wide variability exists between and among placement settings, so it is imperative that they be taken into consideration when evaluating outcomes.

In the past, society expected young people to take on the responsibilities of being adults immediately after turning 18 years old. Today developmental evidence suggests that the transition to successful, self-sufficient adulthood continues into the mid and late twenties (Mech & Fung, 1999). This evidence, specifically surrounding youth in out-of-home placements, has greatly influenced policy makers to create guidelines to better meet the needs of youth aging out of care.

Although modifications to legislation and ILP programs have broadened services for these vulnerable youth, much can be done to upgrade independent living services while dependents are in care, as well as following emancipation from care (Mech & Fung, 1999). There remains significant gaps in service, resulting in a segment of youth not receiving the preparation they need for independent living such as youth with special needs, youth in group home care, and youth preparing for future employment and educational endeavors. Youth advocates, policy makers, and researchers

need to address these gaps in service and data collection issues in order to provide youth in care the most effective and appropriate preparation for independence. The national summary of the findings on this population of youth is summarized in Figure 8.

While the national and state scenes have been the focus of this paper up to this point, it is also important to assess the specific ILP activities and experiences in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is the focus of the next section.

### **CROSS-COUNTY COMPARISONS OF INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS IN THE BAY AREA**

The previous sections on what we know about aging out of foster care provides a valuable foundation for examining Independent Living Programs in Bay Area counties. This section describes services to foster care youth provided in nine Bay Area counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Sonoma. The data were gathered through interviews with programs in each county along with a review of the annual county reports to the state.<sup>1</sup>

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**Figure 8**  
**Summary of Findings:**  
**Emancipation of Youth and Independent Living Programs**

Youth Profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 175,000 youth in out-of-home placements ages 14 to 21</li> <li>• 20,000 youth will age out of care each year</li> <li>• Over 67,000 youth served by ILP each year</li> </ul>
Challenges Faced by Youth Aging Out of Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of employment and education experience</li> <li>• Minimal independent living skills knowledge</li> <li>• Inaccessibility to medical care</li> <li>• Homelessness, lack of stable housing</li> <li>• Financial hardship, use of public assistance</li> <li>• Mental health and substance use problems</li> <li>• Future incarceration</li> <li>• Early pregnancy</li> </ul>
Independent Living Program Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily Living Skills Training</li> <li>• Employment Skills Training</li> <li>• Educational Skills Training</li> <li>• Transitional Support Services</li> </ul>
Gaps in Service	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of collaboration with local employers</li> <li>• Need for job coaches and career mentors</li> </ul> <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No funding for post-secondary education tuition</li> <li>• No monetary support for room and board while in school</li> </ul> <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inaccessible affordable, stable housing</li> <li>• Few supervised practice living run through county agencies or community based organizations</li> <li>• Few scattered or clustered site housing funded by counties</li> </ul> <p>Personal Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No standardized Independent Living Skills Trainings</li> <li>• Difficulty in utilizing transportation (obtaining a driver's license and accessing public transportation)</li> <li>• Excessive adult supervision</li> </ul> <p>Age Eligible for Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widen the range to youth 14 years old and above 21 years old</li> </ul> <p>Youth with Special Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data is unavailable for these youth</li> <li>• Unknown what specific accommodations are made</li> </ul>

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This cross-county comparison of Independent Living Programs begins with a description of the organizational structures and the collaborative partnerships in each county. The second section includes an overview of program components, their similarities, and selected innovative services. In addition, there are highlights of the innovative approaches to recruitment and retention of eligible youth, needs assessment, and outcome measurement. The third section contains a summary of the lessons learned by counties and the fourth section summarizes the major challenges facing ILPs.

### Organizational Structures

The organizational structures of the Independent Living Programs can be categorized into three models: 1) the in-house model, 2) the subcontracting model, and 3) the hybrid model which combines features of the in-house and subcontracting models. The counties reflecting these models are listed in Figure 9.

*In-House Model:* In this model used by four counties, the county ILP hires and supervises the staff delivering the services but the staff job responsibilities vary across counties. Examples from the three smaller counties include: 1) an ILP Coordinator, a full-time benefits analyst, and two benefits analysts, 2) a Social Work Supervisor and two Independent Living Coordinators, and 3) an ILP Coordinator and a full-time Social Worker IV. An example of a larger county includes eight full-time staff (an ILP Coordinator, two Education Specialists, a Job Developer, two Outreach Specialists, a Case Manager, and an Employment Specialist).

*Subcontracting Model:* This model tends to be used by smaller counties. For example, one county subcontracted its entire allocation to a community-based foster care and adoption services organization, while another subcontracted most of its allocation to the local community college.

*Hybrid Model:* This is a model where a county provides some services and subcontracts the rest. For example, one county subcontracts a portion of its allocation to such off-site contractors as the community college, a trainer for the life skills classes, and a non-profit agency that provides job skills assessment, training, and job development. Another county employs an in-house staff that includes an ILP Coordinator, an Aftercare Coordinator, and a Program Assistant and subcontracts for five staff positions with the Community College Foundation. The county staff and the subcontracted staff are all located at the county's drop-in center. A third county employs both in-house staff (an ILP Coordinator, a contract monitor, and a social worker to coordinate emancipation conferences and transportation) and subcontracts most of the direct services to five community-based organizations.

*Interagency Collaboration:* Another aspect of organizational structures is the nature of intra and inter-agency collaboration; namely collaboration with other divisions inside the social service agency and outside with other county agencies, and public or private entities. Several counties attribute the success of their program, in part, to their informal and formal partnerships, especially those between county and community-based agencies that enhance the recruitment of eligible youth.

**Figure 9  
Organizational Structures**

<b>IN-HOUSE</b>	<b>SUBCONTRACTED</b>	<b>HYBRID</b>
Contra Costa	Marin	Alameda
San Mateo	Napa	San Francisco
Santa Cruz		Santa Clara
Sonoma		

Some county social service agencies (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz) have teams of social workers devoted exclusively to adolescents in long-term or permanent placements that work collaboratively with the ILPs. In another county, the Unit Supervisor manages the ILP staff plus five permanency planning social workers. In another county, two long-term placement child welfare units, serving exclusively adolescents, are co-located at a drop-in center.

Several ILPs work collaboratively with other county agencies, primarily mental health and job training services. For example, one county has a joint contract with the community mental health agency for a staff person to coordinate an array of services (including housing) for emancipated youth 18-24 years old. Another county plans to co-locate its ILP at the Employment and Training Division’s one-stop service center.

Five ILPs participate in a consortium of county and community-based agencies serving adolescents. Examples of these inter-agency partnerships include:

- A multi-agency consortium uses weekly case conferences to involve staff from ILP, the Public Health Department, the Probation Department, non-profit organizations, group homes, and residential treatment centers.
- A partnership that uses monthly “unit meetings”, coordinated by the ILP staff to involve community colleges, community-based agencies, the Probation Department, and the Office of Education.
- An Advisory Board that guides program implementation composed of current and former foster youth, relative care providers and foster parents, as well as staff from group homes, foster family agencies, county social services, the Probation Department, and local high schools.
- A coalition of service providers that includes the ILP staff, the foster parents association, several community-based agencies, the community colleges, and a private foundation.

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- A multi-agency consortium that focuses on transitional housing for foster care youth and involves the Mental Health Department, the Probation Department, the Redevelopment Agency, community-based organizations, ILP staff, social workers, and a former foster youth.

Most counties work closely with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), an organization that trains mentors to provide individualized support to foster care youth. In one county, CASA and the ILP are developing a program for youth who choose not to participate in ILP. The CASA mentors will work with youth on the same core competencies taught in the classes.

Counties also work in partnership with non-profit agencies, private service clubs, and private employers. For example, in one county, members of local service clubs such as Kiwanis and Rotary have served as mentors to youth. Some members have also offered a room in their homes to college students who need housing during winter and summer breaks.

It is important to note that the Bay Area counties differ significantly in the number of foster youth eligible for ILP services and the allocations they receive to provide these services. For example, in Fiscal Year 1999-2000 the smallest county received \$107,966 and the largest county received \$1,441,959. While larger counties face challenges in targeting and providing individualized services and smaller counties struggle to provide innovative services with limited resources, all counties recognize the need for inter-agency collaboration to stretch limited

resources and maximize existing resources.

### **Program Components**

The most notable program similarity across the counties is the collaboration between independent living programs and community colleges. For the past fifteen years, the community colleges have received funding for life skills courses in partnership with the county ILPs. All of the ILPs offer life skills courses that cover core competencies developed by the Community College Foundation that include such competencies as: employment searching, making choices and dealing with consequences, strengthening interpersonal/social skills, computer/Internet skills, and basic education. Additional program similarities include:

- Incentives for youth to participate in the classes and other special events (cash, gift certificates, or other gifts).
- Life skills classes dividing youth by age and/or by skill level.
- Workshops on special topics and social events for youth.
- Allocating emancipated youth stipends.
- Reliance on the CWS/CMS system to identify program eligible youth.
- Use of Transitional Independent Living Plan to assess youth and assist with planning for emancipation.

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## Innovative Approaches to Service Delivery

While there are important similarities among the county programs, many have developed innovative approaches to assist youth in preparing for and engaging in emancipation. The innovative programs are described below and include: a) workshops and special events, b) transitional housing, c) career planning and vocational training, e) educational outreach, f) transportation, g) drop-in centers, h) youth empowerment, i) formal emancipation conferences, and j) structured aftercare. The distribution of these approaches to service delivery across the Bay Area counties is noted in Figure 10.

*Workshops and Special Events:* Some counties expand upon the core competencies outlined by the Community College Foundation by offering workshops and special events that keep youth engaged in the program and celebrate their accomplishments. These initiatives include:

- Independent City, a one day event where youth experience the challenges of finding roommates, finding housing, buying a car, establishing phone and electric service, opening up a bank account, and other skills they will need once they emancipate (four counties).
- Special events celebrating graduation from high school and emancipation from foster care. Social workers, care providers, family members, and community leaders are often invited to attend the events. One county includes

former foster youth who have earned college degrees. The events also provide a forum to distribute awards, scholarships, and gifts to youth. Another program works with youth to plan an annual foster parent recognition dinner.

- Unique social events, such as a ropes course designed to build self-esteem and trust in peers, a weekend retreat to Mendocino, and skiing and camping trips.
- Innovative workshops related to leadership skills development, “Rights of Passage” designed to help youth come to terms with their pasts and move forward with their lives, and “Baby Think It Over” designed to reduce teen pregnancy and promote parent education
- Life skills courses for youth with special needs.
- Independent study courses designed to encourage youth to practice new skills between the sessions of life skills classes by providing incentives.

*Transitional Housing:* Housing has been one of the biggest barriers confronting the successful emancipation of youth. The Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP), originally piloted with eight counties, is now available in every county through the use of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ILP and one or more foster family agencies who place youth and provide case management services. The THPP is designed to give





**Figure 10**  
**Innovative Approaches to ILP Service Delivery**

	Special Work- shops and Events	Housing	Career & Voca- tional Training	Educational Outreach	Transportation	Drop-In Center	Youth Empower- ment	Formal Emancipation Conferences	Structured After-care Services
Alameda	X	0	X	X					X
Contra Costa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Marin	X	0		X		X			
San Francisco	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
San Mateo	X	X	X	X					X
Santa Clara	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Santa Cruz	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Sonoma	X	X	X	X					

0 These counties are in the process of developing services.

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youth, 17-18 years old, an opportunity to practice the skills needed for independent living. Five counties are currently operating THPPs and two counties are in the process of developing their plans for a THPP. The counties can either use a scattered-site model, in which youth live with one roommate in an apartment, or they can place all the participating youth in one location, such as an apartment building with separate units. Due to the high cost of housing, one county has been unable to place youth in apartments and instead is renting rooms in private homes, with screening managed by the foster family agency.

