



FOSTER YOUTH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Final Evaluation Report

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Submitted to:

Casey Family Programs
1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3
Seattle, WA 98109-3542

Submitted by:

The Institute for Educational Leadership
4455 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20008

Available at:

<http://www.casey.org/doleval>
<http://www.iel.org/programs/casey.html>

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At IEL:

Irene Lynn

At the Institute for Policy Studies at The Johns Hopkins University:

Burt Barnow

Amy Buck

Consultants and Experts on the Experiences of Youth in Foster Care:

Sue Badeau

Paul DiLorenzo

Local Site Leaders and State Liaisons:

Chicago: Jack Wuest (local); William Leslie (state)

Detroit: Paul Duford (local); Yvette Harris (state)

Houston: Pam Walker (local); Shannon Ramsey (state)

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Executive Summary¹

According to a 2008 AFCARS report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm), over 26,000 youth age out of the foster care system each year. Research shows that youth who leave foster care are more likely to drop out of high school, to be unemployed, and to be dependent on public assistance when compared to other youth. Youth from foster care may also experience mental health problems, drug usage, and involvement with the criminal justice system—all at higher rates than average.² It is therefore not surprising that the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) chose youth in foster care and alumni of care, age 16–21, to be served in a five-state demonstration project.

In September 2004, ETA approached California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Texas, the five states with the largest number of youth in foster care, and offered funds for a demonstration project. The solicitation required the states to conduct the projects in areas of the state with the highest concentration of youth in foster care:

- California: Pasadena and South Central Los Angeles
- Illinois: Chicago
- Michigan: Detroit
- New York: New York City
- Texas: Houston

ETA funded each of the states at \$400,000 per year with matching funds required at an equal level. ETA provided two years of funding and no-cost extensions, so the grant period extended to June 30, 2007. Table A shows the state grant recipient, the local lead agencies, the program start dates, and funding information for the five states.

¹ Please see the main report at <http://www.casey.org/doleval> or <http://www.iel.org/programs/casey.html> for more information.

² See: Courtney, M. E., Terao, S., & Bost, N. (2004). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago; Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. K., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A. C., English, D., White C. R., Hiripi, E., Wiggins, T., & Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. www.casey.org.

Table A. Basic Grant Information for Each Site

State Grant Recipient	Local Lead Agencies and Service Providers	Program Start Date	Total Promised Funding Amount	Source of Matching Funds³
California Employment Development Department	Foothill Workforce Investment Board (Pasadena) and Community Build (South Central Los Angeles)	May 2005	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state and local	State Wagner-Peyser (50%); local Chafee Funds (50%)
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity	Alternative Schools Network	January 2005	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state	State Workforce Investment Act (WIA) discretionary funds (50%); state Chafee funds (50%)
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth	Detroit Workforce Development and the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance; Employment and Training Designs, Inc. (local service provider)	February 2005	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state	State Chafee funds
New York State Office of Children and Family Services	New York City Administration for Children and Family Services (ACS); Arbor Employment and Training (local service provider; also subcontractor The Door)	February 2006	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state and local	State Chafee funds (65%); local ACS funds (35%)
Texas Workforce Commission	Harris County Protective Services	March 2006	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal funds+\$800,000 local funds	State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); first year also included \$100,000 from state Chafee funds

In May 2005, ETA entered into an agreement with Casey Family Programs to collaborate on an evaluation of the demonstration project. In turn, Casey Family Programs contracted with the

³ Wagner-Peyser and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds are U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training funds; Chafee funds are funds for youth in foster care that may come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the state match; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds are U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds for welfare assistance.

Institute for Educational Leadership to conduct the evaluation, along with the Johns Hopkins University and two experts on the experiences and outcomes of youth in foster care. This is the third and final report. It is based on two site visits conducted in the fall of 2005 and 2006 and phone interviews conducted in the fall of 2007. This report is also based on up to nine quarters of individual participant-level data through June 30, 2007 provided by each of the sites. All sites were required to report aggregate data on a quarterly basis to DOL. This report uses the individual participant data, however, as it is more complete and permits analyses based on more than one variable at a time.

Overview of the local projects:

- ***Foothill Workforce Investment Board in Los Angeles*** oversees two sites, one located in Pasadena at the One-Stop Career Center and the other at Community Build in South Central Los Angeles. The Pasadena location is able to leverage the services available at the One-Stop Center, while Community Build is a well-established youth employment and training provider with many services available in the building to its participants. Collectively, these two sites together are known as the Self-Sufficiency Project.
- ***Alternative Schools Network (ASN) in Chicago*** is an association of alternative schools. Thirteen of them participate in this project, which ASN calls Project New Futures. Part-time transition counselors housed in the participating schools assist youth in preparing for postsecondary education and employment, and transition specialists housed at ASN provide postsecondary support and resources.
- ***Employment and Training Designs, Inc. in Detroit***, a for-profit company, operates the Creating Independence and Outcomes (CIAO) project. CIAO is located at the Rosa Parks Center, a city-operated property that also houses other youth programs and services. Many of these services are also available to the youth participating in the program.
- ***Arbor Employment and Training Corporation in New York City*** is a for-profit company that entered into an agreement with The Door to locate the program in its main youth center facility on Broome Street. The Door is a well-known youth services agency that provides programs and services to over 7,000 youth a year, in effect operating a one-stop center. The Door's youth development services and other social services are available to the youth participating in Arbor's program, which it calls Passport to Success.

- ***Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults in Houston*** is a county agency. It operates this program as well as the state-funded transition program for youth in foster care. The Houston Alumni and Youth Center (the HAY Center) operates in a facility that was developed specifically for this project. The HAY Center has attracted a number of partners to provide services to the youth.

Observations and Lessons Learned Across Sites

Although the sites operated within a common framework of services, each brought its own strategy for improving transition outcomes. Listed below are critical dimensions present across programs.

Staff Relationships with the Youth—No single program component rose to the same level of importance in a young person’s life as having a caring adult who guided and supported the youth through this transition period. When we asked youth what they valued most about the programs, overwhelmingly, they pointed out the individual who worked most directly with them. One of the youth in a focus group said “I never had people care about me this much. I would definitely not be in college if it were not for this program.” The factors behind a positive connection between the project participants and the staff can be summarized in a few words: size (relatively low caseloads), mentoring, motivation, and staff accessibility (the value of adult mentors has been documented elsewhere).

