



The Chafee Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program:

Supplement on State Implementation



national foster care coalition

This report was researched and written by Maria Garin Jones, formerly Associate Director of the National Foster Care Coalition. This report provides supplemental information on how states are continuing to implement the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program. Special thanks to stakeholders from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts and to the Orphan Foundation of America.

The intent of the initial Six States' Experiences Report and this Supplement is to offer states and jurisdictions a range of ideas and strategies for ETV program implementation so that young people can most benefit from this resource.

The data in this supplement was collected as of May, 2009.

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Introduction

Nationwide, an estimated 25,000 young people “age out” of the foster care system every year without a family to support them. These alumni from foster care are more likely to suffer from untreated health and mental health problems, more likely to become homeless, and less likely to graduate from high school or go to college than their peers not in foster care. Through the federally funded Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) and the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program (Chafee ETV Program), states are working to improve the outcomes experienced by this vulnerable population of young people and engage them more fully in decision making related to their transition to adult life, economic self-sufficiency, permanency and achievement of educational and career goals.

This supplement, together with the “Six State’ Experiences (2007)”, examines how the Chafee educational and training vouchers and other state-based supports for higher education have been working for these young adults. The National Foster Care Coalition (NFCC) has worked closely with the featured and the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) states to examine the implementation of the Chafee ETV Program since its inception in 2003: California, Maine, Montana, New York, North Carolina, and Wyoming. These states were selected to provide a diverse view of ETV program implementation, including state- and county-administered child welfare programs, urban and rural programs, and programs serving either very large or very small populations of youth.

About the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA)

Founded in 1981, Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) serves thousands of youth in foster care across the United States annually. Each year, OFA awards more than \$15 million in scholarships and grants and is contractually linked with 10 state departments of social services.

OFA is dedicated to helping former youth from care find pathways to success through higher education. Their mission is to help these youth attend and complete postsecondary education and prepare them to successfully enter the workforce. To accomplish this mission, OFA raises public awareness and engages citizens, businesses, and civic organizations in the lives of youth in care to support their goals with scholarships, care packages, mentoring and coaching, internships, and career readiness programs.

One area of focus for OFA is the administration of the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program for nine state partners (Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, and Ohio). This represents 22.2 % all ETV funding awarded. OFA also provides technical assistance to the District of Columbia and administers NC Reach, a North Carolina state-sponsored scholarship program. The ETV Program Instructions released by ACF in 2003 (Log No. ACYF-CB-PI-03-06) strongly encouraged states and counties to coordinate with existing postsecondary programs and school financial aid offices. OFA was listed as an “appropriate education program” (p. 11).

The ETV program offers funds to current and former youth from foster care and those adopted from foster care after age 16 to enable them to attend colleges, universities, and vocational training institutions. Students are eligible for up to \$5000 annually. Awards are based on unmet need calculated

on the full cost of attendance as estimated by the school. The funds may be used for tuition, school supplies, a computer, and approved living expenses including rent, health care and child care. Students receiving funds prior to their 21st birthday may continue to receive support until age 23.

Since 2003, OFA has provided funding to 8,570 ETV-eligible students and reached out to another 5,544 with information and advice. In the 2008-2009 academic year, 2,944 students were funded in 9 states.

Of their current ETV participants, 68 percent are female and 32 percent are male. Students range in age from 18 to 22; most are 20 or younger. During 2008-2009, 20 percent of ETV students were parenting and 3 percent were married. For the academic year 2008-2009, 61 percent of students reported having health insurance and 39 percent reported that they did not.

Of ETV-funded students, 55 percent attended colleges/universities, 39 percent attended community colleges, and the remaining 6 percent were enrolled in technical/vocational schools.

OFA hosts a Web site, www.statevoucher.org, to support the ETV program and offer information to young people from all 50 states. Student applications and related educational records are online and available to students and appropriate state staff for oversight purposes. Training is provided to states via teleconferencing, webinars, and site visits.

States and OFA work together to coordinate all aspects of the ETV program including the application process, establishing applicant and institutional eligibility, determining award amount based on the cost of attendance and unmet need,



tracking expenditures, communicating regularly with students, and preparing monthly, quarterly, and year-end reports. OFA brings state-of-the-art technology and nearly 30 years of experience with funding and supporting college-bound youth in foster care to its ETV program administration.

ETV ADMINISTRATION

OFA assesses each ETV applicant's tuition needs and costs of living individually, and every student gets the ETV disbursement that best suits these needs. They work with students to help them succeed in school and achieve their educational goals. Students receive a wide range of services designed to help them navigate a college campus, access campus services, communicate with professors, develop note-taking and test-taking and other study skills, and make the transition from student to young professional. Furthermore, each

student receives three gift boxes a year through the Care Package Program, is offered group and individual online mentoring and coaching, and has access to internship opportunities.

Students are assigned to an OFA ETV coordinator based on the state in which they were in care. At a minimum, ETV coordinators have personal contact with their students twice a month and students also receive two emails from OFA each week. One of the emails provides an encouraging message and the other is topic-specific. Students are expected to be in touch with OFA at least once a month. Consistent, personal contact with its students is a cornerstone of OFA's approach and serves to build a strong learning community characterized by mutual respect, trust, and open communication.

OFA'S INTENSIVE ARRAY OF STUDENT SUPPORTS

OFA's students receive a wide range of support to help them succeed in the postsecondary educational or vocational training placement of their choice. OFA ETV coordinators assist students with navigating the complicated world of financial aid and are knowledgeable about scholarships, tuition waivers, grants, and loan options available to youth in foster care. Whenever possible, students are encouraged to finance their education without loans so that they can graduate from school and transition into the workforce without student debt.

OFA staff also provides essential emotional, motivational, and strategic support to their students. Enrollment in postsecondary education or vocational training is only the first step. OFA requires official transcripts after every semester, and students are held responsible for their progress. Retention, graduation, and, ultimately, achievement of professional and personal goals are inextricably linked to support, guidance, and accountability. In addition to ongoing personal contact with each student, OFA support includes mentoring and coaching, workforce development and internship opportunities, specialized assistance for students on academic probation, and care packages.

Connections with peers and caring adults through FosterU

FosterU facilitates connections to an online community and is accessible through a secure, Web-based platform available only to OFA students, staff, and an extensive pool of trained mentors and coaches. Through FosterU, OFA hosts the only national online mentoring program for youth in foster care. It provides a convenient and highly effective online platform for private communication between young adults and trained volunteer mentors. The system uses Web portal technology to enable exchanges around the clock, as well as access

to a host of resources helpful for youth aging out of the foster care system.