In addition to the Transitional Housing Placement Program, several counties have implemented different strategies to address the lack of affordable housing as noted below:

- Securing three beds in a transitional housing program for emancipated youth who are not able to live independently due to mental health problems and are not appropriate for a board and care home or currently served by the county mental health system.
- Assisting community-based organizations to apply for a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to allow youth to work and attend school while paying rent as a percentage of their earnings. As an incentive to stay in school and work, the money is returned to the youth when they exit the program. The youth also attend weekly sessions
- Intensive computer training, typically offered over one weekend, can provide youth with

with a case manager. Using the county's General Fund and ILP allocation, another county assists a community-based organization with leveraging additional funding for social services from the Early Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment program.

- Making emancipated foster youth eligible for a network of transitional housing programs designed for families transitioning off CalWORKs and for people with mental health disabilities.
- Providing case management to youth as they transition from a foster care or group home to independent living by offering assistance with transportation to search for housing, help in preparing housing applications, support and advocacy with landlords, information about credit check fees and apartment finder fees, transitional housing program referrals, aftercare, and referrals to agencies that provide financial assistance for housing.

*Career Planning and Vocational Training:* Providing assistance to youth with career planning and vocational training are two vital components of Independent Living Programs. Learning marketable skills in order to earn a living wage and live independently is essential to deal with the high cost of living in the Bay Area. The following are examples of concrete services developed to help youth find and retain employment:

the skills needed for workforce participation and/or higher education. At the end of the

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training, in some programs, participants receive a new computer, a Microsoft Office software package, and a printer. Some counties require youth to complete basic computer classes prior to the workshop and other counties require youth to be active members of ILP. Several counties use a portion of their TANF funds to support this program.

- Linking with Job Corps is another approach to vocational training program. Enhancing job skills needed in a youth-run café located in the cafeteria of a county social service building and around the corner the ILP drop-in center.
- A new vocational training program involves the development of marketable skills through the use of a ten-week course (70 hours) on the techniques of hair braiding.
- Maintaining relationships with employers throughout the County through the use of a Job Developer who gathers job leads and monitors work sites to promote job retention. In some counties, the ILP has contracts with private companies to hire youth who have difficulty finding employment.
- Using the annual Foster Parents Recognition Banquet to develop vocational skills, youth are interviewed for positions and paid minimum wage to plan the menu, shop for the food, and prepare and serve the meal.

Education: A central goal of independent living programs is to provide youth with support to earn a high school diploma or GED and to pursue a college degree. The following innovative strategies were identified from a description of the ILPs across the Bay Area Counties:

- Collaborating with local foundations to secure scholarships for youth pursuing higher education or vocational training. In some cases, eligible youth receive a four-year scholarship if they maintain a 3.0 grade point average and meet at least once a month with an ILP counselor, CASA volunteer, or other qualified mentor. In another country, private donors established a Successful Transitions program stipend for eligible ILP youth pursuing educational or vocational training goals.
- Tours of local colleges to familiarize youth with campus resources, including meeting with Admissions and Financial personnel. In one county, tours are provided for high school juniors and seniors interested in historically black colleges in the southeastern United States. ILP follow-up focuses on seeking additional opportunities for financial aid and monitoring the

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level of support from college counselors.

- Establishing a liaison position between school districts, the foster care system, and group homes to ensure that youth in group homes are placed quickly in the appropriate school programs and receive needed services.
- Establishing a GED training and testing program at its ILP office with the support of the County Office of Education.
- Offering SAT preparation classes at ILP offices.
- Arranging an annual luncheon for youth to meet former foster youth who are attending college along with representatives from community colleges and four-year institutions.

Transportation: Three counties have facilitated participation in ILP services by addressing the barrier of transportation.

- The Outreach Specialist in one county coordinates transportation to life skills classes and other events. The county pays subcontractors \$10 per hour plus a mileage reimbursement to transport youth. Youth are usually told to meet at different central locations to be picked up before events and are provided door-to-door transportation after events. The county is considering whether

*Youth Empowerment:* Empowering youth to participate in program planning is

to contract with Laidlaw to expand its transportation services.

- A second county is developing a contract with its existing THPP provider to offer door-to-door transportation to classes and other events. This service would also be available to youth in THPP who need transportation to school.
- An ILP staff member in a third county coordinates transportation for youth to classes and events. The ILP staff employed by the county and the staff at the subcontracted community-based agencies provide the transportation.

*Drop-In Centers:* Two counties recently opened drop-in centers for ILP youth and a third county will open its center in June 2001. In all three counties, ILP offices are located in the centrally-located centers that are often open during the evenings and weekends. The centers have computers for youth and provide a safe environment for youth to spend time with friends and ILP staff. Two of the centers have space to hold life skills classes and other workshops. One county found that the new teen center and the co-location of ILP staff in the center increased the number of participating youth. The drop-in center offers youth a place to visit after they emancipate and frequently has become a “home away from home”. In another county the drop-in center is located at a community-based agency subcontracted to provide services.

an important aspect of teaching independent living skills. Many of the

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ILPs have a staff person that serves as the adult sponsor for the local chapter of California Youth Connection, a statewide organization of foster youth that sponsors conferences and advocacy programs. In one county, youth were invited by a local judge to present their experiences in foster care at a local conference. In another county, an annual Youth Summit provides input on programs and services to representatives from community mental health services, probation, child welfare, and the juvenile court system. In a third county, a Youth Advisory Council was formed to give youth an opportunity to learn leadership skills and earn a stipend for providing input and direction to the ILP, the transitional housing program, the Child Advocates, and special events like graduation.

Emancipation Conferences: In response to a juvenile court judge who began holding emancipation hearings to ensure that youth had an adequate plan after they left the child welfare system, one county ILP organized emancipation conferences.

Based on the family case conference model already used by the courts and child welfare, the emancipation conference brings together many of the people who are important in the youth's life, including family, friends, counselors, and teachers. During the conference, the

youth identify their support systems and together the participants develop a plan for self-sufficiency related to employment, education, housing, and basic needs. The emancipation conference is youth-directed in order to empower youth to make decisions for themselves.

In other counties, the ILP coordinator works on an individual basis with youth to help them identify the people in their lives that could provide needed support, especially related to viable, safe options in times of crisis.

*Aftercare:* All of the counties allow emancipated foster youth to access ILP services. However, some counties have developed the following types of comprehensive aftercare programs:

- In one county, four staff positions are dedicated to serving youth after they emancipate (Education Specialist, Outreach Specialist, Case Manager, and Employment Specialist). Prior to emancipation, youth are introduced to these staff members and encouraged to utilize such coordinated services as individualized outreach, case management, and counseling related to educational, training, and employment goals.
- Another county employs an Aftercare Coordinator to serve emancipated youth. The Coordinator conducts a needs

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assessment with each youth and provides case management to assist youth in finding housing, setting up a household, finding employment, and enrolling in job training or educational programs.

- A third county subcontracts for aftercare services with a

Recruiting eligible youth to participate in independent living programs and ensuring their continued participation are challenges faced by every county. Yet, several counties have developed innovative approaches to recruitment, including the use of ILP graduates to help recruit participants to serve as mentors and peer counselors to youth and assist with administrative tasks. Another county hired a former foster youth to serve as a Youth Ombudsman and liaison between the youth and the program staff. In addition to utilizing ILP graduates, counties have employed the following recruitment and retention strategies:

- Most counties conduct outreach to social workers and probation officers to encourage them to refer eligible youth, using such tools as a promotional video and data tracking system to confirm that the child welfare staff have completed the necessary referral forms.
- Several counties hold lively orientation sessions for eligible foster youth and their care providers to describe the program and introduce the ILP staff. They also use mailings and phone calls to reach youth who have not shown interest in the program. Other recruitment strategies involve individual meetings between the ILP Coordinator and

community-based organization whose current services to youth include a transitional housing program for homeless youth and a teen health clinic.

### Program Recruitment and Retention

the eligible youth based on contact with the social worker or probation officer.

- Several counties have developed web sites to promote ILP services. The web sites also allow youth to send an email message to staff and alumni to remain in contact with the program. Other approaches to maintain contact include an annual holiday party with a \$100 incentive if they attend.
- Several counties are designing new programs to recruit new foster care providers and exploring ways to support current providers, using weekly discussion groups concurrent with the foster youth's life skills classes, to share ideas, problem solve, and discuss relevant topics (communication with teens, understanding the changes teens go through, and how to support teens in preparing for emancipation).

### Needs Assessment

The state requires county ILPs to use a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) to assess each youth and the services he/she needs to prepare for emancipation. Several counties supplement the TILP with other assessment tools, input from other service

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providers and input from youth involved in program planning.

- The assessment tools include: Daniel Memorial Assessment Tool, Metropolitan Achievement Test, and Career Decision Making System.
- Needs assessment data for each youth are provided by social
- Two counties recently conducted strategic plans to identify the needs of youth. One county focused its strategic plan on human services for all populations but found a need to emphasize prevention and early intervention for youth. The county created a new position, the Adolescent Services Coordinator, which is responsible for expanding the county's services beyond ILP to become more comprehensive. The other county conducted a strategic planning process specifically for ILP services. Through this process, the county learned that housing, employment, education, and recruitment and retention were the four priorities for dependent and emancipated youth.

### Outcome Measurement

Most of the counties do not formally measure the outcomes of the ILP services they provide. Many staff cited the need for additional funding to hire staff with expertise in measuring outcomes, especially with the skills to assist in selecting key outcomes and the capacity to design and manage relevant database tracking systems. Several ILP programs

workers, therapists, teachers, school counselors, and caregivers. Data from community forums led by youth are also used.

- The Educational Specialist in one county completes an Educational Service Plan for each youth upon entry into the program.

have taken steps to measure the program effectiveness as noted below:

- Use of pre- and post-test developed by the Community College Foundation to measure outcomes from the life skills classes.
- Specification of desired outcomes (without indicators) by the Community College Foundation such as: ability to complete college applications, capacity to increase SAT scores, report assistance by mentors, completion of life skills training with improved knowledge levels, improve basic education related to scores in math, reading, and writing, increased computer skills, increased knowledge of vocational options, and demonstrated interest in summer employment.
- Use of outcome objectives for ILP services in contracts with nonprofit organizations, including the specification of service delivery goals and outcomes, how the goals and outcomes will be measured, and timeframes to achieve the goals and outcomes.



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Most counties could only cite anecdotal evidence of program success; namely providing support to: a) graduate from high school, b) complete college applications and gain admissions, and c) secure financial aid for their education or for vocational training.