Program Design and Services—To their credit, none of these programs have remained static. As they gained experience in working with the youth, each made changes in its approach. The biggest change is that several sites have moved away from a cohort approach to serving youth to a more individualized, open-entry/open-exit approach. Several of the programs were originally designed with a structured model of classes and activities for youth to follow. Those sites found that this didn’t work well; they have had to individualize more of the services they provided. Sites have also made changes in how they prepare youth to obtain and maintain employment, a particularly challenging area for the sites. All the sites, most notably Houston, regularly seek the input of their clients in all aspects of services and activities.

Program Staffing—Program staffing across the sites has remained remarkably stable, given the challenging nature of the work and the relatively low pay. All the sites report that many, if not

all, of the initial hires are still with the program. Stability in staffing is important for developing relationships with the youth. The limited turnover is a testament to the sites' good staffing decisions.

Program Partnerships/Collaborations across Agencies—Three of the five program providers (Detroit, Los Angeles, and New York City) have their deepest institutional experience in employment and training or in youth development. In Chicago the program agency is an association of alternative schools, experienced in youth employment, but with their principal focus on education. Only one, Houston, is a child welfare program provider, although the entity funding the project is the state workforce agency. Thus, for four of the program providers, developing a relationship with the child welfare system is critical, both for accessing child welfare funds and coordinating additional services. These relationships, for the most part, appear to have been difficult to build, particularly as they relate to cross-agency coordination of services.

The sites report success in accessing the resources available to these youth through the Chafee funds.⁴ Yet there is little routine coordination between child welfare caseworkers and project staff. Meanwhile, the relationship between the programs and workforce is more developed. Employment and training resources are regularly accessed by all sites.

Sites have developed some notable partnerships in other areas. A few of the sites have established relationships with Job Corps. Other sites have established relationships with the juvenile justice system. Houston and Community Build (Los Angeles), as well as Chicago, also have developed good relationships with local community colleges. These seem to be particularly productive partnerships, as community colleges generally are able to provide youth with extra supports (academic counseling and tutoring, for example) they may need in order to successfully continue their education.

Job Placement and Follow-up—Sites have had little difficulty in finding entry-level jobs for youth. Detroit, with the highest unemployment rate of any of the sites, reports that there are still entry-level jobs available. Job placement specialists at the sites work directly with employers and provide post-placement follow-up and support to both employers and to the young people.

⁴ Chafee funds are provided to states by the federal government to support independent living programs helping youth in the transition to adulthood.

The sites face two large issues around job placement, however. First, many of the youth are unprepared for work, even for part-time employment. Second, many, if not most, of the placements are temporary or short-term.

Management Information Systems (MIS)—DOL required quarterly reporting from the sites. Sites had a great deal of difficulty accurately capturing the required data. The sites lacked both a common system for capturing the information and a complete understanding of how the data elements were defined. There was considerable confusion around the definition of some outcome measures; as a result, the sites did not capture every outcome possibility, particularly as they relate to part-time work. Staff from all the sites indicated that the outcomes and measures did not fully reflect the progress and interim accomplishments of the youth.

Youth Outcomes among the Sites

Staff from all five sites collected data on demographics, services, and outcomes. DOL gave the sites discretion in how they captured the data as long as they could provide the aggregate quarterly reports. This resulted in the sites using different methods. In some cases, the sites were not able to provide participant-level data for a particular variable or could provide these data only for certain participants. Nonetheless, because extensive work was undertaken with sites to replace missing information, we have confidence in the overall integrity of the participant-level data and the results they captured.

Table B provides characteristics of the youth who were served at all five sites (Variable definitions can be found in Table 2 of the main report). The five sites served over 1,000 youth in total; the number of youth served varied from 127 in New York City to 358 in Houston.

Table B. Participant Characteristics at Entry and Quarters Enrolled in Program—by Site and Overall

Characteristics at Entry	Category	Chicago	Detroit	Houston	Los Angeles	New York City	Total for All Sites
Age	Under 17	4.3%	3.9%	20.5%	35.4%	27.9%	19.0%
	17 & older	95.7%	96.1%	79.5%	64.6%	72.1%	81.0%
Race/ Ethnicity	White	0.5%	7.2%	23.0%	2.9%	0.0%	9.5%
	Black	87.3%	88.2%	54.1%	72.3%	70.9%	71.3%
	Hispanic	9.0%	0.0%	15.7%	19.9%	28.3%	14.4%
	Other	3.3%	4.6%	7.3%	4.9%	0.8%	4.8%
Gender	Male	35.5%	35.5%	47.5%	44.4%	37.8%	41.6%

Characteristics at Entry	Category	Chicago	Detroit	Houston	Los Angeles	New York City	Total for All Sites
	Female	64.5%	64.5%	52.5%	55.6%	62.2%	58.4%
School status at entry	In high school	69.6%	18.5%	27.2%	54.9%	46.8%	42.3%
	In postsecondary	2.3%	4.0%	18.8%	0.0%	10.3%	8.6%
	Dropout	4.7%	47.7%	23.8%	19.4%	27.0%	22.9%
	High school graduate but not enrolled in postsecondary education	23.4%	29.8%	30.3%	25.7%	15.9%	26.2%
Housing at entry	Stable housing	49.1%	65.6%	26.8%	68.3%	84.0%	51.9%
	Independent living	27.1%	8.6%	51.4%	18.5%	10.4%	29.0%
	Temporary/homeless	23.8%	25.8%	21.8%	13.2%	5.6%	19.2%
Foster care at entry		91.5%	55.3%	26.3%	74.8%	52.0%	56.3%
Adjudicated or Incarcerated		20.6%	No data	25.7%	17.2%	26.8%	21.9%
Parental status	Not a parent	56.9%	69.7%	85.8%	No data	88.2%	80.6%
	Noncustodial	8.7%	7.2%	7.0%	No data	6.3%	5.9%
	Custodial	34.4%	23.0%	7.3%	No data	5.5%	13.5%
Received public assistance and not in foster care		6.0%	3.3%	14.8%	1.9%	No data	7.1%
Quarters in program	1–3	3.2%	2.0%	30.0%	30.0%	40.9%	22.3%
	4–6	17.5%	22.4%	40.1%	21.3%	59.1%	31.9%
	7–9	79.4%	75.7%	30.0%	48.8%	0.0%	45.8%
Number of youth		214	152	358	207	127	1,058

Note: Variable definitions can be found in Table 2 of the main report.