Using this technology, FosterU also facilitates virtual networking and connects OFA students with their peers, OFA staff, and a cadre of committed adult volunteers. FosterU is available to current and former youth from foster care age 16-26 who receive postsecondary funding from OFA or who are in an independent living program that partners with OFA.

OFA mentors receive pre-service and ongoing training and support as they work with their mentees on issues such as goal planning, course selection, and career guidance, as well as strategies for success in school and in the workplace.

Internship opportunities through the InternAmerica program

Since 1994, OFA has brought students to Washington, DC, each summer to gain hands-on experience in a range of professional environments, including Congressional offices, major corporations, and non-profit organizations. During their six weeks in Washington, InternAmerica students participate in a host of workshops for professional development designed to enhance their marketability as young professionals. Workshop topics include communication, workplace etiquette, resume writing, networking, and time management. Hosted by national corporations and run by professionals in their fields, these workshops provide students with tools and skills to launch their careers after graduation.

In 2008, OFA expanded InternAmerica to provide internship opportunities to its students across the United States. All students receiving ETV funds in OFA states are eligible for these specialized workforce supports. Each year, OFA prepares more than 2,000 young people each year to apply for and excel in internships in their local communities.

Promoting 21st century workplace success

OFA is committed to helping former youth from care become contributing and productive members of the workforce. They provide young people with career assessment, counseling, coaching, and connections to local resources to help them enter the workforce. OFA's programs emphasize the importance of developing a core set of workplace success skills and the positive behaviors that employees need to be competitive in a challenging economy.

Strategic supports for students on academic probation

For some students, challenges with academic coursework can derail them from achieving their educational goals. Because OFA staff are in regular contact with students and receive copies of semester grades, these challenges can be addressed in a timely and supportive manner. Through OFA's Academic Success Program, students placed on academic probation receive targeted assistance and coaching to help them get back on track.

Senior Life Coaching Program for students in their senior year of college

OFA recognizes that life transitions can be challenging. To support its students with making the transition from being a student to becoming a young professional, OFA has recruited professional life coaches who work with students for nine months during their senior year. Through monthly calls and the development of a one-on-one relationship, these coaches help students define themselves as young professionals and guide them as they envision and move toward a successful and productive future.

Hand delivered support through the Care Package Program

School can be a stressful place for young people in foster care. Through its Care Package Program, OFA sends messages of encouragement and caring to all of their students. Three times a year, OFA partners with corporations and community groups

to prepare and send care packages to thousands of students. During 2009, it sent out 8,400 packages: 2,800 in September, February, and late April. Feedback from youth reflects how these gifts of support ease their loneliness and anxiety and boost their drive to succeed in school.

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES EXPERIENCED IN OFA'S ETV STATES

Accomplishments

Sophisticated and unmatched capacity to collect student data

OFA uses a robust, customized software program that has the capacity to track student-specific data and state trends as well as synthesize data across all states served by OFA. While OFA's data system allows state agencies to view client-level data, virtually every feature of the system is permission-based and individually focused to ensure the student's privacy.

Features of the OFA data system:

- Tracks student data as it changes over time, including academic data such as GPA and credit hours attempted/earned by semester, remedial courses taken, and major.
- Generates reports in real time on sub-groups based on specific criteria on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Reports may include participant outcomes, services rendered, account for funding expended, and document case management provided.
- Tracks changing social data such as marital and parental status.
- Tracks data regarding student well-being including finances, health, and social and academic support systems.
- Creates, deploys, and evaluates surveys.

Increased retention and graduation rates

OFA's most significant accomplishment is the fact that its students are staying in school and graduating.

OFA's comprehensive support system provides the encouragement, structure, and accountability students need to succeed in college and vocational programs, graduate, and ultimately transition into the workforce. For 2008-2009, the retention rate was 54%. Across the nine states in which OFA administers the ETV program, 160 students graduated.

Unique program in North Carolina provides comprehensive financial and case management supports to foster youth

The NC Reach Program is a state-funded scholarship offered to young people who emancipated or were adopted from North Carolina foster care after the age of 12. The state of North Carolina currently invests \$2 million annually to support this program. NC Reach scholarships can be renewed for up to four years, including fall, spring, and summer school terms. The program funds up to the school's full cost of attendance after other public funds and scholarships have been applied. NC Reach is administered by OFA and provides comprehensive student support through OFA's vMentors, care packages, and internships programs. NC Reach students also participate in a series of

dynamic workshops across the state and meet in peer support groups with their Reach coordinator.

To be eligible for NC Reach, youth must meet the following criteria:

- The student is a legal resident of North Carolina eligible for in-state tuition rates.
- The student was adopted from North Carolina DSS foster care after age 12 or aged out of NC foster care at age 18 (must have been in NC DSS foster care on 18th birthday).
- The student is enrolled in one of the 74 North Carolina public universities or community colleges.
- The student has not yet reached age 26. Students remain eligible until their 26th birthday.

OFA state partner makes a commitment to supporting youth in foster care

Ohio has demonstrated a renewed energy and focus on improving the lives of its young people. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) is committed to helping young people

ETV RETENTION*	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Total Funded	810	2030	2060	2611	2809	2940
First-Time Funded	810	1513	895	1445	1331	1508
Returning	N/A	517	1165	1166	1478	1432
Retention	N/A	64%	59%	60%	60%	54%
Graduated	5	52	93	123	167	160
Military	1	9	8	7	11	11
Deceased				1	1	2

*Retention takes into account deceased students and students who joined the military. According to standard practice in the higher education community, "retention" is calculated as the number or percentage of students in a given cohort who return from one year to the next, subtracting those students who graduated. In this chart, cohort 1 (students that began in 2003/2004 school year who returned to school in 2004/2005) shows a retention rate of 64% from year one to year two because 810 students started, 52 graduated, and 517 returned the following year.

in and transitioning from foster care to achieve success by working with local agencies that provide youth with a range of support and services and by engaging the youth in decisions that affect their lives. Over the past year, ODJFS staff has worked diligently to implement policy and state information system requirements for the National Youth in Transition Database. This will allow Ohio to monitor the services that local agencies are providing to youth to support successful outcomes. Provisions were implemented a year in advance of the timeframe under which federal law required them in order to allow Ohio to work with its local agencies to assure that data regarding service provision are entered correctly to continuously inform policy and technical assistance needs.

ODJFS staff is involved in various forums with youth and staff who work directly with them to inform practice, policy, and advocacy at the state level. One of the venues is the Ohio Youth Advisory Board, which is coordinated by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio. This board provides Ohio's young people in foster care with opportunities to develop leadership skills and become involved in advocacy efforts at the local and state level. This group has experienced significant growth in recent years and is composed of young people from all over the state. Board members meet quarterly but are involved in on-going efforts to educate and influence legislators about key issues affecting youth in care. Representatives from this group are also involved in the planning and coordination of an annual conference on higher education, a convening designed to bring the child welfare and higher education communities together to hear directly from young people about their experiences.