### Lessons Learned

The three major lessons learned from ILP program implementation relate to: a) program philosophy, b) program design, and c) program components. Each of

- The youth involved in ILP are quite capable of effectively articulating the kinds of services that will meet their needs and therefore should be active partners in designing new programs.
- The building of successful relationships between participants and staff are the key elements of effective services delivery. ILP staff are viewed by youth as different from the busy child welfare workers and frequently overburdened foster care providers.
- The staff form relationships with the youth and continue to provide advice and emotional support as long as necessary. Staff frequently become like a family to youth who do not have other support systems.
- Staff longevity is another ingredient of ILP success, especially those staff who have been in their positions for several years and have developed expertise in preparing youth for emancipation.

these elements are described in this section

### Program Philosophy

- Programs should be designed to treat each youth as an individual in order to maintain flexibility and explore multiple options for each individual. Services should be tailored to the different learning styles of youth and their diverse needs for support.
- Staff should continue outreach to youth who do not initially show an interest in ILP services by working to earn their respect and trust.
- The program staff should strive for a balance between being supportive of youth and helping youth learn to be independent.
- Programs are successful when staff feel a personal commitment to the youth involved in the program. However, staff should remember that they have responsibility to the youth who come to depend on them.
- Program trainers should be responsive to youth and engage with them in order to effectively teach the information.
- The staff should operate from a strengths-based perspective to build on a youth's individual strengths.

### Program Design

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- The following elements are important for successful life skills training: the training should be fun and engaging; information should be relevant to current life situations; use of small groups for more meaningful interaction; use of a mixture of “soft” skills and “hard” skills; and, use of a team of trainers, rather than a single instructor.
  - Co-locating staff at a drop-in center helps staff build relationships with the youth and stay connected to them.
  - Youth with special emotional and/or psychological issues may need alternative learning opportunities to receive the support they need and to reduce disruption in the life skills classes.
  - It is important to include other county and community-based service providers as a regular part of the ILP so that youth are familiar with the services available and can access these services after they emancipate.
  - Youth are more likely to participate in the program if they are encouraged to do so by their social workers and care providers.
  - The classes offer staff an opportunity to observe how youth interact with their peers and to identify youth who need help improving their social skills.
  - The life skills classes often appeal more to younger youth, while the older youth seek out individualized services.
  - Transportation is an essential component for participating in life skills classes and special events. It is often unrealistic to expect foster parents to provide transportation while they are juggling the demands of work and caring for other children.
  - Youth should be encouraged to look at all of their options with respect to education and should not necessarily be tracked into the local community college. Private four-year institutions are often able to assist emancipated foster youth with generous financial aid packages.

### Program Components

- For many counties, housing is the most important factor for emancipated youth to maintain their independence and continue working on their educational and career goals.

### Challenges to ILP Service Provision

Several challenges emerge from this cross-county comparison of the Bay Area ILPs and the national and state data on those aging out of foster care. The major challenges facing the provision of future ILP services are described below and summarized in Figure 11.

***Strengthening Program Recruitment and Retention:*** Several counties face a challenge in recruiting youth for the program and encouraging their continued

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participation. Some youth choose not to participate in ILP because they do not want to be associated with the foster care system. This is especially true of youth who are placed with relatives and want to limit their involvement with social services. In addition, it can be difficult for youth to appreciate the challenges associated with emancipation. Youth who are younger may not see emancipation as an immediate concern.

Some county ILPs rely on social workers and probation officers to refer youth. Yet, the high turnover rate of social workers in some counties leads to inconsistency in ILP referrals. Almost every county uses the CWS/CMS to generate a list of eligible foster care youth ages 15 ½ and older. However, the system does not include youth in the

Figure 11  
Challenges to ILP Service Provision

- Strengthening Program Recruitment and Retention
- Increasing Support from Care Providers
- Addressing Housing Needs
- Serving Youth with Special Needs
- Clarifying the Role of Counties in Serving Out-of-County Youth
- Enhancing Database Systems
- Pursuing Further Research

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probation and mental health systems. Many youth are moved from placement to placement and the ILP staff in large counties can easily lose contact with them. ILP staff also experience difficulty in maintaining contact with youth after they emancipate.

***Increasing Support from Care Providers:*** Several counties cited a lack of support from care providers, including foster parents, relative care providers, and group homes. Some care providers forbid youth with disciplinary problems from attending the life skills classes. One county sent a bulletin to the group homes and foster parents reminding them that they are not permitted to keep youth from attending the classes.

Counties who rely on care providers to provide youth with transportation to life skills classes and special events often find that providers are unable to handle this responsibility with the demands of work and caring for other children. Several counties are experimenting with different ways to engage care providers in ILP services.

***Addressing Housing Needs:*** The lack of affordable housing is a significant barrier to living independently after emancipation. This challenge was cited by almost every county in the study. Some youth choose to return to an unsafe home environment because they cannot afford

***Clarifying the Role of Counties in Serving Out-of-County Youth:*** Most of the counties described the challenge of serving youth placed out-of-county when counties do not have enough foster homes and group homes to meet the demand for placements. It is difficult for social workers to ensure that youth living out-of-county receive adequate independent

to live independently. While housing may be less expensive outside the Bay Area, youth are often apprehensive about moving to an unfamiliar location without a support network.

Some counties also experienced challenges with operating a Transitional Housing Placement Program where the monthly THPP rate is inadequate to cover the high cost of rent. In one county, the non-profit placement agency and the county have been providing the additional amount needed for expenses. In other counties, the program has placed youth in private homes where room rental is less expensive.

***Serving the Special Needs of Youth:*** Several counties discussed the challenges in providing services to those with special needs. First, youth with low reading levels often struggle in all aspects of academics. It is also difficult for the job developer to help the youth find adequate employment. At least one county has allocated significant funding for intensive tutoring to improve reading skills. Second, the emotional and/or psychological development of youth does not always coincide with chronological age, making it difficult to work with the youth in the life skills classes. Finally, substance abuse can make it difficult for youth to maintain their independence after emancipation.

living skills training. Some counties also cited the challenges associated with providing services to youth who come from other counties. Youth often leave the local area after the program year, which makes it difficult to track these youth for outcome data or aftercare services. In addition, one county is a destination for emancipated youth from

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other areas of the state and from other parts of the country. The program serves youth regardless of their county of origin, but this places a burden on their resources.

The state allocates money to each county based upon the number of youth placed in foster care aged 15 ½ and older. The state maintains that the county of origin is always responsible for providing services to youth. Some counties have a large number of group homes and receive a disproportionate number of foster youth. At one point, the service providers in a rural northern county became overwhelmed by the influx of foster youth and announced they would stop serving youth from out-of-county.

Many ILP Coordinators in the Bay Area agree that core services should be offered to all youth residing in the county and that the county of origin should pay the cost of incentives. However, some counties are not comfortable with this arrangement. Program coordinators are concerned about the difficulty of budgeting for services that they might be billed for at some time in the future. Some counties have submitted bills for services provided but have not been reimbursed. This issue has created confusion among the counties and controversy about the appropriate way to address the issue.

#### *Enhancing Database Systems:*

Several counties indicated that they are in the process of reviewing their systems to collect and maintain data on program participants. Some counties currently have database systems and others are in the process of developing systems to track participation in the program. The CWS/CMS system is not designed to

track participation in ILP or to track youth who have emancipated. In addition, approximately a third of the youth who are eligible for ILP are referred by the Probation Department and these youth are not included in the CWS/CMS system. Therefore, counties are not able to determine the total number of youth who are eligible to participate in ILP. The state's annual report does not request information on the total number of foster care youth that were eligible for the ILP, only the number that were offered services.

Ideally, county database systems should be designed to assist staff in compiling data for the annual report. However, the state frequently changes the reporting requirements and does not distribute the reporting forms until a few weeks before the due date. Some counties have struggled to collect and report the information requested by the state. In the 1999-2000 reports, counties completed statistical reporting forms that required different information. For example, one form asked counties to report the number of emancipated youth that received services (18-20 years of age) and the other form asked counties to report the number of youth that received ILP services, emancipated and were now 16, 17, and 18 years of age. The first question determines the number of youth who received aftercare services and the second question determines the number who received services prior to emancipating. Data from the second question could serve as a baseline for evaluating the results reported for other questions, such as the number that received a high school diploma.

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*Pursuing further research:* Further research should be conducted on the relationship between ILPs and youth served by County Probation Departments and County Mental Health Departments. First, it is not clear how services are funded to serve these youth. Second, most counties do not have a formal system to recruit eligible youth from the probation system. Therefore, counties are not able to determine how many youth are eligible to receive services.

Another area of research relates to the provision of ILP services to youth as young as 14; namely, what additional resources are needed to serve this population and how do current services need to be modified for this population? Further research is needed on the effectiveness of innovative programs that the expanding the age range of the ILP populations.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: National Recommendation for State ILP Reporting and Data Collection

Appendix B: California ILP Allocations by County

Appendix C: California Emancipated Youth Stipends by County

Appendix D: California Expenditure Categories for Emancipated Youth Stipends

Appendix E: Alameda County ILP Profile

Appendix F: Contra Costa County ILP Profile

Appendix G: Marin County ILP Profile

Appendix H: Napa County ILP Profile

Appendix I: San Francisco County ILP Profile

Appendix J: San Mateo County ILP Profile

Appendix K: Santa Clara County ILP Profile

Appendix L: Santa Cruz County ILP Profile

Appendix M: Sonoma County ILP Profile

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Recommendations for Independent Living Programs**  
**Reporting and Data Collection**  
**ACYF (1999) Recommendations**

- Convene a working group to address reporting issues and build a consensus around essential items to be included in State final reports
- Design standardized reporting requirements with consistent definition of terms and similar timeframes for data collection.
- Develop, pilot test, and distribute structured reporting forms and clear guidelines based on a core series of important Independent Living Program elements with specified formats and common definitions.
- Develop guidelines for annual collection of select and well-defined group of outcomes that reflect mastery of skills, education, employment, housing attainment, and other indicators of self-sufficiency.
- Encourage States to relate objectives stated in their applications with the performance and achievements recorded in the final reports. Monitor progress against stated objectives
- Promote electronic data collection with similar software to be used by States
- Offer States technical training and assistance on data collection and provide feedback following report submissions.
- Help States identify ways to track youth over time
- Support longitudinal studies by external evaluators to provide needed insight into the effectiveness of various ILP services and their long-term impact on youth self-sufficiency
- Conduct additional research to assess ILP staffing issues, understand causes and consequences of ILP Coordinator turnover, and develop a list of appropriate ILP staff competencies



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APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

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## APPENDIX D

### Expenditure Categories for Emancipated Youth Stipends

#### Category 1 Transportation Costs

- Public or private transportation may be used
- When using public transportation, reimbursement will be the actual cost with a receipt
- When using private transportation, reimbursement will not exceed \$.31 per mile
- Public parking will be reimbursed at the actual cost with a receipt of \$2.00 per day without a receipt
- The cost of driving lessons for the emancipated youth
- The cost of car insurance for the emancipated youth
- The following are allowable roundtrip destinations:
  1. The youth's school
  2. The youth's child(ren)'s childcare, preschool or school
  3. Religious services or related activities
  4. Attending court proceedings
  5. Medical appointments for the youth and/or their children
  6. Sibling(s) visitation
  7. Work and/or work-related training
  8. ILP-sponsored events and classes

#### Category 2 Work Required Costs

- Training
- Clothing and/or uniforms
- Tools
- Professional/ union dues
- Costs incurred due to the job/ interview process
- Vocational/ educational assessments