All of the sites served a significantly higher percentage of youth over 16, most of whom were African American. Lack of stable housing, being parents, and having a juvenile record can all be considered significant barriers to employment for the youth served by the five sites.

The sites provided academic preparation, job preparation, and college preparation as well as a variety of support services to participants. Youth participated in these services for varying lengths of time. A large percentage of the youth, 46 percent, participated in the program for over 7 quarters, suggesting that the sites are providing long-term services to a significant number of youth. Just over 20 percent of the youth participated in the program for 1–3 quarters, and 32 percent participated for 4–6 quarters. The data for specific sites reflect differences in the start-up timeframes and decisions about how long to continue enrolling youth. For example, New York City did not begin enrolling participants until February 2006. Accordingly, New York participants could participate for a maximum of 6 quarters; and in fact, 59 percent participated for 4–6 quarters, while 41 percent participated for 1–3 quarters. In contrast, other sites tend to

show longer participation periods. In Chicago and Detroit, about 3 percent of the youth have been enrolled for less than 4 quarters, and in Houston and Los Angeles, 30 percent of youth have been enrolled for less than 4 quarters.

Table C shows the percentages of youth in each site and overall who received particular services, such as job or college preparation.

Table C. Services and Participation Received—by Site and Overall

Services & Participation Received the Following	Chicago	Detroit	Houston	Los Angeles	New York City	Total for All Sites
Job preparation	82.6%	96.7%	77.1%	71.5%	46.5%	76.3%
College preparation	80.7%	27.0%	8.1%	32.9%	14.2%	31.3%
GED/Basic Education	16.1%	46.7%	17.6%	15.5%	11.0%	20.2%
Life skills	80.7%	50.7%	11.5%	42.0%	43.3%	41.1%
Parenting	15.6%	3.3%	0.3%	12.1%	5.5%	6.8%
Health	52.3%	17.1%	61.5%	4.8%	No data	34.8%
Income support	50.9%	17.1%	54.5%	8.7%	No data	33.0%
Substance abuse	13.8%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	No data	4.1%
Other	64.7%	86.2%	31.8%	45.9%	4.7%	45.9%
Number of youth	214	152	358	207	127	1,058

Note: Variable definitions can be found in Table 2 of the main report.

Table D shows the percentage of youth who achieved specific outcomes, and the last row shows the percentage of youth who achieved any of the tracked outcomes. Wide variations in outcomes across the sites can be noted. These variations occur for all types of outcomes. Some can be explained by the specific program model used at a site. For example, Chicago has the highest GED or diploma rate, and Chicago is also the site where the most youth are in high school at the time of enrollment. Detroit has the lowest GED/diploma rate, which is consistent with what we learned from the site regarding their programming challenges around education. Because New York was in operation for fewer quarters, achievement of outcomes was likely reduced for both Passport to Success and overall for all sites.

Table D. Outcomes Achieved—by Site and Overall

Attained the Following Outcomes	Chicago	Detroit	Houston	Los Angeles	New York City	Total for All Sites
GED or diploma	43.6%	4.6%	27.9%	15.0%	8.7%	23.0%
Postsecondary	33.5%	10.5%	19.3%	9.2%	0.8%	16.8%
Employment	56.4%	38.8%	31.8%	24.2%	20.5%	35.0%
Any positive outcome	66.1%	45.4%	46.4%	32.4%	23.6%	44.8%
Number of youth	214	152	358	207	127	1,058

Note: Variable definitions can be found in Table 2 of the main report.

We examined a number of variables relating the participant characteristics and services received to outcomes attained. Some significant patterns emerged. Across all the characteristics and services, the most significant findings related to age, schooling status at entry, housing status at entry, and foster care status. Table E shows how outcomes varied for youth with particular characteristics.

Table E. Percentage of Youth with Specific Characteristics Who Attain Different Outcomes

Characteristics at Entry	Category	Attained the Following Outcomes			
		Employment	GED or Diploma ^a	Postsecondary ^b	Any Positive Outcome
Age	Under 17	18.6%	16.5%	6.9%	27.3%
	17 & older	40.1%	25.8%	17.3%	50.4%
Race/Ethnicity	White	37.0%	--	--	45.0%
	Black	36.1%	24.5%	16.6%	46.2%
	Hispanic	31.6%	20.6%	10.7%	40.8%
	Other	29.4%	--	--	39.2%
Gender	Male	33.7%	21.1%	14.0%	43.7%
	Female	36.1%	24.3%	15.3%	45.9%
School status at entry	In high school	34.5%	--	17.3%	47.1%
	In postsecondary	54.9%	N/A	N/A	67.0%
	Dropout	28.6%	10.4%	5.0%	35.7%
	High school graduate but not enrolled in postsecondary education	35.1%	29.8%	19.2%	42.4%
Housing at entry	Stable housing	31.1%	22.4%	12.6%	41.2%
	Independent living	43.4%	27.5%	19.7%	53.9%
	Temporary housing/homeless	34.3%	21.3%	14.5%	42.8%
Foster care at entry	Yes	36.1%	25.3%	17.0%	45.8%
	No	34.0%	18.5%	11.6%	44.0%
Incarcerated/Adjudicated	Yes	32.7%	21.5%	14.9%	40.5%
	No	34.4%	26.2%	15.7%	45.6%
Parental status	Not a parent	32.1%	21.6%	12.5%	41.7%
	Noncustodial	36.5%	22.6%	26.2%	49.2%
	Custodial	51.7%	31.2%	22.6%	61.5%
Number of youth		1,058	687	971	1,058

Note: Variable definitions can be found in Table 2 of the main report.