The Columbus Bar Foundation's Class of 2008 also worked with ODJFS, PCSAO, and youth to develop an interactive Web site, www.mymissiontransition.com, designed to prepare and support young

people as they make the transition out of foster care. PCSAO has maintained the Web site after its development.

Ohio Reach provides campus-based support to youth enrolled in Ohio's state colleges. This program creates a network of university liaisons located on the campuses of state schools. The liaisons are knowledgeable about the challenges encountered by young people involved with the foster care system and are available to provide assistance with issues such as gaps in housing when dormitories close for semester breaks.

Lastly, Ohio has extended Medicaid eligibility to young people leaving foster care up to age 21. The state is currently coordinating a series of training of local agencies to ensure continuity of care for this population. During the academic year 2008-2009, 58 percent of Ohio's ETV students reported having health insurance while 42 percent did not. The extension of Medicaid will provide a much needed resource to older youth who are currently uninsured.

During the academic year 2008-2009, 510 students were funded by Ohio's ETV program. Of these young adults, 81 percent were between the ages of 18 and 20. In addition, 25 percent of the students funded were parenting and 15 students were married. Just over 25 percent of students in Ohio earned their postsecondary degree within 6 years, with 12 graduates during the last school year.

CHALLENGES

Need for increased support given the current economic crisis

Given the current economic crisis in the US, ETV funds will provide an essential source of financial support to young people pursuing education beyond high school. In the past, many students supplemented their income by working part-time. Anecdotal evidence suggests that young people are struggling to find employment that allows them the flexibility to attend school. Education and Training

Vouchers will provide a critical but limited source of funding for youth in care who are in postsecondary programs.

Supporting youth as they navigate life's challenges

Transitioning youth from care face many challenges regardless of whether or not they are in college. The lack of affordable housing remains a major barrier to stability. Young people struggle with balancing the multiple and often competing priorities of work, school, and personal life. Additionally, for some young women, educational aspirations are derailed by unplanned pregnancies.

OFA staff works closely with all its students to provide the support and focus needed to stay on track with educational and career goals. Students are coached to access on-campus and community support services. If a student leaves school prior to graduation, OFA continues to provide guidance, encouragement, and assistance with re-enrollment if the student decides to try again. Typically students have an ongoing relationship with OFA for five to seven years. As demonstrated by its scholarship program, this supportive relationship can last through young adulthood.

New graduates are often unprepared for the realities of the world of work

It has become increasingly clear that ETV programs need to “do better and do more” around career planning and workforce development. For years, the field of child welfare has focused on youth from foster care starting college, but enrollment, attendance, and even graduation from college are no longer enough to ensure success in the workplace.

Young people need guidance and information about their options as they select and prepare for a career

of their choice. OFA's ETV staff engages students in conversations about interests and abilities and places special emphasis on educating students about emerging careers and industries, such as those related to “green” jobs and scientific and technical services. Additionally, its Senior Coaching Program helps students develop the social skills necessary for workplace success.

For those who opt not to pursue an academic degree, there are many career paths that require “mid-level skills.” One to two years of specialized training can lead to well-paying jobs in growth areas such as health care and emerging technologies.

OFA ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

Promoting success and completion of postsecondary education

Many young adults formerly in foster care can cover the basic costs associated with postsecondary education through tuition waivers, grants, and scholarships. ETV can represent up to 50 percent of the cost of attending college; this funding should dramatically reduce the need for student loans. Once financial worries have been alleviated, OFA focuses on four critical areas that are essential to student success.

First, students need to be ready for postsecondary or vocational programs. Youth need to be academically and emotionally ready to take on the challenges of higher education or training programs. Students who have experienced multiple foster care placements and disruptions in their primary and secondary education may need specialized assistance and support.

Second, OFA works to build consumer awareness. OFA staff works with students to view their educational or vocational program as a product they

NOTE: OFA staff counsels students on the true cost of taking out loans versus living on a reasonable budget based on Pell, ETV and other independent living or state-funded resources. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, for academic year 2005-6, the cost of attendance (tuition, room and board) at an average community college was \$6,492. At a public four-year institution, it was \$12,108. Even accounting for inflation of 8% per year, bringing the costs to \$8,830 and \$16,471 respectively in 2009-10, \$5000 in ETV along with a maximum of \$5350 in Pell should dramatically reduce the need for the burden of student loans. The two sources of funding still outweigh the cost of a community college and cover nearly 2/3 of the cost of a public college education.

are buying. As “consumers,” they need to understand what they are getting for their money, including on-campus services paid for by student fees, the high cost of dropping and repeating classes, the limited window of opportunity to receive federal grants including ETV, and the life-long return on investment of an education.

Third, students need to be held accountable. Students need to understand the expectations associated with participating in the ETV program and being a college student. ETV recipients should experience natural consequences and learn difficult life lessons with a strong and supportive safety net in place. For example, all ETV students are required to maintain a semester GPA of 2.0 or higher; students falling short are placed on academic probation. They have one semester to work with OFA’s Academic Success Program and raise their semester GPA to 2.0. If they do not achieve this, they will not receive additional ETV funding although they can still receive support and enrichment services. They also risk losing their Pell grant and other funds and may face academic dismissal.

Finally, consistent, personal contact is essential to helping youth stay motivated and feel confident to meet the challenges that college and vocational training programs can present. For OFA’s students, personal support is the difference between success and failure. OFA’s Chief Executive Officer Eileen McCaffrey says, “Everyone needs a safety net and to feel like someone cares. Young people who have experienced foster care also need guidance and accurate information so they can make good decisions and have a full, rich life.”

Making workforce preparation a priority for all youth in foster care

In these challenging economic times, a college education can no longer guarantee employment upon graduation. The field of child welfare needs to emphasize the importance of graduation while also

ensuring that students have the supports, services, and skills needed to successfully transition into the workforce as young professionals.

Social workers and case managers must be able to help young people identify and prepare for the career of their choice in the context of what is happening in the world of work.

OFA has made this shift. It has become very intentional about its messaging, and it provides student support that is focused on workforce preparation. A priority has been and continues to be encouraging students to use their college career centers and other campus resources starting in their freshman year. Furthermore, OFA has recently hired staff to work with students on the hard and soft skills necessary to enter the workforce. They provide students with Web-based training specific to workforce issues and career planning.

OFA will continue to provide its ETV states with Web-based trainings for social workers and case managers focused on strength-based career planning and strategies for helping youth identify and pursue appropriate career paths.