#### Category 3 Contracted Services Costs

- Educational planning
- Job preparation
- Career assessment and development
- Personal awareness
- Life skills training
- Financial aid workshops
- Computer classes

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Category 4 Health Services Costs

- Non Medi-Cal funded physical and/ or mental health medical treatment needs of the emancipated youth that are beyond the financial means of the emancipated youth
- The cost of tuition for classes, activities, or services on or related to:
  1. Nutrition
  2. Family planning
  3. Parenting skills
  4. Sexuality and sexual behavior
  5. Drug/ alcohol use
  6. Prenatal drug/ alcohol exposure
  7. Home health and safety management
  8. First aid
  9. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
  10. Eating disorders
  11. Hygiene and personal care

Category 5 Costs Related to the Child(ren) of the Emancipated Youth

- Non Medi-Cal funded costs physical and/ or mental health medical treatment needs of the child(ren) that are beyond the financial means of the emancipated youth
- Food
- Clothing
- Bedding
- Diapers
- Childcare, preschool, and/ or school
- Infant furniture such as a high chair, car seat, crib, bed and stroller

Category 6 Housing Assistance Costs

- Food
- Rent and/ or utility deposits
- Rent and/ or utility charges
- Moving expenses
- Furniture and/ or household items
- Costs incurred through roommate network agencies

Category 7 Emancipated Youth Aftercare Costs

- Educational assistance
- Educational counseling
- Crisis counseling
- Job placement and retention training
- Vocational training
- Legal assistance

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## APPENDIX E

### Alameda County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

A unit within the Children and Family Services Department of Alameda County's Social Services Agency administers the Independent Living Program. The Unit Supervisor oversees five county social workers and five ILP staff - an Education Specialist, a Special Events Coordinator, two Emancipation Specialists, and an ILP support clerk. The County also subcontracts with two independent contractors - one runs the World of Work program and the other coordinates and teaches the life skills courses.

#### Program Components

- The ILP has five county social workers that each carry a caseload of up to 40 permanently planned youth. Youth are accepted for transfer into the unit if they have shown an interest in ILP and have attended life skills classes. The social worker positions, a unit clerk, and part of the Unit Supervisor's position are paid with Title IV-E foster care funds
- The County contracts with a head trainer to coordinate separate ILP classes for freshmen, sophomores and juniors at sites in North and South County. The curricula for the classes cover the following subject areas: education options, job skills training, job search assistance, living independently, budgeting and finances, community resources, legal issues, medical needs assessments, urgent decision making, interpersonal skills, and housing search and maintenance. The one and a half hour classes are offered once a week for each grade level. The ILP also offers two smaller classes for youth with special needs to provide more intensive support. Youth can earn \$10 for every class they attend; they receive the money at the end of the series of classes.
- Alameda County subcontracts a portion of its ILP funds to Chabot and Merritt Community Colleges to augment their allocation from the state. These colleges offer life skills classes to ILP youth who are high school seniors.
- The Education Specialist evaluates the high school transcripts of all youth in ILP and coordinates services to assist youth in earning a high school diploma. The ILP is also working collaboratively with the County Office of Education and the adult schools to assist youth in earning high school credits and to launch a GED training/testing component at the ILP office in Oakland.
- The ILP program offers various services to assist youth in applying for college. Every fall the staff conducts a six-week course for seniors taking the SAT in November. The staff helps students fill out the test application and the pays the testing fee. The ILP also offers financial aid workshops, assists youth with financial aid applications, helps youth complete college applications, and pays the applications fees. Juniors and seniors are able to participate in weekend college tours and an annual tour of black colleges in the southeastern United States.
- The Special Events Coordinator plans Independent City, the graduation ceremony, and other social events. This staff person also serves as the adult sponsor for the California

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Youth Connection. The holiday party and the graduation event bring together program alumni and current ILP participants. The graduation party honors youth for their participation in ILP and their graduation from high school, and it honors program alumni who are graduating with a four-year or graduate degree. Seniors can apply to receive one of two \$2000 scholarships or a \$10,000 scholarship, regardless of whether they are planning to attend college.

- The World of Work program evaluates youth on their job readiness skills using several different assessment tools. The program has a full-time Job Developer, a full-time Employment Specialist, and a part-time Youth Employment Opportunity Specialist. The program offers youth a comprehensive set of services to assist them in preparing for work, as well as finding and retaining employment. The Employment Specialist also conducts on-going week long job readiness workshops, held for two hours each day.
- The County is funding a new vocational training program for eight youth to take a 10-week course (70 hours total) on the techniques of hair braiding.
- The ILP offers youth a variety of computer classes. High school seniors who have attended four Saturday computer classes are eligible to attend a computer “boot camp”. This year 75 youth participated in the weekend computer camp. ILP alumni who attended life skills classes can participate in the computer camp if there are vacancies. Every participant receives a computer and printer at the end of the training.
- The ILP is a member of the Foster Youth Alliance, a coalition of service providers in the county. The other participating organizations include Covenant House (which has a homeless youth program), the Community Colleges, First Place Funds for Youth, the Alameda County Foster Parents Association, Tri-Cities Homeless Coalition, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Bay Area Youth Centers.
- Bay Area Youth Centers is working with the ILP to develop a Transitional Housing Placement Program in Alameda County. This organization will be licensed by the state to place ILP youth 17-18 years old in transitional housing. The organization will operate similar to a foster family agency and provide primary case management to the youth.
- The ILP also works closely with the Court Appointed Special Advocates Program, which is located in the same building.
- The ILP developed a resource guide for youth that includes information about community programs and services for education, employment, health, legal services, immigration, recreation, transportation, and runaway assistance.
- The County was awarded a two-year grant from the City of Oakland Children and Youth Fund to hire two Emancipation Assistants and one Employment Specialist. The County plans to hire three additional Emancipation Assistants using a portion of its ILP allocation.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation is working with the County to develop new programs for emancipated youth, including a training/placement program at UPS and transitional housing for emancipated youth. In addition to these programs, the ILP provides monetary support and case management services to youth 18-21 years old. Youth who have emancipated and are attending college can receive a post-emancipation stipend of \$50 per month if they visit their school counselor; they can also receive \$50 per month if they meet with their World of Work counselor once a month.

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- The ILP provides bus passes or bus to BART passes for youth to attend classes and other events. The ILP office and the community colleges are can be accessed by public transportation.
  - ILP recruits program alumni to serve as mentors to dependent youth and youth who have recently emancipated. The mentors receive a stipend and meet with youth on an as needed basis to provide support and guidance.

### Outreach Activities

- Youth are referred to ILP by their social workers or probation officers. The ILP staff reminds placement units in foster care and probation several times a year to refer eligible youth.
- The County coordinates program orientations to sign up eligible youth. The month prior to the orientations, the staff mails invitations to eligible youth with a copy to his/her care provider and social worker/probation officer. Youth can attend an orientation on one of three Saturdays in August where they sign participation contracts, receive information about the program, and complete assessments. The staff also plans a mini-orientation in January for youth who entered the system after August and for youth that did not attend an orientation in August. The program will also accept youth on an individual basis any time between September and the end of February, even if they do not have an official referral from their social worker.
- On a monthly basis, the staff receives a list of all eligible youth currently in the foster care system placed in-county and out-of-county. Social workers send referrals to the other counties where their clients are placed.
- The County developed a website with information about the program. Program alumni can use the website to update their address and other contact information, which helps the staff keep in touch with emancipated youth.

### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- The County uses the Daniel Memorial Institute assessment for it lower division participants. The program also uses the Metropolitan Achievement Test to evaluate academic skills and the Transitional Independent Living Plan form to evaluate readiness for emancipation.
- Every six months one of the trainers reviews the TILP with each youth to assess his/her progress and make appropriate changes.
- At the beginning of the academic year, the program administers pre- and post-tests to evaluate competence in each section of the life skills classes.
- The program maintains a comprehensive database of the youth that participate in ILP and the services they received.

### Barriers to Service Provision

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- Some youth choose not to participate in ILP because they do not want to be associated with the foster care system. Youth are more likely to participate in the program if they are encouraged to do so by their social workers and care providers.

### Successes

1. The ILP staff recently moved to a new office space that is more suitable for the youth. The staff wanted space for youth to drop in, meet with staff, use the computer lab, and attend classes. The staff is discussing the feasibility of creating a drop-in center for ILP youth, separate from the offices. The computer lab is equipped with 24 computers with Internet access.
2. The ILP has three staff members who are former foster youth and ILP graduates. One graduate is a county social worker, another is the Special Events Coordinator, and the third is the Emancipation Assistant.

### Lessons Learned

1. A stable staff is a key component of a successful ILP program. Alameda County has had consistent staff and social workers that are familiar with the program and can continue to look for ways to improve the services.
3. The program is effective in part because the staff serves as a support system for youth. Building supportive relationships with the youth is a tremendous responsibility because the youth come to depend on the staff.
4. ILP services should be available to youth at a younger age. However, the counties would need more funding and resources to expand their services. Programs targeted to youth younger than 16 would need to employ a different approach because youth at this age are often reluctant to plan for emancipation.



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## APPENDIX F

### Contra Costa County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

The Children and Family Services Division of Contra Costa County's Employment and Human Services Agency administers the Independent Living Program. A Program Coordinator manages eight ILP staff, including two Education Specialists (one for emancipated youth), a Job Developer, two Outreach Specialists (one for emancipated youth), a Case Manager for emancipated youth, an Employment Specialist for emancipated youth, and an Administrative Assistant. There are also five social workers that carry a reduced caseload of approximately 38 youth in permanent placements, plus a social work supervisor. The County employs all the staff; however, only the social workers are civil service employees. The other staff are contract employees, which reduces staffing costs and allows the County to hire more people. The County has expanded its program in recent years from 4.5 FTE staff to 15, in part by using TANF funds to support its post-emancipation services.

#### Program Components

- Los Medanos Community College and Contra Costa Community College offer a series of courses twice a year (in fall and spring) on the following topics: employment, daily living skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal/social skills, education, and computer/Internet skills. Youth who participate in the life skills classes are eligible to receive \$125 incentive payments.
- To supplement those courses, the ILP offers workshops on topics such as substance abuse, cooking and nutrition, pregnancy prevention, housing - renters' rights, finding affordable housing, and how to find a roommate, consumerism - on the differences between brand items and generic items and how to shop on a budget, effective communication, relationships, and study skills.
- In addition, the County offers several workshops to provide youth with information about applying to college, including financial aid workshops, college tours, application workshops, and an annual luncheon for youth that features former foster youth who are attending college and representatives from community colleges and four-year institutions.
- The program also offers several unique programs for its youth. Youth can attend a 2-day ropes course, which gives them opportunities to take risks, build self-esteem, and learn to trust their peers. A workshop titled rites of passage is designed to help youth come to terms with their difficult pasts and move forward with their lives. The staff also sponsor separate support groups for young men and women.
- Each year the staff plans several social activities for youth, including a holiday social, a trip to Great America, a ski trip, a year-end barbecue, a camping trip in Yosemite, a trip to San Francisco, and a recognition dinner for graduating youth.
- This summer the County will open a new office for ILP staff with a drop-in center for the youth. The center will have a library, a lounge area, a computer room, and a meeting room for classes and workshops. The goal of the drop-in center is to give youth a "home away from home" that is warm and welcoming. The Program Coordinator hopes to

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keep the drop-in center open on evenings and weekends. The social workers and ILP staff are also expected to attend classes and workshops on a regular basis.