^a Only youth who were in high school or were high school dropouts at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

^b Only youth who were not in postsecondary school at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

Additional Findings

One of the most significant findings to emerge from the data is that youth who receive services for more quarters are much more likely to attain a positive outcome than youth who receive the same service for fewer quarters. (See Table 8 in the main report). For example, only 8.3 percent of participants who did not receive job training achieved an employment outcome. Of those youth who received 1–3 quarters of job preparation service, 32 percent obtained an employment outcome. The number who achieved this outcome rose to 69 percent for youth receiving the service for 4–6 quarters and to 100 percent for youth receiving the service for 7–9 quarters.

In another example, as the number of quarters participants received college preparation services increased, so did the number achieving a postsecondary outcome. For participants with no college preparation services, 8 percent achieved a postsecondary outcome; for participants with 1–3 quarters of college preparation services, 21 percent obtained a postsecondary outcome; for participants with 4–6 quarters of college preparation services, 49 percent obtained a postsecondary outcome; for participants with 7–9 quarters of college preparation services, 63 percent obtained a postsecondary outcome.

Conclusions

This evaluation was intended to be instructive to state and local policymakers and practitioners across the many systems that touch the lives of these youth. The following conclusions can serve as useful advice to those who work to ensure a successful transition of youth from foster care to productive adulthood.

- ***A multisystem approach is needed, as no single agency can meet all needs.*** Partnerships are critical design elements for these types of programs and, as such, need to be part of the original program plans. However, many of these relationships were formed after the programs were launched. Some never bore fruit and need further examination as to why.
- ***Staffing, including specialists who work directly with the youth, is resource-intensive but highly valued by the youth.*** As noted earlier, focus groups of youth placed a high value on the project staff, particularly their youth worker. These were not case managers in the traditional sense. These sites have gone a long way in creating a

practice model that combines the roles of social worker, counselor, mentor, navigator, teacher, and listener.

- ***The sites lacked complete data and comprehensive outcome measures.*** This is an important lesson for future demonstration and new program implementation efforts. Good data inform work, are a vehicle for tracking and following up on individual progress, and are needed to promote the program in the community and to prospective funders.
- ***Some program models are better defined than others, and these tended to be more successful in leveraging other services.*** Programs that start out as demonstration projects, such as these, use what they learn to refine and improve their service models. After more than two years of programming, the program model needs to be very clearly defined for the program to succeed.
- ***What constitutes formal program completion should be defined for all programs.*** Sites continue to explore the criteria for closing a case. As a result, sites report few youth exiting their programs. Program completion should be both a goal and a milestone for youth. That is, it should be defined and recognized through some sort of graduation or by a certificate of completion. Program completion or exit should not mean, however, that the young people who exit the program can no longer be served. Alumni follow up support groups offer promise as a way to transition youth away from the program supports that they have grown used to and can address some of the unmet permanency and relational needs these youth frequently experience.
- ***Sites value and need well-defined, intensive technical assistance.*** Sites unanimously found little value, aside from encouragement, from the technical assistance provided through DOL. More targeted and sustained technical assistance for this type of project is critical and should be a required part of the partnership agreement between the funder and the sites. An effective technical assistance strategy is especially important to replicating the promising approaches and to sustaining the projects. Future technical assistance elements should be customized for each site and combined with the opportunity for cross-site learning.

- ***Sustainability is an elusive goal.*** None of the sites has yet created a credible plan for sustainability. Casey Family Programs, which is now sponsoring the sites, is requiring that each site develop a sustainability plan moving forward.
- ***States clearly have a role in this type of program, but the role was inconsistent across the sites.*** With the exception of Texas, it is hard to see how these projects have brought the child welfare and workforce systems together in a truly collaborative way. This has been one of the more disappointing aspects of these projects. Strong partnerships and leadership at the state level—especially between the workforce development and child welfare agencies—can translate into aligning systems and services at the local level, no matter how the partnerships are organized. Moreover, it is clear that these local programs often need the help of the state to sustain their efforts.
- ***Policy changes in other arenas are needed to ensure success for youth transitioning from foster care.*** Many times, policies related to high school graduation requirements, financial aid for postsecondary education, liability for obtaining driver’s licenses, and eligibility for subsidized housing have a direct impact on youth transitioning from foster care and their opportunities for success.
- ***Strong long-lasting adult relationships are not a given for this population, so it is vital to assist youth in building these relationships at all stages of their lives.*** At all sites, several of the individuals interviewed recognized the important role that lasting adult connections can play in the lives of these youth. The lessons from this project should be built into strategic planning and reforms in how to deliver services to younger children in foster care to prevent them from reaching this stage of life without the connections they need for stability and success in adulthood.
- ***The sites show promise in serving youth in foster care and alumni of care, but it is too soon to draw conclusions about their success.*** We have found a number of promising practices across the sites, yet the data present a mixed picture. Only one of the sites reports a positive outcome for more than half the participants. Two of the sites report positive outcomes for less than one-third of the youth. On a more positive note, the data show that the longer youth receive services, the better their outcomes. We draw from these data that most youth need intensive services over a longer period of time if

they are to achieve successful outcomes. This is not surprising given what we know about the childhood adversities endured by this population. Accordingly, if these programs are to achieve lasting success, they must move beyond demonstration projects to stable programs with sustained funding support.

Highlighted practices from across the sites:

- Creating a center where youth feel comfortable and where a variety of services are available on site, rather than through referrals.
- Focusing on mental health by providing additional training for staff and more services to youth on site.
- Implementing a youth development approach where youth are involved in the design and operation of the center.
- Sticking with the youth as they come and go from the program when they are in need of assistance.
- Focusing on asset building by developing the youth's ability to live independently.
- Identifying job developers who place youth in jobs and who work closely with the employer and the youth to provide post-placement follow-up and support.
- Providing paid work experience as part of a work-readiness program.

IMPROVING TRANSITION OUTCOMES FOR FOSTER CARE YOUTH

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT OF FIVE-SITE FOSTER YOUTH DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

I. Introduction

In September 2004, the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) selected five states to participate in a demonstration project serving youth age 16–21 who were either currently in foster care or alumni of care. The solicitation required responding states to target the city or county with the largest population of youth in and from care and was limited to those states that had high numbers of such youth. The five sites selected were Los Angeles, California; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; New York City, New York; and Houston, Texas. The purpose of these projects was for sites to design and implement programs to improve employment outcomes for youth exiting foster care. ETA wanted these programs to serve as prototypes for the national Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system.