Supporting ETV recipients

When asked about additional support that would be helpful to the youth served by OFA, Eileen McCaffrey highlighted safe, stable, and affordable housing and health insurance as being critical needs for young people as they transition out of foster care and pursue postsecondary education.

Additionally, all young people in foster care should be automatically enrolled in Higher Education Opportunities Programs (HEOP) or “bridging programs.” These programs begin in middle school (Gear Up) and continue to provide support to students identified as at-risk as they move through high school and onto college campuses. Programs such as Upward Bound target first-generation college

students who need a role model and a road map. Students receive individualized counseling, tutoring, and assistance with completing applications and obtaining letters of recommendation. They also have opportunities to go on college trips and begin integrating college into their vision of the future. While young people in foster care are clearly eligible for HEOP and are, in fact, a priority population for HEOP, they are not always enrolled and often miss out on this critical support.

Utilizing ETV for vocational training programs

Although young adults from foster care may pursue two- and four-year academic-oriented degrees, postsecondary career training opportunities offer viable opportunities too often overlooked. Many technical, career, and vocational training programs are offered at local community and technical colleges. They can provide “fast track” workforce preparation and job placement with benefits. Community colleges are a great resource for youth from foster care as they offer a wide range of career-oriented training certificate programs. Child welfare staff needs to be aware of the full range of programs that ETV recipients can take advantage of, including universities, two- and four-year colleges, and certificate programs. For some young adults, vocational training provides the surest and quickest way to a sustainable job at a living wage.

THE FUTURE OF THE ETV PROGRAM

As the number of students accessing the ETV program increases, these funds need to be leveraged; ETV is not the only source of support for youth in foster care who want to pursue postsecondary education or vocational programs. By combining state tuition waivers, scholarships, and other federal and state grant monies, all youth in foster care can attend college or a training program. Students receiving full ETV and Pell grants as well as any other state and federal grants for which they are eligible will have a sizeable portion of their cost of attendance covered.

More than \$1 billion dollars in private scholarship funding is awarded annually in the US to needy and deserving students. While some scholarships are for merit, the majority of grants are needs-based. Motivated youth in foster care are strong candidates for scholarships. Unfortunately, less than 5 percent of graduating seniors apply for scholarships, and instead, they rely solely on federal and state grants and student loans.

Young adults leaving foster care need real-world budgeting and money management skills. They should understand the importance of good credit, the difference between a student loan and a grant, how interest is accrued, and how to plan ahead to meet short- and long-term goals.

An achievable goal for everyone working with college-bound youth in foster care is to help them combine ETV with other postsecondary funding to meet their education and training goals with little or no student loan debt, and to graduate from the program of their choice ready to enter the workforce.

Maine

AT A GLANCE

No. of Youth in Care	3,676 (AFCARDS 2004)
No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services	2,700 (FY07)
No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program	475 (academic year 2007-2008)
Allocation of Chafee Funds	\$3,035,968 (2008)
Allocation of ETV Funds	\$1,043,211 (2008)
Average ETV Award	\$2,112 (academic year 2007-2008)
Chafee ETV Program Administrator	State-administered
Status of Medicaid Extension Option	Took the Medicaid option in 2007
Other Postsecondary Resource Support	State College Tuition and Fee Waiver, Foster Child Grant Program, and William Warren Scholarship Program

PRIMARY INFORMANT(S):

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CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Funding and Youth Served

Massachusetts' Chafee Foster Care Independence Program's (CFCIP) allocation for FY 2008 was \$3,035,968. During FY2007, 2700 youth age 14-21 were eligible for CFCIP services. During FY2007, 1201 youth (44%) received CFCIP services.

Program Administration

Massachusetts' child welfare system is state-administered. Funds from the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program support the Adolescent Outreach Program, which provides intensive, individualized life-skills assessment and training services to current and former youth and young adults in foster care from across the state. The

program serves youth between the ages of 14 and 21 years, and its principle objectives include helping all of the youth and young adults served with achieving permanency and self-sufficiency. More specifically, the Adolescent Outreach Program focuses on the following:

- Helping youth to develop the necessary skills and supports to achieve their potential
- Assisting youth with life-skills development, access to education, training, and other services necessary to obtain employment
- Providing support through mentors and connections to family and life-long supports
- Assisting youth with planning for and succeeding in postsecondary educational settings
- Providing financial, housing, counseling, employment, educational, and other support services to youth ages 18 and older

The program is staffed by twenty outreach workers and four supervisors who report directly to the Director of Adolescent Support Services. Each outreach worker carries an active caseload of 15 adolescents and meets with the youth on a weekly basis. The outreach workers are an integral part of the program. They work directly with the youth providing life-skills training so the youth can develop the skills that they need to live self-sufficiently in their communities. Outreach workers also engage DCF case managers, foster parents, group care providers, and community service providers to broaden the array of supports available to these youth.

The Department of Children and Families uses its own life-skills development curriculum, Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood (PAYA). This program is used by foster parents, residential and group care staff, and therapeutic foster care agencies. The PAYA program includes a training guide, which provides strategies for working with young people. This guide is designed to support the implementation of program services by foster parents and staff. Each module has three components: (1) Assessment, (2) Skill Plan, and (3) Activity Workbook; and there are five modules in this curriculum:

- Module One: Money, Home, and Food Management
- Module Two: Personal Care, Health, Safety, and Decision Making
- Module Three: Education, Job Seeking, and Job Maintenance (<http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/res/PAYA/Module3/Intro-19.pdf>)
- Module Four: Housing, Transportation, Community Resources, Laws, and Recreation (<http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/res/PAYA/Module4/ppIntro-27.pdf>)
- Module Five: Young Parents Guide—Sexuality, Reproduction, Decision Making, Prenatal Care, Pregnancy, Child Development, Child Safety, Physical Care, and Housing

Chafee funds support the Independent Living Support Program. This program provides additional financial resources necessary to support independent living preparation, such as transportation assistance, SAT testing fees, senior class expenses, athletic uniforms, sports fees, tutoring, furniture, computers, etc. This program is intended to ensure that young people have access to resources that can help to normalize their foster care experience. Funds have also been used to pay for limited travel to support permanent connections for youth. From July 2006 through June 1, 2007, 598 youth were served by the program for a total expenditure of \$300,969.

The Department created and manages its own Youth Employment/Internship Program. Chafee funds are used to pay a stipend to youth who participate. The program provides youth with an opportunity for career exploration in an occupation of interest as well as strategic support in the form of an adult who could potentially serve as a mentor. From July of 2006 through June 1, 2007, 50 youth participated in this program.