- The Outreach Specialist coordinates transportation services for youth to attend classes and other events. The County pays subcontractors \$10/hour plus a mileage reimbursement to transport youth. The staff often arrange central pick-up spots for the youth and door-to-door transportation home after classes and events. The county is considering whether to contract with Laid Law to expand its transportation services.
- The Educational Specialist supports youth by providing referrals for tutoring, monitoring school attendance and academic progress, tracking progress toward graduation, attending Individual Education Plan meetings and other related meetings, and working collaboratively with school personnel, county social workers, care providers, and youth regarding specific educational services and needs. This staff person also coordinates tours of local colleges to familiarize youth with campus resources. The County uses part of its allocation to pay for college scholarships at the level of \$500/semester for community college, \$1200/semester for state universities, and \$1500/semester for a UC or private college.
- The Educational Specialist and Job Developer work together to inform youth about different options for vocational training. In addition, the Job Developer maintains relationships with employers throughout the County to stay informed of job leads for youth. Youth are monitored and visited at their work sites to promote job retention.
- The ILP has four staff dedicated to serving youth after they emancipate. The staff provides individualized outreach and case management, and assist youth in pursuing their educational, training, and employment goals. Prior to emancipation, youth are introduced to these staff members and encouraged to utilize their services. The entire staff coordinates their efforts to ease the transition for youth from the foster care system to emancipation.
- The County operates its Transitional Housing Placement Program in collaboration with FamiliesFirst, a nonprofit organization. The program can serve up to eight youth at one time. High school seniors can apply for the transitional housing program by filling out an application, writing an essay, and completing an interview. A panel of social workers and one youth selects youth for the program. FamiliesFirst receives \$2700 per month for each youth in the program; of this amount, each youth receives a \$900 stipend to pay for rent, utilities, food, and other costs. The County has a scattered-site model, which allows youth to remain in their high school. The County does not have any formal contracts or linkages with other agencies or organizations; however, it works collaboratively with and receives support from many county agencies, nonprofit organizations, private foundations, and private companies.

### Outreach Activities

- Once the county social workers refer eligible youth to the ILP, the Outreach Specialist mails a letter to the youth, the care provider, and the caseworker to introduce the program and encourage their participation. The Outreach Specialist follows up with the youth and requests a meeting to discuss the various services available through ILP.
- The ILP social workers also conduct outreach to the county district offices on weekly basis to ensure that other child welfare services staff refer their eligible clients. In

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addition, the ILP office tracks the youth that are reaching eligible age to confirm that the child welfare service staff have completed the necessary referral forms.

- The ILP staff also organizes an annual fall retreat at Mt. Diablo Park to share information with eligible youth, care providers, social workers, and group home providers about ILP services. The participants can visit different “stations” with information on transitional housing, employment, education, after care, and California Youth Connection.
- The Post-Emancipation Outreach Specialist makes an effort to contact every eligible youth that has emancipated. This staff person starts with the most current information in the County’s database to find emancipated youth who have lost contact with the program.
- To expand its outreach efforts, the County plans to hire two emancipated youth at \$12/hour for up to 20 hours/week. The youth will assist the staff with outreach activities and with trainings for staff and foster parents. These positions will also serve as a contact person for youth in the program and help the staff to build partnerships with the ILP participants. The Program Director believes it is important to hire youth since none of staff have been in the foster care system.

#### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- The Outreach Specialist meets individually with eligible youth and administers a general assessment tool to determine each youth’s needs and strengths and his/her short and long-term goals.
- After the general assessment is completed, the youth meets with the Educational Specialist to complete an Educational Service Plan, which assesses the individual’s educational needs in more depth. By developing this plan, youth begin to think about their goals and what they will need to do to reach their goals. They also become informed about the ILP services available to assist them in meeting their goals.
  - Each youth is also assessed for job readiness and a service plan is developed to meet the individual’s needs.
  - The program is in the process of modifying its database. The new system will include staff case notes, the level of program participation for each youth, and the incentives given to each youth, and the incentives and other program support given to each youth. The system will be networked, allowing every staff member to access the information and reduce time spent on paperwork.
  - The ILP measures outcomes from the life skills courses offered by Los Medanos College and Contra Costa Community College with a pre and post-test developed by the Community College Foundation.

#### Barriers to Service Provision

- The most significant barrier to helping youth become self-sufficient is the lack of affordable housing. Many youth choose to return to an unsafe home environment because they cannot afford to live independently. The program would like to establish a transitional housing for emancipated youth.

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- Many youth have low reading levels struggle in all aspects of academics. It is also difficult for the job developer to help these youth find adequate employment. The County has spent a significant amount of money on intensive support to improve reading skills among ILP youth.
  - Despite the County's targeted outreach efforts, some youth decline to participate in ILP. Some of these youth are placed with relatives and don't want to accept "handouts" or to be involved with social services. Other youth don't understand how difficult it will be to maintain self-sufficiency once they are emancipated.
  - The monthly rate for the THPP is inadequate to cover the high cost of rent in the County. FamiliesFirst and the County have been providing the additional amount needed for expenses. The County is in the process of requesting a rate adjustment.

### Successes

- The staff and the social workers are committed to the ILP and the youth involved in the program. Many of the staff have been in their positions for several years and have developed expertise in supporting youth to prepare for emancipation. The staff makes an attempt to develop supportive relationships with the youth and to create a family-like atmosphere.
- The County has an active California Youth Connection chapter. At statewide CYC events, the youth take pride in Contra Costa County's strong ILP.
- The staff is looking forward to the new drop-in center as a significant enhancement to its program. The County's Employment and Human Services department provided most of the funding for the new office space.
- A local judge invited some of the ILP participants to make a presentation at a conference about their experience in foster care.

### Lessons Learned

- Treat each youth as an individual. This philosophy helps staff to see many different possibilities for each individual. Also, people have different ways of learning information, so it is important to keep this in mind when designing the program.
- Don't give up on youth who don't show interest in participating in the program. The staff need to earn each youth's respect and trust.
- If given the opportunity, the youth can articulate the services they need. The youth should be included as partners in the program.
- The program staff need to find a balance between being supportive of youth and also teaching them how to be independent.

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## APPENDIX G

### Marin County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

The Division of Health and Human Services of Marin County's Department of Social Services administers the Independent Living Program. Marin County has subcontracted its entire program allocation to Alternative Family Services, a community-based organization providing foster care and adoption services. Alternative Family Services employs a Program Director and an Independent Living Specialist.

#### Program Components

- The ILP and the College of Marin offer a twelve-week series of classes every spring. The classes are based on the following topics: self-exploration, examining negative influences, interpersonal/communication skills, setting goals, planning a career, job applications and interviews, budgeting and money management, housing, and healthy living. (The ILP Program Director also directs the program at the community college.) Youth that attend all of the classes can receive incentive payments of up to \$250.
- Most of the ILP services are individualized. The staff prefers to work with youth one-on-one to assess their needs and offer the appropriate support and services.
- The ILP plans social activities on a monthly basis, such as trips to the movies, bowling nights, baseball games, cultural events, etc. In addition, the staff plans several special events each year, including a weekend retreat in Mendocino and a ropes course.
- Alternative Family Services has a contract with Community Mental Health to provide ILP services for 18-24 year olds who are part of the mental health system. The program will provide individual case management services to people with an Access 1 diagnosis who are at risk of repeated hospitalization.
- The ILP is working with a community-based organization to secure three beds in their transitional living program for emancipated youth. Some youth don't need the level of service provided in a board and care home but they wouldn't be able to live independently or with a roommate. Some of these youth have mental health issues but they aren't part of the mental health system.
- The ILP works closely with Court Appointed Special Advocates. In addition, members of local service clubs such Kiwanis and Rotary provide support to youth in the program. Some members serve as mentors to the youth and others offer their homes to college students who need housing during winter breaks and summers when the dorms are closed on campus.
- The staff works with Dominican University, the University of San Francisco, and Saint Mary's because the administration is willing to take former foster youth "under their wing" and help them successfully navigate the college system. These colleges are also able to offer substantial scholarships to emancipated youth.
- The ILP relies on the Marin Education Fund's resource center for information on vocational programs and university programs. The Marin Education Fund awards youth

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scholarships for community college (\$800 a year) and public and private universities (\$2000 a year).

### Outreach Activities

- ILP staff receives a list from the county of eligible youth in foster care, group homes, and probation. The Program Director follows up with the appropriate social worker or probation officer to get additional information about the youth and then makes contact with each youth and his/her care provider to introduce the program and encourage the youth to participate.

### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- The staff uses the Daniel Memorial Assessment Tool to interview each youth and assess his/her needs. The questions are organized into 14 categories, including money management, health, housekeeping, job seeking and job maintenance skills, knowledge of community resources, legal skills, etc. The assessment tool helps staff know where to focus their efforts.

### Barriers to Service Provision

- Marin County has only 2-3 group homes and therefore many youth are placed in other counties, including Sonoma County.
- The lack of affordable housing makes it difficult for youth to live independently after emancipation. Many youth cannot afford to pay for housing in Marin County; yet, youth are often apprehensive about moving to a county they are unfamiliar with and where they don't have a support network.

### Successes

- The individualized approach allows the staff to act as mentors to the youth. The youth view the ILP staff as different from their social worker and parents, which allows the staff to build successful relationships with the youth.
- Marin's ILP office is centrally located in a downtown shopping mall. The small office includes space for youth to drop in and meet with the staff or to spend time relaxing or working on a computer.
- The increased funding has allowed the Program Director to spend more time on program development and outreach, leading to an increase in the number of youth participating in the program.
- 97 percent of participants receive their high school diploma or GED.

### Lessons Learned

- The ILP has limited resources and therefore it is important for youth

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to have support networks. The Program Director works with youth to help them identify the people in their lives that could provide support if needed (e.g. a place to sleep for a few weeks). She acts as a liaison between youth and the people they plan to seek help from to ensure they have viable, safe options in times of crisis.

- the classes appeal more to younger kids, while the older youth seek out individualized services.
- The classes offer the staff an opportunity to observe how youth interact with their peers and to identify youth who need help improving their social skills.
- It used to be that youth in **ILP** were encouraged to begin their education at a community college. The staff at the Marin Education Fund has encouraged youth to look at all their options and has assisted youth in securing the financial aid they need to attend a private college. The **ILP** Program Director arranges individual meetings with administrators for youth attending private colleges. The Program Director explains the youth's situation, inquires about additional opportunities for financial aid, and ensures that the youth will receive adequate support from a school counselor.

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## APPENDIX H

### Napa County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

The Children's Division of Napa County's Department of Health and Human Services administers the Independent Living Program. Napa County has subcontracted its entire program allocation to Napa Valley Community College.

#### Program Components

- Napa County's ILP program provides 63.5 total hours of workshops and classes that address the seven core competencies established by the Community College Foundation: employment, daily living skills, survival skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal/social skills, education, and computer/Internet skills.
- The ILP is based at Napa Community College and youth receive information related to college entrance requirements, financial aid, and the college application process.
- The County offers a 12-hour workshop to help youth identify employment resources, conduct a job search, apply for employment, conduct successful job interviews, and maintain employment.
- Youth are invited to attend presentations from the Housing Department about the services available to them. In addition, the County organizes a panel discussion of program graduates to talk about the challenges of living independently and in shared living situations.
- Program participants have access to the computer lab at the community college and four computer classes that teach basic and intermediate skills.
- The ILP has paid positions for several program graduates to serve as mentors to the youth.
- The County's ILP doesn't have an aftercare component, though youth are actively recruited to participate in the program through their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Also, ILP participants who are placed in Napa from other counties and who are expecting to leave care and return to their county, are given the name and number of the ILP coordinator in their home county.