ETA chose this population of youth because of the poor outcomes they often experience. According to a 2008 AFCARS report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm), over 26,000 youth age out of the foster care system each year. Research shows that youth who have left foster care are more likely to drop out of high school, to be unemployed, and to be dependent on public assistance when compared to other youth. Other outcomes these youth often experience include higher than average mental health problems, drug usage, and involvement with the criminal justice system.⁵ It is clear that these young people face significant challenges in many spheres of everyday living.

These grants were initially funded for one year with the possibility of funding for up to three years. Each state initially received \$400,000, and states were required to match these funds on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Most of the matching funds came from state sources, but some local

⁵ See: Courtney, M. E., Terao, S., & Bost, N. (2004). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago; Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. K., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A. C., English, D., White C. R., Hiripi, E., Wiggins, T., & Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. www.casey.org.

sources have been used as well. DOL elected to fund the grants for two years and invested a total of \$4.0 million in the five projects. The states also invested \$4.0 million, most of which went to the local project sites. The funding covered all the sites through at least June 30, 2007. Casey Family Programs is continuing to support the sites with a required match of state or local funds.

In May 2005, ETA entered into an agreement with Casey Family Programs to collaborate on an evaluation of the five employment projects. In September 2005, Casey Family Programs selected the Institute for Educational Leadership to conduct the evaluation, along with its partners, the Johns Hopkins University and two experts on the experiences and outcomes of youth in foster care, Sue Badeau and Paul DiLorenzo. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the five demonstration sites in (1) implementing comprehensive services for youth in foster care and (2) improving education, employment, and independent living outcomes for these youth through these services. The evaluation was also designed to identify and highlight promising practices that could be disseminated to policymakers and practitioners in the workforce development and child welfare systems.

This is the third and final report. In each of the prior two years, the evaluation team made visits to the five sites to learn about their respective programs and to document their implementation challenges and successes. The first-year visits were to gather baseline information, and the second-year visits updated this information and identified promising practices and continuing challenges. The Year Two report was issued in May of 2007 and is available at www.iel.org/programs/casey.html. During October 2007, the evaluation team conducted a series of extended telephone interviews with key site representatives to update our information for this final report.

This report is also based on up to nine quarters of data for the period ending June 30, 2007. Sites began their programs at different times, so only the earliest to start up, such as Chicago, have nine quarters of data to report. New York City, which started up most recently, has six quarters of data. All sites were required to report data on a quarterly basis to DOL that included information about participants enrolled in the programs (including their characteristics), the activities they participated in, and selected outcomes. The sites also provided the evaluators with individual participant data. This report uses the individual participant data, as they are more complete and permit analyses based on more than one variable at a time.

II. Site Highlights

This section provides an overview of each of the sites. Additional information on each site can be found in the individual site reports. Information is based on site visits in the fall of 2005 and 2006 and telephone interviews conducted in the fall of 2007. Basic grant information for each site is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Basic Grant Information for Each Site

State Grant Recipient	Local Lead Agencies and Service Providers	Program Start Date	Total Promised Funding Amount	Source of Matching Funds⁶
California Employment Development Department	Foothill Workforce Investment Board (Pasadena) and Community Build (South Central Los Angeles)	May 2005	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state and local	State Wagner-Peyser (50%); local Chafee Funds (50%)
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity	Alternative Schools Network	January 2005	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state	State Workforce Investment Act (WIA) discretionary funds (50%); state Chafee funds (50%)
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth	Detroit Workforce Development and the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance; Employment and Training Designs, Inc. (local service provider)	February 2005	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state	State Chafee funds
New York State Office of Children and Family Services	New York City Administration for Children and Family Services (ACS); Arbor Employment and Training (local service provider; also	February 2006	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal+\$800,000 state and local	State Chafee funds (65%); local ACS funds (35%)

⁶ Wagner-Peyser and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds are U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training funds; Chafee funds are funds for youth in foster care that may come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the state match; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds are U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds for welfare assistance.

State Grant Recipient	Local Lead Agencies and Service Providers	Program Start Date	Total Promised Funding Amount	Source of Matching Funds⁶
	subcontractor (The Door)			
Texas Workforce Commission	Harris County Protective Services	March 2006	\$1.6 million: \$800,000 federal funds+\$800,000 local funds	State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); first year also included \$100,000 from state Chafee funds

California: Los Angeles

This project is unique among the demonstration projects in that it operates in two distinct locations serving two very different geographic areas of Los Angeles County: Pasadena and South Central Los Angeles. This is the result of a decision made by the state grant recipient, the California Employment Development Department (EDD). The Foothill Workforce Investment Board operates the location in Pasadena. Community Build, a well-established youth employment and training provider, operates the other location, in the heart of South Central Los Angeles. The program design is called “The California Model” and consists of six modules:

- Intake/ Eligibility
- Employment
- Academic/Educational
- Training
- Financial Literacy
- Retention

Although both programs are based on the same underlying program design, curriculum, and philosophy, the services and activities look quite different across the two locations, reflecting each organization’s culture, youth demographics, and approach to delivering services. The program was originally designed in modules for youth to work through in sequence. Both sites found that a structured, modular approach did not work well and that the youth needed a more individualized approach. Both sites have continued to fine-tune the delivery of services to youth in response to observations related to needs, maturity level, capabilities, goals, and interests of the youth and their readiness (or lack of preparation) for work.

Over the past year, changes have occurred at both sites, with the more significant redesign occurring at the Foothill site. The program was originally housed at the Jackie Robinson Center, a multipurpose community center located in Pasadena. This past year, the project moved to the Foothill One-Stop Career Center, largely because of concerns about continued funding of the project. Staff members feel that this move has been beneficial, as it allows youth to participate in the job-preparation and job-finding activities offered at the One-Stop Career Center. The staff believes it is good for the youth to be exposed to the offerings of the Center and to be served alongside the adult population that the Center serves. In addition, staffing has been increased with the addition of a case manager and two peer advocates. Work experience, which has always been a strong program component, was reduced because of finances and participant

need. The number of hours of work experience per week was reduced from 40 to 20, although the hourly wage was increased to the self-sufficiency standard of \$9.83 an hour. Again, staff believes that there are some benefits to this change in that it allows more time for the youth to look for a permanent job.