In response to their focus on permanency and self-sufficiency, the Department administers the Youth Mentoring Program to ensure that all youth who leave their custody have a life-long connection to a caring adult. Volunteers from the community are matched with transition-aged youth to provide community connections, guidance, and a positive role model. Currently, 12 mentors are actively engaged with this program. Note that DCF has many more mentoring relationships through their Youth Employment/Internship Program.

Lastly, the Department also provides Transition to Independent Living (TIL) payments directly to youth who are deemed responsible and able to live in an approved placement (college dormitory, apartment, home with extended family). Youth receive TIL funds to cover daily living expenses.

As of June 2007, 650 youth were receiving TIL payments.

Aging Out

In FY2007, 670 youth age 18-23 were discharged from foster care although many of these youth did return home. Custody with the Department of Children and Families ends at age 18 but youth can sign a Voluntary Placement Agreement. Current agency policy requires that youth who sign this agreement must be attending high school or postsecondary educational program or a job training program, are compliant with their service plan, and are willing to accept continued services. Youth who sign the Agreement with the Department continue to receive placement services and permanency supports, essentially, the same array of services that they received before they reached age 18. These young adults are able to remain in care until age 22. If, during their 22nd year, they will obtain a Bachelor's degree, these young adults are permitted to remain in care until age 23. Generally, almost three-quarters of the youth served by the Department elect to sign the Agreement.

If a youth does not sign the Agreement, the Department offers Chafee services through the Adolescent Outreach Program. The Department is also able to provide assistance through their Discharge Support Program. This program makes financial resources (with an annual cap of \$1500) for first and last months' rent, security deposit, and initial utilities charges) available to youth who are discharged from DCF at age 18 or after and who are not returning home or being adopted. Additional supports include assistance with budgeting, home management, and employment.

Under current policy, if a youth elects to leave care but decides that he or she wants to come back, the Department will assess the youth's situation and determine needed services. Youth may receive services and supports up until age 22. Outreach

workers track youth for six months after they are discharged from the program. After this time, cases are moved to closed status.

Healthcare

Massachusetts implemented the Chafee provision that enables the state to provide MassHealth for youth who discharge from placement at or after the age of 18. This benefit is available until the youth's 21st birthday. Youth who remain in the Department's care under a Voluntary Placement Agreement after age 18 continue to receive MassHealth coverage and they are automatically enrolled in Medicaid up until age 21. These youth are not required to reapply, and they do not have to provide any information to the Medicaid office.

When the young adult leaves DCF care after age 21, the Outreach staff will inform him or her of the new state law that requires everyone to have health insurance or incur a tax penalty. They assist young adults with identifying their insurance options.

CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Funding and Youth Served

Massachusetts' Chafee ETV Program's allocation for FY 2008 was \$1,043,211. During the 2007-2008 school year, the Chafee ETV Program provided grants to 475 students. The average ETV award during the academic year 2007-2008 was \$2,112.

Of the total allocation, Massachusetts is on track to fully expend these funds. To date, they have expended all ETV funds allocated with the exception of the first year of the ETV program. The administrative costs of the program are approximately 16 percent, with the remainder of the funds going towards direct payments to youth. During the 07-08 academic year, \$1,006,252 was paid out for ETV vouchers. The administrative costs cover the two staff members who manage all the payments, review applications, and

coordinate the ETV program statewide. These staff are responsible for:

- Identifying eligible youth
- Providing direct support to youth attending college or vocational training programs
- Assisting youth in achieving their full potential
- Addressing issues and challenges that can impede their educational pursuits
- Collaborating with the all of the state colleges and the University of Massachusetts

The ETV staff manages the college advising days at the colleges, the college fairs, college prep workshops, etc.

Program Administration and Data Collection

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program is administered through the state's central office. The program is staffed by two ETV social workers who review applications and work directly with the schools and the students.

The ETV workers have created a database of all applicants and ETV recipients, which includes the funding streams received by each youth, the materials that they need, where they are in terms of payment and grades, and whether the student is on academic probation.

The database includes a "notes" section in which staff can document contacts with the students and other relevant information including connections to outreach workers, where the payments should go, and if the staff are awaiting additional documentation from the youth.

ETV Eligibility and Enrollment

The ETV program is available to youth who fit any of these criteria:

- Were adopted after age 16 years through DCF

- Were in DCF-sponsored guardianships with kin at or after age 16
- Were in the custody of DCF until age 18 years, unable to return home, and have not yet reached age 21 year
- Have achieved a high school diploma or GED certificate

In the state of Massachusetts, the ETV program is particularly helpful to DCF youth in foster care who were in agency CHINS custody because these youth have not been eligible for the state Foster Child Tuition and Fee Waiver until this year.

Similarly, the ETV program provides much needed support to youth who were adopted from foster care after attaining age 16. Since the inception of the program, 15 young people who were adopted have received ETV vouchers. The program is available to all categories of former youth in care up to age 23 provided they are enrolled in a qualifying educational program on their 21st birthday and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

Students are required to complete an Educational/Vocational Training Voucher Program application. This application is available on line at www.mass.gov/DCF. Students are also required to submit copies of their financial aid award letter and most recent college transcripts including course credits and grades. The ETV staff provides individualized support to all applicants to ensure that any youth eligible can access the vouchers. Renewal applications are automatically disseminated to students who have previously received the ETV. Youth can access the application online but must apply via the paper route (hard copy) at this point.

Students are required to maintain satisfactory performance in accordance with their school or training program and federal financial aid guidelines. The ETV staff work to ensure that all students are

connected to the personal and academic resources that are available on campus to promote their success. Each ETV recipient receives a college-specific listing of resources, along with contact information for the ETV worker who is assigned to his or her college/program. ETV staff have existing relationships with on-campus support services such as financial aid, student support, and Trio. Because of these connections, ETV and outreach staff are able to assist their students with getting in touch with the appropriate personnel.

Staff maintain regular contact with each student, ranging from intensive weekly contacts for students in need of more intensive supports to periodic assistance with financial aid, ETV re-enrollment, and assessment of on-going support needs. Through this regular contact, they are able to monitor whether their students are making use of on-campus resources. Students who are in need of more specialized support are referred back to the Adolescent Outreach Program.

During the academic year 2006-2007, 407 ETV vouchers were awarded. There were 483 youth who applied. Of this total, 76 were deemed ineligible; 43 did not complete the paperwork (despite outreach from ETV workers) or were deemed ineligible, and 33 were in DCF subsidized guardianships and were not eligible at that time due to their custody status (See Challenges section for additional information.)