#### Outreach Activities

- The Program Coordinator works closely with the Health and Human Services Department and the Probation Department to encourage their staff to refer youth to ILP.
- Health and Human Services staff has begun to refer youth to ILP when they turn 15 instead of when they are 16.
- Youth receive information by mail about the ILP and other services available in the community.
- Though not formal aftercare, the informal networking relationships of a small county are put to use to locate local minors over the age of 18 who previously attended ILP but now



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reside independently in the community. These older ILP youth are invited to participate in ILP up until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. At times, these youth are used as “youth mentors” within the regular ILP program.

### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- The County uses the youth’s initial referral form and the Transitional Independent Living Plan to assess his/her needs and strengths. The ILP Coordinator augments this information with the results from the Community College Foundation pre-training questionnaire.
- On an annual basis, the County reviews the individual assessment data to identify trends and areas of community need. The ILP Coordinator makes changes as necessary to the program.

### Barriers to Service Provision

- As many ILP youth are placed in Napa from outside counties, they often leave the local area after the program year. This makes it very difficult to track these youth for required outcome data or aftercare services.
- The County is in the process of hiring a Social Worker III specifically for ILP duties. This will address a need that exists for case management services to help youth make a personal connection between the information provided in training and their personal life circumstances.
- The ILP services a large number of youth and has a policy of nonexclusion. This leads to a very large class size.
- The emotional and/or psychological development of youth does not always coincide with chronological age, making training difficult or even unrealistic.

### Successes

- There is excellent collaboration between the County, the Community College, and other agencies as well as the local foster homes and group homes.
- Outreach to the target population is effective and results in good attendance.
- There has been excellent education of the professional community regarding ILP services. Social Workers, Mental Health Counselors, Probation Officers, Schools, foster family agencies, group home staff, and agency directors all understand the importance of this program and are knowledgeable as to how to access services.
- Students have good access to the Community College campus, specifically the computer lab.
- Over the past several years, the number of available training hours has increased from 27 to 63.5.
- ILP Program Director has brought gender, youth and ethnic diversity in the ILP training team in order to effectively reach and teach adolescents.
- The ILP training team expertise in working as a team to teach counseling with adolescents.

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- The ILP training team has developed a creative teaching curriculum and experiential learning approaches that are effective with adolescents and meet the core competencies.
  - 80% of eligible youth submit financial aide applications for college.
  - There has been a separate “senior track” of training developed specifically targeting for those youth who are about to graduate from high school and/or leave care up to and including youth 21 years of age.
  - Older youth who have participated in ILP in previous years are promoted as “youth mentors” to other program participants.

### Lessons Learned

- Training has to have an element of fun to be received by the participants.
- Participating youth must believe the information is relevant to their current life.
- Tracking youth after they have left care is an ongoing and very difficult problem, especially those youth who return to their county of origin.
- Those who provide the training must be responsive to youth and relate and engage with them in order to effectively engage youth in the information. Program trainers should be responsive to youth and engage with them in order to effectively teach the information.
- Youth with special Emotional and/or psychological issues may need alternative learning opportunities to receive the support they need and to reduce disruption in the life skills classes.
- Smaller groups and class size produces more meaningful interaction with youth.
- Youth respond well to training that is a good mixture of “soft” skills and “hard” skills.
- Youth respond well to a “training team” approach rather than a single teacher/instructor model.

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## APPENDIX I

### San Francisco County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

The Family and Children's Services Division of San Francisco County's Department of Human Services administers the Independent Living Program. The County has five civil service employees: a Family and Children's Services Program Manager and a Section Manager who oversee the program, and a Program Coordinator, an After Care Coordinator, and a Program Assistant who provide services. Prior to 1994, San Francisco contracted out the provision of all its ILP services. Now the County provides some services in-house and subcontracts the other services. The County's primary subcontractor, the Community College Foundation, has five staff positions.

#### Program Components

- The Community College Foundation offers a ten-session series of classes at various locations throughout the city, including the teen center and San Francisco City College, that provide a basic introduction to employment, daily living, survival skills, choices and consequences, and interpersonal skills.
- The Foundation also coordinates a College Club to provide youth with guidance in preparing for college, through college fairs and college tours, a resource library, individual counseling and workshops, financial aid application workshops, and SAT preparation workshops. The Foundation offers a Vocational Club that emphasizes employment readiness through vocational field trips, job fairs, and placement in vocational training programs. In addition, its mentoring program links youth with mentors from the community, its tutoring program offers remedial tutoring in basic math, reading, and writing skills, and its computer training program offers computer classes and a drop-in computer lab.
- In response to requests from ILP participants, San Francisco opened a Teen Resource and Drop-in Center in the year 2000. The drop-in center offers youth a place to access materials and resources, meet with staff, take classes, and interact with their peers. All of the ILP staff and contractors are stationed at the center, which is located around the corner from the main office of the Department of Human Services. In addition, two long-term placement child welfare units, serving exclusively adolescents, are co-located at the center.
- The ILP and the Department of Public Health, Community Health Services have a joint contract for one staff position to coordinate an array of services, including housing services for emancipated youth 18-24 years old, some of whom have mental health needs. There are also weekly case conference meetings for staff from the ILP, the Public Health Department, nonprofit organizations serving this population, group homes, residential treatment centers, and occasionally the Probation Department. These case conferences allow the staff from various departments to coordinate their efforts in helping youth who will transition from child to adult services.

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- To meet the needs of youth for substance abuse services, San Francisco contracts with the Family Service Agency to provide several substance abuse case managers, one specifically assigned to the teen center. This case manager is available to conduct assessments, provide counseling, and facilitate groups. The ILP staff has also been working closely with the Department of Public Health to link with agencies that provide medical services to homeless youth.
  - The County is linking with Job Corps to develop a new vocational training program for emancipated youth to learn job skills in a youth-run café. The café will be located in a cafeteria in the Department of Social Services building, around the corner from the ILP drop-in center. It will eventually expand to include dependent youth.
  - San Francisco County also operates a Transitional Housing Placement Program for youth 17 and older who are current dependents. The program is managed by an organization that operates other group homes in the County. This program offers youth a semi-independent living situation, which allows them to gain the skills necessary for successful emancipation. The facility has three apartments in one building and can serve ten youth. The contractor has staff available for case management and support 24 hours a day. The program served 22 youth during Fiscal Year 1999-2000.
  - San Francisco has several components to its Aftercare program. The Aftercare Coordinator conducts a needs assessment with each youth and provides case management and resources to assist youth in finding housing, setting up a household, finding employment, and enrolling in job training or education. An Aftercare Housing Coordinator provides intensive support to youth by locating available housing, helping youth apply for Section 8, and advocating on behalf of youth with potential landlords.
  - The program also provides case management services to 17 year olds preparing for emancipation to ensure youth have the documentation they need and that they are connected to the right services.
  - The county recently funded a new position to serve as a liaison between school districts, the foster care system, and group homes to ensure that youth in group homes are placed in the appropriate school programs and to expedite services for youth. This new program was created to reduce the time youth must wait to be properly enrolled in a new school when they are transferred to a new group home.

### Outreach Activities

- Program outreach activities are primarily conducted by three of the staff employed by the Community College Foundation; however, all of the staff assist with outreach efforts. Youth can self-refer to ILP or they can be referred by their child welfare workers, by the Probation Department, by group homes, and by other public institutions such as the schools.
- Once the program receives a referral, the staff mail information to the youth about the program and follow up by phone with the youth within one to two weeks. If the youth does not express interest in the program within six weeks, the program sends a second packet of information and follows up with a second phone call. The County receives lists

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of all eligible youth in foster care and uses the same outreach strategies with youth who were not referred to the program.

- The program also offers orientations to familiarize youth and their care providers with the available services and enroll them in upcoming activities.
- The County is exploring ways to expand its outreach activities. Efforts include the development of a website that will provide information about the program and give youth a way to stay connected to the program after they emancipate. The staff is also working on improving outreach to the Probation Department.

#### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- San Francisco County uses a tool developed by the Community College Foundation called the Program Outreach Perspective. The Perspective includes basic demographic and placement information, school information, educational goals and needs, work history and interests, career goals, computer skills, short and long-term goals, interests, living plans, and program components the youth would like to participate in.
- In addition, the San Francisco chapter of the California Youth Connection coordinates an annual Youth Summit to provide input on programs and services. Representatives from Community Mental Health Services, the Department of Probation, child welfare, and the juvenile court system are invited to participate and hear feedback from youth about the services they provide. During previous summits, and through other venues, youth expressed frustration that they were not more involved with decision-making about the services offered through ILP.
- To ensure that the program receives ongoing feedback from youth, the County began contracting with a Youth Ombudsman. This person serves as a liaison between the youth and the program staff and contractors and conducts focus groups with program participants to gather input and feedback about the program. The ombudsman is a former ILP participant and is currently attending California State University, Hayward.
- The Community College Foundation measures outcomes for the programs it is contracted to provide. The organization has identified the following outcome objectives: youth will be able to apply for college; SAT scores will increase; youth will be able to report assistance from mentors; youth will have completed life skills training with improved knowledge of life skills; youth scores in math, reading and writing will show improvement; youth computer skills will increase; youth's knowledge of vocational options will increase; and, youth will be interested in obtaining summer employment. The Foundation also administers pre- and post-tests at each set of life skills courses to test the knowledge, skills and attitude development for each skill level covered.
- The County uses a database program to track the participation of youth in the various aspects of the program.

#### Barriers to Service Provision

- The lack of affordable housing is a challenge for youth who have emancipated and are trying to remain self-sufficient. The County is not able to meet the demand for housing subsidies.

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- The County would like to begin offering services to youth aged 14 and older and hopes the state will identify additional funding to expand its programs.
  - San Francisco places dependent youth in foster homes and group homes in other counties. The County provides funding to the counties that accept their youth but the staff is concerned that the youth may not receive adequate ILP services. Many emancipated youth move to counties with less expensive housing and there is inconsistency among the counties about whether youth should be served by their county of origin or their county of residence.
  - San Francisco is a destination for emancipated youth from other areas of the state and from other parts of the country. The County serves youth regardless of their county of origin, but this places a burden on the program's resources.

### Successes

- The new drop-in center and the co-location of ILP staff in the center increased the number of youth that participate in the program. The drop-in center offers youth a place to come back to and visit after they emancipate, and even after they turn 21. The drop-in center offers youth a place to visit after they emancipate and in many ways it has become a "home away from home" that is not associated with the child welfare system.
- The program has planned two successful orientations for eligible youth, child welfare workers, friends, and other family members. At the most recent orientation the staff hired Comedy Sports, an organization that uses comedy to teach people and share information.
- One of the most important successes of the program is that many youth continue to stay involved with the program after they turn 21. The program has hired several former participants to serve as peer counselors. The staff form relationships with the youth and continue to provide advice and emotional support as long as the youth need it.