Community Build has always had many in-house services in the building it occupies that are available to youth in foster care. This year the organization has been working with the County Mental Health Department to expand their services, and they have reached an agreement to house staff at Community Build.

Both sites report that housing, gang involvement, and mental health issues are continuing challenges for this population of youth. Both sites indicated that they are seeing progress in the maturity level of the youth and in their placement in jobs and postsecondary education. Community Build, in particular, is seeing an increase in placement retention—an area they have prioritized over the past year.

Illinois: Chicago

Alternative Schools Network (ASN) is the local grant recipient for this project. Unlike the other states, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity identified a local service provider in its grant application. Thus, the funds have flowed directly from the state to ASN, based in Chicago. ASN is the largest and oldest association of non-public, community-based alternative schools in the country.

Thirteen alternative schools participate in this project, called Project New Futures. These schools are among the 15 that also participate in the Youth Skills Development and Training Program, which has been funded since 1999 by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to serve youth from foster care age 16–21, who are out of school and have not obtained a high school diploma or a GED. The services provided under Project New Futures are in addition to what is received through the alternative school programs. Youth are enrolled in the second semester of their junior year or during their senior year. A part-time transition counselor works at each of the schools and provides youth with intensive postsecondary preparation and planning, including preparation for the workforce. Youth participate in summer internship programs or are assisted in finding work. Every youth who wants a summer job is provided one.

Based on a review of first-year operations, ASN provided more direction to the participating schools around core elements of the program. Nonetheless, each of the 13 sites has flexibility in how they deliver services, resulting in disparities in the quality and consistency of the service delivery.

Transition specialists are stationed at ASN to provide support to the students once they leave high school and go on to postsecondary education or work. The postsecondary support is a key component of the program and was intended to address the issue of youth “falling off the cliff” once they leave high school.

Over the last year, staffing has been increased at ASN to reduce caseloads, which have continued to grow as more youth finish high school. Two additional staff members were hired, freeing up time for the project coordinator, who also had a caseload. There are now four full-time transition specialists at ASN and a project coordinator dedicated to providing support and assistance to youth once they leave school.

Like other sites, lack of housing is an ongoing issue, as are mental health and substance abuse. While ASN has been successful in raising funds in general and in raising visibility around issues of high school dropouts, it has not developed close relationships with either the child welfare agency providers or the agency that administers the WIA youth programs for the city.

Michigan: Detroit

Employment and Training Designs, Inc. (ETDI), a for-profit company, under contract with the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance and the City of Detroit Workforce Development Department, operated this project. The project is called CIAO, which stands for Creating Independence and Outcomes. It is located within the city of Detroit at the Rosa Parks Center, a city-operated center that also houses other Detroit WIA services for youth. CIAO moved to Rosa Parks Center from its location at the Highland Park One-Stop Career Center during the second year of the project. This move provided significantly more space and the opportunity to use the resources available at the new location.

The second year of the program has been a period of improvement for the program. Previously, many of the educational and workforce preparation services were delivered through workshops. The site reported that individualized job search and career preparation activities were more appropriate for this population than large-group workshops. Moreover, with respect to the GED preparation classes, many of the youth did not pass the test. The site started an education lab and added an educational coordinator about one year ago. Also, a college intern helps tutor youth. As a result, the staff report that they are seeing more academic progress in the youth, although many still face significant challenges as they prepare for the GED exam. Despite the poor economy in Detroit, there are entry-level jobs available. Unfortunately, many of the youth are not prepared for full- or part-time employment, and they face the added challenge of finding transportation.

Since the last evaluation visit, the project was advised by the state child welfare agency that youth could not be served once they reached 21, as they are no longer eligible for Chafee funds. In response, an alumni group was organized so that the youth could get peer-to-peer support and learn about available resources. Another positive change was that a mentoring program, called Stand Up for Kids, moved into the building and is providing mentoring services to some of the youth.

New York: New York City

The Arbor Employment and Training Corporation, a for-profit company under contract with the New York City's Administration for Children Services' (ACS) Office of Youth Development, operates this project, called Passport to Success. The New York State Department of Children and Family Services, the grant recipient, designated ACS as the funding agency for the project. In turn, Arbor subcontracted with The Door, a nonprofit youth service organization in New York City. Unfortunately, the contracting process was extremely lengthy because of the city's bureaucratic procurement protocols and took well over a year to conclude. Consequently, this project started later than the others.

The Door operates a youth center that provides a range of comprehensive programs and services to over 7,000 youth per year, approximately 25 percent of whom have foster care in their background. Because of the lengthy procurement process, the Passport to Success did not become fully operational until February 2006. Before then, ACS was providing services to a small number of youth that they thought would transfer to The Door. For a number of reasons, this did not happen.

Each youth at Passport to Success is assigned to a life coach who, with the youth, creates a membership development plan. The plan outlines a sequence of steps and daily schedule of activities that lead to reaching the youth's goals. The staff was initially surprised about the high percentage of youth who lacked a GED or high school diploma. To address this, the project has integrated the GED program with career preparation.

A strength of this program is its location at The Door. Over the last year, the program has become more integrated with the services offered at The Door, allowing the youth to take advantage of The Door's many services. Also, over the last year, relationships with ACS have improved. Youth in the program were able to participate in the agency-sponsored internship program, providing them with opportunities for career exploration and paid work experience. In addition, staff from The Door participates in monthly cross-agency meetings sponsored by ACS. As with the other sites, finding suitable housing is a big challenge for the youth. Mental health issues and the complications associated with teen parenting are persistent obstacles.

Texas: Houston

Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults was the agency selected by the Texas Workforce Commission, the state grant recipient, to operate this program. Unlike other sites in the demonstration project, Harris County also administers the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program, which is the state-funded transition program for youth from foster care. The program operates in a building that has been leased and renovated specifically for this purpose. PAL caseworkers have their offices at the Houston Alumni and Youth Center (the HAY Center), where services are provided to youth participating in the Houston's program.