Fund Disbursement

The ETV staff uses the student's financial aid award letter to determine the cost of attendance as well as the total amount of financial aid available from all other sources prior to ETV funding. Once the student's unmet need is calculated, the ETV workers help the student to identify the various resources available to them to cover their remaining expenses, including living arrangement (Independent Living Program, foster home, apartments, dormitory or other), transportation costs, child care, technology, and school supplies. Funds are disbursed directly to

the young person or to the college or educational/vocational training program.

Awards are made directly to schools when there is a payment system set up with a specific school and the youth owes funds directly to the institution. Awards are made to students when ETV funds are being used to pay a third party, such as a loan company or bookstore. In most cases when awards are made directly to students, the voucher check is provided to the student's Adolescent Outreach worker or social worker to assist the youth in getting the money to the right place. When the funds are disbursed directly to the youth, the student is expected to turn in receipts. If he or she fails to provide receipts for funds disbursed, the youth will not receive a payment the following semester.

Outreach

The ETV staff works closely with the Adolescent Outreach Program staff in the 29 area offices to assist youth with planning for and succeeding in postsecondary educational and vocational programs. Both Adolescent Outreach Program and ETV staff are in the communities doing training, conducting Educational and Vocational Fairs, and providing information about the process for pursuing as well as the resources available for postsecondary education/vocational programs. Information about these resources is also part of the core training for new DCF workers.

DCF also expanded their Peer Mentoring Program to include college advising days during which ETV staff conduct open houses at local colleges. During the 2006-2007 academic year, the two staff met with 199 students at 19 different colleges. (Note: The Peer Mentoring Program matches students with peer mentors who are also in the DCF system and attending the same academic institution.)

The Department also hosts a statewide college fair, which is designed to connect youth in foster care with local public colleges.



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Ineligibility for the ETV program hinders permanency for youth in subsidized guardianship

In the state of Massachusetts, the Department subsidizes guardianship placements for youth. Under current federal guidelines, these youth are ineligible to participate in the ETV program because they are not assigned a social worker with a service plan. Expanding eligibility to youth in guardianship placements would allow the state to serve 50-100 more youth annually. However, the state has included guardianship youth as eligible for the State Tuition and Fee Waiver and the new federal financial aid guidelines as well as the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, which opens eligibility to youth guardianed at or

after age 13 and age 16 respectively. This has and will continue to assist with permanency attainment.

Need for additional staff and funding to sustain and expand the availability of the socio-emotional, interpersonal, and academic supports needed for success in postsecondary and vocational programs

The Adolescent Outreach workers provide intensive support to young people to help them graduate from high school or obtain their GED and then identify how to achieve their next educational goal. Although the Outreach staff often remained connected to the youth as they pursue postsecondary programs, these youth do need to transition to a tracking status at some point. The staff must balance the wait list of younger youth with the ongoing needs of youth in postsecondary programs. With increased program funding, DCF could extend the services provided by the Adolescent Outreach Program.

Need for increased funding to meet increased demand for the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

In October of 2005, to address the increased demand for ETVs as well as the increasing costs of higher education, DCF elected to decrease the maximum awards available for four-year programs (from \$5000 to \$4000) and vocational training programs (from \$4000 to \$2000). Special exceptions can be made for youth who can demonstrate that without the full funding, they will not be successful in their educational program.

The state of Massachusetts can clearly document the need for these critical resources and recognizes that many of the youth who apply to the ETV program are in need of the full funding and more. Currently, the state is able to tap into other resources for youth in foster care (Foster Child Grant Program, Tuition and Fee Waiver for Foster Children, and William Warren Scholarship Program; see Noteworthy Practices section for additional information).

NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

Availability of multiple financial resources to support youth in foster care in pursuing postsecondary or vocational training

In the state of Massachusetts, a number of resources are targeted specifically for young people in foster care to assist with covering the costs of educational or vocational programs. DCF coordinates the ETV program with the three other state-funded education and training programs that offer financial assistance to eligible foster and adopted youth: (1) State College Tuition and Fee Waiver Program, (2) Foster Child Grant Program, and (3) the William Warren Scholarship Program. Youth who are able to take advantage of a combination of these grant programs may carry no cash balances and nominal (if any) loan balances if they attend a public college.

The State College Tuition and Fee Waiver Program covers tuition and fees at Massachusetts' public two- and four-year state colleges and universities for both degree and certificate programs. The Massachusetts Tuition and Fee Waiver occurred in

two parts. The actual tuition waiver was passed in 2000 and the fee waiver in 2008. In Massachusetts, the fees are higher than the tuition in public colleges. The Massachusetts Foster Care Tuition and Fee Waiver Program (FAAP 00-37) was approved by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education on June 20, 2000, and amended by the Act Relative to Children in the Care of the Commonwealth, Chapter 176, Section 22 of the Acts of 2008, effective July 1, 2008. Students eligible for this program include youth adopted through DCF or youth who came into DCF custody and remained in DCF custody or under a DCF-sponsored guardianship arrangement until their 18th birthday. Additionally, youth age 18 and older in DCF care and youth formerly in foster care who meet any of the above criteria are eligible until their 25th birthday. To date, the Department has issued more than 5,000 of these waivers for youth who have been adopted, guardianed, or in foster care.

The Foster Child Grant Program is state-funded is available to young adults under the age of 25 who meet the following criteria: placed in the custody of DCF through a Care and Protection Petition until age 18, enrolled full time (12 credits or the equivalent), and has applied for financial aid using the standard Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This program provides up to \$6000 per year to cover fees, room and board, and other living expenses for public institutions and private non-profit or private for-profit institutions. This funding can be used to cover the costs of vocational training programs. During the 2006-2007 academic year, 450 youth were served by this program.

The William Warren Scholarship Program provides scholarships (ranging from \$450 to \$4000) for educational and vocational programs to any youth under age 25 who was in DCF placement for at least one year. Both current and former youth in foster care are eligible.

Program grounded in youth development and strengths-based practice

Youth are viewed as partners in all aspects of their case planning and service delivery. Youth

have opportunities to practice new skills and are encouraged to make decisions and problem-solve with a safety net of caring and committed adults in the context of the communities in which they live. The staff in the Adolescent Outreach and ETV programs know the youth with whom they work. Because of these relationships, the workers are able to provide support and resources that are individualized and based on the youth's strengths and needs.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Development of collaborative relationships between DCF, postsecondary institutions, and the broader community to optimize the support and services available to current and former youth in foster care

In the state of Massachusetts, there is a clear commitment to ensuring that all young people in foster care have the resources and supports needed to succeed in postsecondary and vocational programs. Staff work closely with communities that serve adolescents to emphasize the importance of educational and career planning as well as the need for on-going support. The ETV staff are available on campus and meet with administrators from colleges/vocational programs each year to engage campus staff in DCF activities such as college advising days and the peer mentoring program and to provide information about the unique challenges facing young adults who have been in foster care. DCF is currently working to develop these liaisons with each of the colleges that their students attend. As a result of these collaborative efforts, the process for processing financial aid has become streamlined, and many of the barriers to registration and enrollment experienced by youth in foster care have been reduced. Additionally, one of the community colleges in the state has created a separate orientation for youth in care to address special issues or concerns facing these young adults.