### Lessons Learned

- The youth involved in ILP are bright and can effectively articulate the kinds of services that will meet their needs. It has been effective to work with the youth to design new programs.
- Co-locating staff at the drop-in center helped staff build relationships with the youth and stay connected to them.
- Programs should be designed to treat each youth as an individual. This philosophy allows staff to remain flexible and envision numerous possibilities for each individual. Services should be tailored when possible to accommodate different learning styles of youth and their diverse needs for support. The staff operates from a strengths-based perspective to build on a youth's individual strengths.

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## APPENDIX J

### San Mateo County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

The Child and Family Services Division of San Mateo County's Human Services Agency administers the Independent Living Program. The Director of the Southern Region and the Adolescent Services Coordinator oversee the program and an ILP Coordinator and a full-time Benefits Analyst staff the program. In addition, two Benefits Analysts work overtime hours to coordinate and teach the three sessions of classes.

#### Program Components

- The core of San Mateo County's ILP consists of three sets of classes for youth. The first session, "Fledge Training" is offered twice a week over three weeks. The classes are designed to give youth an overview of independent living skills, including the topics of money management, food management, living arrangements, community resources, transportation, and etiquette. After the first session the youth are expected to practice the skills they learned by completing a set of tasks, such as setting the table, assisting with grocery shopping, helping to prepare dinner, and opening a bank account.
- The second session, "Flight School", is geared toward 17 year olds. The classes are offered twice a week for eight weeks and expand upon the introduction to daily living skills provided in the first session. Youth are expected to complete interim training after this session by completing several tasks, such as obtaining a California ID, developing a resume, inquiring about entrance requirements at two different colleges, and opening a checking account.
- The County offers a third session for youth prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The "Solo Flight" session is offered on three consecutive Saturdays. In this session, youth learn how to conduct business in Eagle City and also plan and host a reception for the adults they want to honor in their life. Eagle City is similar to the Independent Cities that other counties plan for youth. The program has a core group of volunteers who return every year to play roles such as bank personnel and car sales people to help youth learn how to successfully complete these tasks.
- Youth receive incentive payments for participating in each set of courses and \$200 for each interim training session they complete. In addition to the classes, the County coordinates at least four workshops or events a year, including a career fair and a session on vocational training opportunities. The youth are also invited to participate in social events.
- The ILP coordinates an intensive computer training program for youth. Participants who complete the training receive a new computer and a printer.
- San Mateo instituted a new contract with Hope Preservation, a community-based organization, to operate an educational mentoring program for 16-17 year olds. The mentors will support youth in setting goals and making key decisions to plan for a career.

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- San Mateo is implementing a countywide initiative to recruit new foster care and group home providers, especially for adolescents. The goal of the initiative is to develop new placements in the communities where adolescents live in order to reduce the disruption in their lives. The county will seek to identify and provide the support people might need to care for this population. San Mateo is also developing programs to assist current foster parents to support youth in preparing for emancipation.
  - The County offers youth who were eligible for ILP the same services available to people moving from welfare to work. These programs assist youth in improving their job skills, finding employment, finding affordable housing, and applying for health insurance. The services are available to youth up to age 25 and are financed with a portion of the County's CalWORKS allocation. An employment specialist is also available to work on an individual basis with youth.
  - The ILP is working with drug and alcohol services and mental health services to determine what specialized they can provide to youth.
  - San Mateo developed a new contract with Youth and Family Assistance, a community-based organization whose current services to youth include a temporary shelter, a transitional housing program, and a teen health clinic. The organization has established ties with the community and will expand its program to recruit emancipated foster youth for an aftercare program. Youth and Family Assistance will enhance its outreach efforts by working collaboratively with providers that serve a similar population.
  - The County is working on its state plan to use foster care dollars for a Transitional Housing Placement Program. Youth 17-18 years old can apply to live independently in apartments and receive case management services from Youth and Family Assistance.
  - The County is also building a network of housing programs that include emancipated foster youth. The County subcontracts a portion of its CalWORKS funds to Shelter Network, which provides up to six months of housing for families moving from welfare to work. Also, through the System of Care funding for people with mental health disabilities, the County can provide up to 45 days of temporary shelter. Emancipated foster youth are eligible for both of these programs.

Outreach Activities



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- Eligible youth are referred to ILP by their social worker or probation officer. The ILP Coordinator follows up on referrals by sending a letter and calling each youth to invite him/her to participate.
  - The County is working to improve outreach to youth who have emancipated from foster care.

#### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- The County uses the Transitional Independent Living Plan to assess each youth's needs. The youth's social worker, the current care provider, and the youth complete the TILP together prior to the youth entering the ILP.
- San Mateo County Human Services is in the process of developing agency-wide outcome objectives and indicators. The ILP will begin to develop program-specific objectives and indicators once that process is complete. It is important to the staff that the life skills classes are effective so that emancipating youth are able to create a safe and stable plan for housing, education, employment, and health care.

#### Barriers to Service Provision

- San Mateo County places a significant percentage of its youth in other counties. This is due to several factors, including the high cost of residential group homes and foster family agencies, and the shortage of foster homes. It is difficult for the ILP staff to ensure that youth placed in other counties are receiving ILP services. There is an agreement among the ILP Coordinators in the Bay Area that core services will be offered to all youth residing in the county and incentives will be paid by the county of origin. However, some counties are not satisfied with this arrangement. The state allocates money to each county based upon the number of youth they have in foster care aged 15 ½ and older. This can be problematic for places such as Shasta County, which at one time had approximately 30 resident youth and over 400 youth from other counties. CWDA and CDSS are discussing the issue but there hasn't been a resolution.
- The CWS/CMS system does not effectively track youth participating in ILP and those who have emancipated. In addition, approximately a third of the youth in ILP are referred by the Probation Department and these youth are not included in the CWS/CMS system.
- The ILP has a separate database to track participants; however, the database is of limited use in completing the annual report because the reporting requirements change from year to year.

#### Successes

- The Court Appointed Special Advocates is working with the ILP to develop a mentoring program for youth who chose not to participate in ILP. The CASA mentors will work with youth on the same core competencies taught in the classes.
- The ILP staff has successfully supported a group of youth in gaining admission to college and completing their degree programs.

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- The County's intensive computer training program has been popular with youth and has given them skills that are critical for success in college and in many careers.

### Lessons Learned

- The County's year 2000 strategic plan emphasizes prevention and early intervention for youth. The Adolescent Services Coordinator is responsible for expanding the County's services beyond ILP to make them more comprehensive.
- There are currently six-month gaps between each of the three sessions of classes. The County is planning to expand its case management services to youth, especially during the interim period when the youth are expected to work on their independent tasks.
- The County is planning to revise the interim training to give participants more flexibility in the tasks they complete. The County would like to gather more information about how each task was done and whether the youth needs additional support to learn any of the competencies.
- It is important to bring in other county and community-based service providers as a regular part of the ILP so that youth can access these services after they emancipate.

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## APPENDIX K

### Santa Clara County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

The Department of Family and Children's Services of Santa Clara's Social Services Agency administers the Independent Living Program and subcontracts the provision of direct services to six community-based organizations. Five of the agencies provide Independent Living Skills training to youth in geographic areas defined by zip codes and/or certain group homes, and the sixth agency provides housing assistance. County staff members include an ILP Coordinator, an Analyst to establish program objectives and monitor the contracts, a Social Worker to focus on case conferences and transportation for youth, an employment counselor, and two Clerks.

#### Program Components

- Santa Clara's ILP curriculum covers seven competencies: employment, daily living, survival skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal/social skills, education and training, and computer/Internet skills. Each of the five community-based agencies delivers a two-component curriculum: Level I (16 weeks of courses covering basic competencies, such as daily living and survival skills) and Level II (16 weeks of courses covering more advanced skills, such as how to deal with medical, legal, and housing issues). While the agencies can develop their own curriculum, each must administer the same set of post-tests to ensure youth have learned the core competencies.
- The ILP staff at each agency provide youth with a variety of other services. One of the community-based service providers also operates a drop-in center for youth, which includes a computer lab. After they emancipate, youth can choose to participate in the programs offered by any one of the five community-based ILP service providers.
- Social workers can offer up to \$250 in gift certificates for Mervyns and Target to youth who participate in a minimum of four life skills classes. In addition, each agency must spend 5% of its contract on incentives for youth.
- The subcontracting agencies also work together to offer special workshops at the request of program participants. These workshops have included a leadership series, a financial aid workshop, and a college day sponsored by San Jose State University.
- At an event called Independent City each youth is given a job title, a salary, and the number of roommates he/she needs to find to afford housing. The youth get to experience the challenges of finding roommates, finding housing, establishing phone and electric service, and opening up a bank account in a fun atmosphere with support from the staff and "friendly neighbor" volunteers.
- In response to an increase in funding for ILP, Santa Clara County initiated a strategic planning process to evaluate the services currently provided and to determine how the new funds should be spent.

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- During the planning process, housing was identified as one of the biggest challenges for emancipating youth. The County subcontracts with Alum Rock Counseling Center to provide case management to youth as they transition from foster care/group home living. This program offers assistance with transportation to search for housing, help in preparing housing applications, support and advocacy with landlords, information about credit check fees and apartment finder fees, transitional housing program referrals, and referrals to agencies that provide financial assistance for housing.
  - The County recently received approval from the State to offer a Transitional Housing Placement Program for youth ages 17-19 years old prior to emancipation. The County contracted the program out to a community-based organization (and existing ILP service provider) to operate the program for youth. Several years ago the Bill Wilson Center and Community Solutions, two of the community-based ILP providers, secured funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for a transitional housing program for 18-21 year olds. The Board of Supervisors approved funding to expand the services to a third nonprofit organization in 1999. The program allows youth the opportunity to work and attend school while paying rent based on a percentage of their earnings. The rent the youth paid is returned to them when they exit the program. The youth also attend weekly sessions with a case manager.
  - During the strategic planning process, both the foster youth and the professionals working with foster youth identified employment as the second priority. An ILP employment counselor, co-located at one of the County Career Centers, offers support and guidance to youth as they plan for a career and search for employment. Youth can receive assistance in writing a resume and cover letters, searching for employment, deciding on a career path, interviewing techniques, assistance with Financial Aid applications, and exploring options for higher education and vocational training.
  - The County offers an intensive 2 ½-day computer training program for youth who have participated in ILP (either prior to or after emancipation). Youth 18-21 years old who complete the training receive a new laptop and all the necessary software. The program is funded through CalWORKs and the County collaborates with NOVA (North Valley), an employment training program.
  - In 1999, Child Advocates (also referred to as Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA) expanded their program and began working more closely with ILP. The Advocates for Successful Transitions to Independence program is designed to assist youth with the emancipation process. Many of the mentors are matched with youth based on their careers and the youths' interests.
  - The County's ILP recently joined in a collaborative effort with the Silicon Valley Children Fund to create a Youth Education Scholarship for ILP youth. Those selected receive a four-year scholarship if they maintain a 3.0 grade point average and meet at least once a month

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- with an ILP counselor, Child Advocate or other qualified mentor. The funding from the scholarships provides additional support to former foster youth, allowing them to work fewer hours while they're in school and concentrate on their academic goals.
  - The County coordinates monthly meetings for agencies working with ILP youth, including the community colleges, social workers, the five community-based ILP agencies, the Department of Probation, and the Office of Education. The meetings allow people serving foster care youth to work collaboratively with each other and to stay informed about program and funding issues affecting ILP services. The meetings are similar to a unit meeting in that the participants all have a sense of working for ILP.
  - Last fall, the ILP Coordinator began organizing emancipation conferences for youth. The impetus for this program came from a juvenile court judge who began holding emancipation hearings to assure that youth had an adequate plan after they left the child welfare system. The program is based on the family case conference model already used by the courts and child welfare. The emancipation conferences bring together the people in the youth's life, including family, friends, counselors, and teachers, that could serve as a support system once the youth is emancipated. During the conference, the youth identify their support systems and the participants develop a plan for self-sufficiency, which includes issues related to employment, education, housing, and basic needs. The emancipation conference is youth-directed in order to empower youth to make decisions for themselves.