The HAY Center leadership has focused on bringing in other partners to the Center, including representatives of postsecondary education and workforce development. Their educational offerings include both GED preparation and courses for a high school diploma. They also offer youth a work-readiness curriculum called Blueprint to Success. Staff has worked to address the challenge of getting youth to regularly attend and complete the Blueprint program. They have done this by treating it as a job for the youth, who are paid for on-time full attendance. Also, last year the staff was able to renegotiate the lease on their building. It had been the single largest program cost, and they were able to reduce this cost by two-thirds.

DOL's decision not to fund the sites for a third year had a detrimental impact on the site. They had begun to temporarily shut down operations until they found a less expensive location. Renegotiating their lease at one-third the cost and a Casey Family Programs' decision to fund the sites brought stability to the Center's operations. Many of the youth had drifted away, however, and the Center has had to work hard to attract them back. Another significant change that occurred with the transition from DOL funding is that the state has authorized the site to serve youth up to age 25.

III. Youth Characteristics and Outcomes among Sites

Overview of the Participant-Level Database

The data in the following section and throughout this report were generated from participant-level data rather than from the DOL matrix reports. The evaluation team compiled this participant-level database from individual-level data provided directly by the five sites. Because DOL allowed the sites latitude in documenting outcomes as long as they could provide quarterly aggregate reports, the manner in which sites documented records differed dramatically, though all sites used either Excel or Access files to capture much of their data. The service and outcome data were clearly burdensome for the sites to enter, and several sites did not keep electronic records of either services or outcomes. In some cases, the sites were not able to provide us with participant-level data for a particular variable, or they could provide these data only for certain participants. In these cases, we marked the appropriate cells in the overall participant level data as missing. We did not impute values for these missing fields.

Because we felt strongly that only participant-level data would allow us to investigate the effects of participant characteristics and services on the outcomes of interest, we opted to enter these data manually from case files and monthly participant update reports. For the most part, the participant-level data track very closely with the data provided to DOL in the matrix reports. Some discrepancies may have occurred because of differing interpretations of the data definitions. We consulted with the five sites to understand and interpret differences in the participant-level data and the aggregate data reported to DOL. Thus, we have confidence in the overall integrity of the participant-level data and the results they captured.

Overview of Variable Definitions

Staff from all five sites collected demographic information on the characteristics of each youth who enrolled in the program. For the purpose of analysis, categorical groups for some numeric variables were created, such as age, so we could compare the characteristics of older youth (those 17 and older) and younger youth (under 17). Table 2 shows youth characteristics for which we have data, the categories used in analysis, and, where not self-evident, variable definitions as set by DOL.

Table 2. Variable Categories and Definitions

Variable	Category	Definition
Characteristics at Entry and Quarters Enrolled in Program		
Age	Under 17	Participants who had not yet turned 17
	17 & older	Participants who were 17 or older at entry
Race/Ethnicity	White	Participants who are white and non-Hispanic
	Black	Participants who are black and non-Hispanic
	Hispanic	Participants who are Hispanic
	Other	Participants who are American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islander, multiracial, or of other races
Gender	Male	Participants who are male
	Female	Participants who are female
School status at entry	In high school	Participants who were enrolled full-time in secondary school at entry
	In postsecondary	Participants who were enrolled full-time in postsecondary school at entry
	Dropout	Participants who were not attending secondary school and had not graduated or obtained a GED
	High school graduate but not enrolled in postsecondary education	Participants who had graduated high school or obtained a GED but not entered postsecondary school.
Housing at entry	Stable housing	Participants living in a stable household at entry (including foster group homes) with a guardian or foster parent
	Independent living	Participants who had established permanent living arrangements, alone or with spouse or friend at time of enrollment.
	Temporary/homeless	Participants in other non-permanent living arrangements, such as homeless shelters, transitional housing, homes for pregnant/parenting teens, half-way houses, incarcerated, etc., at time of enrollment
Foster care at entry		Participants who were still currently involved in the foster care system at enrollment. This definition may vary based on site, as the age at which youth are emancipated from foster care can range from 18 to 21.
Adjudicated or Incarcerated		Participants who, at enrollment, were currently or had ever been incarcerated or adjudicated.
Parental Status	Not a parent	Participants who do not have any children
	Non-custodial	Parents who have at least one child but do not have custody of any children
	Custodial	Participants who have at least one child for whom they have custody and who resides with them
Received public assistance and not in foster care		Participants who received public income supports, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and who were not in foster care at entry.
Quarters in	1–3	Participant has been enrolled 1 to 3 quarters

Variable	Category	Definition
program	4–6	Participant has been enrolled 4 to 6 quarters
	7–9	Participant has been enrolled 7 to 9 quarters
Services and Preparation		
Job preparation		Participant received one or more of the following: subsidized work experience/ internship, unsubsidized work experience, or other job preparation class/ activity, such as leadership development classes or Secretaries Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) training
College preparation		Youth participated in activities intended to prepare youth for postsecondary education
GED/ Basic Education		Participants were in a GED prep class or were attending basic and remedial education classes
Life skills		Participants were enrolled in life skills courses
Parenting		Participants were enrolled in parenting classes
Health		Participants received medical, mental health, or prescription drug services at any time
Income support		Participants received income support such as TANF, SSI, Chafee, or Pell
Substance abuse		Participants received substance abuse counseling at any time
Other		Participants received other services, such as transportation, child care, education support services, or counseling
Outcomes		
GED or diploma		Participants achieved a GED or a high school diploma
Postsecondary enrollment		Participants entered full-time postsecondary school or part-time postsecondary education and part-time unsubsidized employment
Employment		Participants were employed in a paid job including apprenticeship and the military
Any positive outcome		Participants achieved a GED or diploma, entered postsecondary education, or achieved an employment outcome

Characteristics of Participants at Entry

Table 3 shows the characteristics of the youth served in the five sites during the first nine quarters of the programs' operation; over 1,000 youth were served during this period. Note that these characteristics were captured at enrollment or entry into the program. DOL consulted when deciding which data elements to collect to insure that the characteristics reported are ones that are relevant to this population of youth. Thus, the data elements reflect information about the status of the young people that relates to their unique situation, such as whether they are in stable housing and their foster care status. This array of data characteristics provides us

with an opportunity to see through the data to where these young people are in terms of their transition from foster care to adulthood and independent living.