Regional youth boards actively engaged in agency improvements

At present, there are 45 members of the regional youth boards who are committed to improving the services available to youth served by DCF. Each

regional board meets monthly and a representative from each of these regional boards sits on the Central Office Advisory Board. Because of its strong commitment to youth development and strengths-based practice, DCF will continue to provide ongoing youth leadership opportunities that focus on peer support, foster parent training, program development, and service delivery evaluations. The regional youth advisory boards also serve as a vehicle for youth to provide informal support to each other and to recognize their own strengths and talents. Some of the many accomplishments of the regional youth advisory boards include:

- Offering recommendations in preparation for the federal CFSR
- Participating in a statewide Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Permanency
- Planning for and presenting a youth summit on adolescent permanency
- Training and recruiting foster and adoptive families
- Developing a Bill of Rights for youth in foster care
- Advocating and submitting recommendations for changes to the CHINS legislation
- Contributing to DCF's teen newsletter, The Wave, now available on the DSS intranet
- Engaging in community service projects at local homeless shelters, nursing homes, and residential programs.

Pennsylvania

AT A GLANCE

No. of Youth in Care	10,681 (AFCARS 2007)
No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services	10,681 (AFCARS 2007)
No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program	470 (academic year 2007-08)
Allocation of Chafee Funds	\$5,377,920 (2008)
Allocation of ETV Funds	\$1,847,947 (2008)
Average ETV Award	\$4,502
Chafee ETV Program Administrator	State-supervised, county- administered by program specialist
Status of Medicaid Extension Option	Did not take option. Youth can apply for Medicaid.
Other Postsecondary Resource Support	No state tuition waiver Foster Parent Association Scholarships PA State Grant Program and Special Programs (both managed by PHEAA)

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CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Funding and Youth Served

Pennsylvania's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) allocation for FY 2008 was \$5,377,920. Additionally, over \$2,400,000 of state and county funds were utilized in the prior year. The amount of state and county funds for the next fiscal year is expected to increase significantly. During FY 2007, there were 10,681 youth age 16-21 who were eligible for CFCIP services, and 5,774 youth (54%) received CFCIP services during FY 2007.

Program Administration

Pennsylvania's child welfare system is state-supervised and county-administered. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program is operated as a grant program to county children and youth agencies/providers that are required to apply for funding annually. CFCIP is administered by a human services program specialist with the Department of Public Welfare/Office of Children, Youth and Families (DPW). The program specialist has assistance from Independent Living project staff from the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Competency-Based Training Program who monitor the providers, conduct site visits, and provide training and technical assistance.

For each young person involved with the Independent Living Program in Pennsylvania, the goals are independence and productivity. Success is defined as:

- Self-supporting employment
- Enrollment in educational or vocational

training or completion of high school education or equivalent

- Stable place of residence after discharge from foster care

County children and youth agencies provide a range of program activities including:

- Individualized assessments of eligible youth to determine their IL needs and development of IL case plans based on these results
- Counseling and experiential programs in daily living skills, budgeting, locating and maintaining housing, and career planning
- Stipends
- Job training, placement, and follow-up services
- Assistance in obtaining higher education or vocational training, including technical assistance, financial assistance, and counseling
- Preparation for GED
- High school support and retention services
- Programs directed at improving self-esteem and self-confidence
- Programs to provide parent education and to help teen parents make the transition from foster care
- Purchase of books, audiovisual materials and equipment, and other resources to be used in providing life skills and other training to youth in the program
- Equipment to support efforts for youth in care and discharged from care

Aging Out

In FY 2007, 786 youth age 18 to 21 emancipated from foster care. The Juvenile Act 42 Pa.C.S. §§6301—6365, definition of a child, provides the opportunity for youth to request the courts to

remain in agency care beyond age 18 to complete a course of treatment or educational program.

(See <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3130/s3130.5.html>)

Healthcare

Pennsylvania did not take the Medicaid option. Young people who are in need of health insurance coverage are encouraged to apply for Medicaid. Other low-cost health insurance options are available, such as the Children's Health Insurance Program for children through age 18 and adultBasic Health Insurance for Adult Pennsylvanians. Young adults age 19 and over with income between \$5,100 and \$20,800 may be eligible for adultBasic Health Insurance with a low monthly premium of approximately \$35.00.

CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Funding and Youth Served

Please note that Pennsylvania's ETV program is actually entitled the Education and Training Grant (ETG) program.

Pennsylvania's Chafee ETG program allocation for FY 2008 was \$1,847,947. During the 2007-2008 school year, the Chafee ETG program provided grants to 470 students; the average ETV award was \$4,502.

Of the total allocation, Pennsylvania expended slightly over \$2 million for the 2006-2007 school year and has fully expended its allocation for the last three years.

Program Administration and Data Collection

The Department of Public Welfare (DPW) collaborates with the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) to administer the ETG program. Through an Interagency Agreement, PHEAA administers and distributes the ETG funds for the state of Pennsylvania. DPW has worked with PHEAA since the ETG funds became available and has offered to cover their administrative costs

for running the program. To date, PHEAA has not accepted this offer and provides this service to the state at no cost. As a result, the full ETV allocation goes to fund ETGs.

To apply for ETG funds, students are required to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); they must also complete a one-page ETG application. This application is submitted directly to PHEAA. Once PHEAA receives the application, it works with DPW to determine the student's eligibility for ETG funds, communicates with the postsecondary institution to establish the unmet cost, and finally, calculates the student's award. Once PHEAA has established the student's eligibility as well as the award total (if applicable), PHEAA sends a letter to the student directly and ensures that the ETG funds are sent directly to the college or vocational program in which the student is enrolled. While the current system is not Web-based, PHEAA is exploring the feasibility of implementing a Web-based application process.

In terms of data collection, PHEAA currently tracks the number of ETG awards by county, by region, and by school, confirming that funds are used for their intended purposes. The cost of attendance is calculated by the institution and PHEAA. PHEAA is in the process of developing a system for tracking retention and graduation rates.

Disbursements are made by PHEAA to the institution and not to the youth. A majority of ETG awards are distributed to institutions in Philadelphia, Allegheny County, and State College because most of their students attend school in these areas.

About the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) administers the Chafee Grant Program on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW). This program is authorized under the Foster Care Independence

Act of 1999 as amended by the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001.