### Outreach Activities

- In Santa Clara County, youth are referred to ILP through their Social Worker or Probation Officer. The County staff send reminder letters to social workers when youth turn 15 ½ and continue to follow up with the social workers.
- To improve the recruitment and retention of foster youth in ILP, the County formed a task force of service providers and county staff. The task force developed linkages with community organizations serving youth and began making presentations at group home provider meetings and Foster Family Agency meetings. The ILP Coordinator also makes presentations at trainings for new Social Workers, at trainings for new foster parents, and at County Probation Department meetings.
- Santa Clara County developed a website to promote the ILP services available to youth. The website has information about the various programs, information about how to figure out which community-based agencies to contact, links to other relevant sites including a searchable database for health and human services in the County, a schedule of upcoming events for ILP participants, and information about how to set up a free email account through Yahoo. The County also developed promotional videos for social workers to assist them in recruiting youth for ILP.
- To reach youth that previously refused services, the County continues to send flyers to all eligible youth to announce upcoming events and the ILP Coordinator sends a letter to youth at emancipation to tell them about the available services. Finally, the emancipation conferences help to engage some youth that previously declined to participate.

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### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- Santa Clara County evaluates the needs and strengths of each ILP participant through the assessments completed by the youth's Social Worker or Probation Officer at the time of the referral. The assessment includes information about the youth's education, job readiness, and basic living skills.
- The County has recently formed an ILP Youth Advisory Council to provide input and direction to the ILP, the transitional housing program, and to Child Advocates. The Council consists of a youth representative from each of the five geographic regions served by the community-based organizations. The community-based agencies each send a staff representative to the meetings and other youth are welcome to attend. The five youth representatives are voting members and receive an honorarium for their participation. Each contracted agency is also required to involve youth in their program planning.
- In 1999, Santa Clara County developed a strategic plan for the expansion of ILP services. The strategic planning process included interviews with key informants, two focus groups with foster youth, a planning workshop with those involved with the coordination and delivery of services to this population, and a literature review. The following four priorities emerged during the planning process: housing for emancipating youth, employment for youth, educational opportunities, and recruitment and retention of youth in ILP services. The strategic plan outlines general strategies and specific tasks to address each of the four priorities.
- The County includes outcome objectives for ILP services in its contracts with the five nonprofit organizations. The contracts contain a list of the service delivery goals, a description of how the goals will be measured, and timeframes to achieve the goals. In addition, the expected outcomes for ILP clients and how the outcomes should be measured are included in the contracts. For example, one agency was expected to ensure that 42 participants progressed through school by contacting the schools on a quarterly basis to verify participants' attendance.

### Barriers to Service Provision

- Santa Clara County relies on Social Workers to refer youth to the ILP and to case conferences. If the Social Workers or Probation Officers don't refer a youth to ILP then the youth might not receive services. The high turnover of Social Workers has made the referrals to ILP inconsistent. Yet, many of the youth move so frequently that the staff cannot rely on the address listed in the CWS/CMS system. In other cases, youth involved with ILP are moved to new placements and the ILP staff is not notified. Sometimes the staff doesn't discover the problem until the youth contacts them directly.
- The State has said that the county of origin is always responsible for providing services to youth. Youth are frequently placed in other counties and many youth move after they emancipate. Some counties have refused to serve youth from other counties. Other counties are beginning to bill the county of origin for services provided. This ruling has generated a lot of confusion and the topic has become very controversial. Counties can't budget for services that they might be billed for at a later date.

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- Some foster parents and some group homes are not supportive of youth participating in ILP. In some cases they neglect to provide transportation for youth to classes and events and in other cases the lack of support is more severe.
  - The New Children's Shelter Fund built a new shelter with a capacity to house 130 children ages 0-18. There are 16-17 year olds that would rather stay in the emergency shelter than move to foster care.

### Successes

- The County's success is due to collaborative working relationships with California Youth Connection, the Children's Fund, CASA, the community colleges, and CalWORKs.
- The Youth Advisory Council provides youth with an opportunity to learn leadership skills. The Council is taking on new projects, such as organizing the graduation celebration.
- The computer training and the computers youth receive give them the tools they need for the workforce and/or higher education.

### Lessons Learned

- Through the strategic planning process, the County learned that housing, employment, education, and recruitment and retention were the four priorities for emancipating and emancipated youth.

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## APPENDIX L

### Santa Cruz County: Profile of Independent Living Program

#### Organizational Structure

The Family and Children's Services Division of Santa Cruz County's Human Resources Agency administers the Independent Living Program. A Program Manager and an Analyst oversee the program and manage a Social Work Supervisor and two Independent Living Coordinators.

#### Program Components

- The ILP provides a series of life skills classes in collaboration with Cabrillo Community College. The classes incorporate a core curriculum; however, the staff reviews the assessments of youth and feedback from youth themselves, and revises the program each year to meet their needs. The topics of the classes include basic living skills, money management, parenting, computer training, preparation for college and career, suicide prevention, sexual responsibility, teen pregnancy prevention, cultural diversity, and self-esteem. Youth are encouraged to attend all of the classes, but the program allows for open enrollment so youth can join the program at any time during the year. Participants can earn \$25 per class and receive other incentives, such as gift certificates.
- In addition to the classes, the program provides individual case management to youth. The ILP Coordinators work closely with the schools to monitor progress toward graduation; connect youth with tutors; assist youth with SAT preparation and college applications; inform youth about how to access community resources; provide referrals to vocational training programs and assistance with applications; and, provide instruction in searching for jobs, completing applications, writing resumes, and interviewing techniques.
- The program sponsors an annual Honors Night at the end of the school year. Youth are honored for their accomplishments and they receive special awards and gifts.
- The ILP works collaboratively with other county agencies, community-based organizations, and private employers to provide comprehensive services to youth. Youth are referred to WIA (Workforce Investment Act) for employment services. The County also has several contracts with private companies to hire ILP youth who have difficulty finding employment.
- The ILP staff meets twice a month with a multi-disciplinary team consisting of senior social workers and mental health professionals. This team, called Supportive Adolescent Services, holds case conferences and works together to enhance program coordination for youth 16-19 years old in foster care. The social workers in this team carry a reduced caseload of 20 children.
- The County also has a multi-agency consortium to focus on transitional housing for foster care youth. The Mental Health Department, the Probation Department, the Redevelopment Agency, several non-profit community-based agencies, ILP staff, social workers, and a former foster youth participate in the consortium on a monthly basis. This consortium worked together to plan the Transitional Housing Placement Program



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for 17-18 year olds prior to emancipation. In addition, they planned a new transitional housing program for 18-21 year olds.

- The County has a Memorandum of Understanding with Children's Placement Services, a licensed Foster Family Agency, to manage Phase I of the THPP for 17 and 18 year-olds. The program can currently serve four youth and will open another site this summer.
- The transitional housing program for 18-21 year olds, referred to as Phase II, can serve five youth. Youth must have participated in ILP to enter the Phase II program. Santa Cruz Community Counseling manages the program, which is supported by several different funding sources, including a portion of the County's ILP allocation and money from the County's General Fund. Santa Cruz Community Counseling pays for the social workers through the Early Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment program. ILS Staff works in partnership with the Workforce Investment Act to increase participants' access to job training and placement services.
- Santa Cruz County's aftercare program consists of case management services for 18-21 year olds. Emancipated youth can receive assistance with housing, employment, vocational training, education, and other related topics. Youth who participated in ILP prior to emancipation remain with their ILP Coordinator.
- The ILP recently implemented the "Baby Think it Over" program, which is designed to reduce teen pregnancy by helping youth understand the responsibilities associated with parenthood. Youth are given a doll equipped with a computer chip to detect the level of care it was given.
- Youth who are active participants in ILP can attend an intensive weekend computer training camp. Upon completion of the course, participants receive a new computer equipped with Microsoft Office software and a printer. The program, funded through the County's TANF allocation, prepares youth for the Microsoft Office Certification Exam.
- The County is currently planning to expand its services by offering emancipation conferences for youth. The program will build on the family case conferencing model currently employed in child welfare services. The purpose of emancipation conferences is to help youth identify their resources and the areas where they need additional support. In addition to the youth, the conferences could include the youth's ILP Coordinator, the youth's family, and others who will be able to support the youth.
- The ILP is developing a contract with the existing THPP provider to provide door-to-door transportation services to classes and other events for youth in ILP. The service will also be available to youth in the THPP who need transportation to school so that they can avoid transferring to a new school in their senior year.

### Outreach Activities

- The ILP receives a list of foster youth aged 15 ¾ from the CWS/CMS system. Each eligible youth is assigned to an ILP Coordinator and the Coordinators contact each youth to set up an appointment for assessment. The staff also follows up every six months with youth who refuse services. The ILP makes an effort to maintain contact with youth after they emancipate by calling former foster parents to request updated contract information for youth.

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- ILP Coordinators also work with social workers and probation officers to promote the program to eligible youth. Licensing personnel encourage caregivers to support youth in attending the classes and other events.

#### Needs Assessment and Outcome Measurement

- The staff completes a Transitional Independent Living Plan with each youth. In addition, the staff uses a career interest inventory, called the Career Decision Making System.
- The ILP collaborates with social workers, probation officers, therapists, teachers, school counselors, and caregivers to help identify youth's needs. The staff monitors each youth's progress and reassesses participants every six months.
- The ILP is evaluating how participant records are maintained and is developing a new database system to track participation in the program.
- The THPP has specified outcome measures and participants will be tracked for two years after they leave the program.

#### Barriers/Challenges to Service Provision

- Substance use can be a barrier to youth successfully emancipating. The ILP staff addresses this issue by helping youth find and consider different treatment options.
- It can be difficult to engage some youth and their care providers in ILP. The staff is examining its outreach efforts and exploring ways to get care providers to support youth in attending classes and participating in the program.
- Social workers make an effort to monitor the services youth receive when they are placed in other counties. Santa Cruz provides services to youth placed in foster care from other counties. The County bills the originating county for the incentives they give to these youth; however, they are not consistently reimbursed for these costs.

#### Successes

- Staff researched the various scholarships available to youth pursuing a college education or vocational training and have helped youth successfully apply for these funds.
- Housing has always been one of the biggest barriers to helping youth successfully emancipate. The new THPP program gives youth an opportunity to learn new skills prior to emancipation, and the Phase II program provides support to emancipated youth who are learning to live independently.

#### Lessons Learned

- Transportation is an essential component of enabling youth to participate in the classes and special events. It is often unrealistic to expect foster parents to provide transportation when they work and care for other children.



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