PHEAA has grown from a small student loan guarantor in 1964, with a guaranty volume of only 4,600 student loans, to one of the largest, full-service, nonprofit, financial aid organizations in the nation serving millions of students and thousands of schools through its state grant, guaranty, servicing, and financial aid processing systems.

Since 1964, PHEAA has devoted its energy, resources, and imagination to creating affordable access to higher education for students and their families. The agency continues to take a leadership role in developing innovative ways to ease the financial burdens of students and borrowers, while streamlining delivery systems for schools and lenders.

ETG Eligibility and Enrollment

The process for disseminating the ETG program funds to eligible students has been facilitated by the relationship that DPW has with PHEAA. Pennsylvania uses the ETG program funds for students who are attending both eligible public and private colleges and universities as well as vocational training programs. At this time, all students who are eligible and in need of financial assistance for postsecondary education are served by the Pennsylvania ETG program.

The program is available to all categories of former youth in care up to age 23 provided they are enrolled in a qualifying educational program on their 21st birthday and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of this program.

In Pennsylvania's DPW, the Independent Living and Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) staff work closely to promote permanence for their youth. As a result, young people who were adopted at age 16 or after, their adoptive parents, and adoption and permanency staff are aware of and accessing ETG funds. Data on the numbers of adopted youth who receive ETGs are not available.

Fund Disbursement

PHEAA uses FAFSA information and coordinates with each institution prior to the semester to determine each student's cost of attendance and unmet need. Once the student's unmet need and eligibility are determined, PHEAA disburses the funds directly to the student's school or vocational program. The school/vocational program provides funds to the students for allowable costs.

Outreach

Students are able to access information about Pennsylvania's ETG program in several ways. The state ensures that all county and private providers have information about the ETG program. This information is also available on several websites: PHEAA (www.pheaa.org), University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Competency-Based Training Program (www.ilp.pitt.edu), and the PA Youth Advisory Board (www.independentlivingpa.org). ETG program information is also shared and distributed at quarterly SWAN/Independent Living meetings and other child welfare conferences or trainings. Additional outreach is conducted by PHEAA through workshops and information dissemination to guidance counselors and financial aid staff. PHEAA has also created an electronic ETG program brochure, and the one-page application is also available for electronic dissemination (http://www.pheaa.org/specialprograms/pa_chafee_grant_program.shtml)

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Initial challenges with program start-up

With the delay in receipt of the federal program instructions as well as the challenges inherent in creating a new program, Pennsylvania experienced some challenges in formalizing the memorandum of understanding with PHEAA to accept applications for youth during the first program implementation year. These challenges were resolved.

Need for a formal program to provide specialized educational supports

At present, Pennsylvania's children and youth county agencies provide aftercare support through the IL program to age 21. While some foster parents and caseworkers continue to provide this essential support beyond the age of 21 (including accessing TRIO programs when geographically possible), currently no formal program in Pennsylvania provides intensive educational support to the current and former youth in care enrolled in educational or vocational programs. Young people need specialized assistance and connections to caring adults to promote the achievement of educational goals and completion of educational and vocational programs.

Funding cycle challenges

It is difficult to manage the ETG funds on a federal fiscal year, and it would be simpler if the funds could be disbursed to align with the academic year such as July to June.

NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

Strong relationship with PHEAA

Because PHEAA administers the program at no cost to the state, the ETG funds in Pennsylvania are fully expended every year. PHEAA has streamlined the program so that young people are not overwhelmed with paperwork or process. There is a one-page application that youth are required to complete annually. Upon receipt of the applications, PHEAA takes care of working through the process of confirming eligibility based on unmet need as it relates to the student's cost of attendance.

Web-based resources for youth

For Pennsylvania's youth in foster care, a number of resources are available to answer questions about the ETG program and financial aid. These resources are available on several Web sites and provide information to youth in an easy-to-read format. A brief overview of the ETG program as

well as the eligibility requirements and application form are available on the Youth Advisory Board Web site (www.independentlivingpa.org/chafee.php). The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work created A Student's Guide to Financial Aid and Scholarships 2007 (<http://www.ilp.pitt.edu/edtraingrant.htm>). This comprehensive guide defines terms such as financial aid, grants, loans, scholarships and work study programs, and it provides specific information about types of loans and scholarships that are available to young people. The guide provides links to scholarship and college search Web sites and is written in a clear style. Finally, the guide includes a series of questions for youth to ask when working with a financial aid office, a financial aid checklist, and a timeline for completing college and financial aid applications. Also available on the University of Pittsburgh Web site is a Frequently Asked Questions about the Chafee Education and Training Grant Program document for young people. This document answers basic questions about the ETG program.

Youth voice

Pennsylvania has had an active statewide youth advisory board (YAB) for the last six years. The board meets quarterly with approximately 20 and 30 youth members in attendance at each meeting. During these meetings, youth receive training and professional development so that they are able to effectively share their stories and key messages about their foster care experiences. The youth board also has its own Web site: www.independentlivingpa.org.

The youth advisory board has undergone some recent changes but the transition has been smooth. The YAB will eventually consist of 16 regionally selected youth members at the state level. They will continue to have regionally based boards; these boards have the capacity to meet more frequently. However, given current budgetary constraints, many of the boards are meeting via teleconference and/or Web conference because of travel fund restrictions.

The ongoing management of the youth advisory board has been transferred to the IL Project staff at the Child Welfare Training Program.

The state also has a youth ambassador program. Currently, there are two youth ambassadors who work part-time with DPW to provide leadership and guidance around youth issues. On a regular basis, these youth ambassadors participate in meetings and activities so that the youth voice is present. Youth from the state advisory board also participate in other meetings.

Pennsylvania has also created a youth speaker's bureau. Staff from DPW work with young people participating with this group to provide training and share their foster care experiences to increase awareness about the strengths and needs of youth in care.

The Juvenile Law Center has also worked extensively with youth in Pennsylvania to educate young people in care about their rights; it also created a Know Your Rights publication, available at <http://www.independentlivingpa.org/>. This publication was co-authored by KidsVoice.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Emergence of community supports for youth in foster care

There is currently a small college mentoring program operating in two counties in Pennsylvania. The mentors involved with this program provide specialized assistance to young people who need help with applying to college and obtaining financial aid. This program is unique in that it was started by a retired college dean who made a personal commitment to helping 7 young people in foster care who wanted to go to college or vocational school. To date, 18 youth have benefited from this unique mentoring program. Six of these youth have aged out of the foster care system and have remained in contact with their educational mentor. Currently, there are 12 youth participating in the program.



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For more information on Casey Family Programs, visit www.casey.org.