Table 3. Participant Characteristics at Entry and Quarters Enrolled in Program—by Site and Overall

Characteristics at Entry	Category	Chicago	Detroit	Houston	Los Angeles	New York City	Total for All Sites
Age	Under 17	4.3%	3.9%	20.5%	35.4%	27.9%	19.0%
	17 & older	95.7%	96.1%	79.5%	64.6%	72.1%	81.0%
Race/Ethnicity	White	0.5%	7.2%	23.0%	2.9%	0.0%	9.5%
	Black	87.3%	88.2%	54.1%	72.3%	70.9%	71.3%
	Hispanic	9.0%	0.0%	15.7%	19.9%	28.3%	14.4%
	Other	3.3%	4.6%	7.3%	4.9%	0.8%	4.8%
Gender	Male	35.5%	35.5%	47.5%	44.4%	37.8%	41.6%
	Female	64.5%	64.5%	52.5%	55.6%	62.2%	58.4%
School status at entry	In high school	69.6%	18.5%	27.2%	54.9%	46.8%	42.3%
	In postsecondary	2.3%	4.0%	18.8%	0.0%	10.3%	8.6%
	Dropout	4.7%	47.7%	23.8%	19.4%	27.0%	22.9%
	High school graduate but not enrolled in postsecondary education	23.4%	29.8%	30.3%	25.7%	15.9%	26.2%
Housing at entry	Stable housing	49.1%	65.6%	26.8%	68.3%	84.0%	51.9%
	Independent living	27.1%	8.6%	51.4%	18.5%	10.4%	29.0%
	Temporary/homeless	23.8%	25.8%	21.8%	13.2%	5.6%	19.2%
Foster care at entry		91.5%	55.3%	26.3%	74.8%	52.0%	56.3%
Adjudicated or Incarcerated		20.6%	No data	25.7%	17.2%	26.8%	21.9%
Parental status	Not a parent	56.9%	69.7%	85.8%	No data	88.2%	80.6%
	Noncustodial	8.7%	7.2%	7.0%	No data	6.3%	5.9%
	Custodial	34.4%	23.0%	7.3%	No data	5.5%	13.5%
Received public assistance and not in foster care		6.0%	3.3%	14.8%	1.9%	No data	7.1%
Quarters in program	1–3	3.2%	2.0%	30.0%	30.0%	40.9%	22.3%
	4–6	17.5%	22.4%	40.1%	21.3%	59.1%	31.9%
	7–9	79.4%	75.7%	30.0%	48.8%	0.0%	45.8%
Number of youth		214	152	358	207	127	1,058

Note: Variable definitions can be found in Table 2.

Across all the sites, Houston served the greatest number of youth, 358, accounting for approximately one-third of all youth served. Just over 80 percent of the youth served by the sites were 17 and older.

Nearly three-quarters of the youth served were black, just under 10 percent were white, approximately 15 percent were Hispanic, and the remaining 5 percent of youth fell into other racial categories, such as Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian, or multiracial. The racial/ethnic composition differed somewhat across sites. For example, Houston served a higher percentage of white participants than the other sites, and New York City served a higher percentage of Hispanic youth than the other sites. Across all sites, about 60 percent of all participants were female.

The greatest proportion of youth was in high school when they entered the program (42 percent). The smallest proportion, fewer than 9 percent, was in postsecondary school at intake. The rest of the youth were split fairly evenly between being high school dropouts, 23 percent, and having graduated high school or obtained a GED and not enrolled in postsecondary, 26 percent. Not surprisingly, given their program model of operating their program through alternative schools, Chicago had by far the highest proportion of youth in school at entry, 70 percent.

The percentage of youth identified as being in foster care at entry varied widely across the sites, ranging from just over one-quarter of youth at one site to nearly 92 percent at another. Lack of stable housing, being a parent, and having a juvenile record could all be considered significant issues for the young people served by the five sites. In these areas, the percentages of youth with one or more of these characteristics vary from site to site. Across all of the sites, a significant percentage of the youth, ranging from 17 to 27 percent, were juvenile offenders. The percentage of youth in stable housing at entry ranged from just over one-quarter to over 80 percent. Across all five sites, less than one-fifth of youth lived in temporary housing or were homeless at entry, and the percentage in independent living arrangements ranged from 9 to 51 percent. Approximately 80 percent of youth were not parents at entry. Of those youth who were parents, approximately 70 percent were custodial parents, and 30 percent were noncustodial parents.

As Table 3 illustrates, across all sites, the participant data show that just over 7 percent of youth served were not in foster care at enrollment but did receive public assistance at intake. Houston's participant data showed a higher percentage of youth who were not in foster care but who were receiving public assistance at intake than for other sites, 14.8 percent.

The data on the number of quarters in the program show youth participating for varying lengths of time. A large percentage of the youth, 46 percent, participated in the program for 7 or more quarters, suggesting that the sites are providing long-term services to a significant number of youth. Just over 20 percent of youth had participated in the program for 1–3 quarters, and 32 percent participated for 4–6 quarters. The data for specific sites reflect the differences in the timeframe of the sites’ start-up and their decisions about how long to continue enrolling youth. For example, New York did not begin enrolling participants until February 2006; thus, of their participants, 59 percent participated for 4–6 quarters, while 41 percent participated for 1–3 quarters. In contrast, in Chicago and Detroit, only about 3 percent of the youth had been enrolled for fewer than 4 quarters, and in Houston and Los Angeles, 30 percent of youth had been enrolled for fewer than 4 quarters.

Overview of Participation and Services Received

Table 4 shows the percentages of youth in each site and overall who received particular services, such as job or college preparation.

Table 4. Services and Preparation Received—by Site and Overall

Services & Preparation Received the Following	Chicago	Detroit	Houston	Los Angeles	New York City	Total for All Sites
Job preparation	82.6%	96.7%	77.1%	71.5%	46.5%	76.3%
College preparation	80.7%	27.0%	8.1%	32.9%	14.2%	31.3%
GED/Basic Education	16.1%	46.7%	17.6%	15.5%	11.0%	20.2%
Life skills	80.7%	50.7%	11.5%	42.0%	43.3%	41.1%
Parenting	15.6%	3.3%	0.3%	12.1%	5.5%	6.8%
Health	52.3%	17.1%	61.5%	4.8%	No data	34.8%
Income support	50.9%	17.1%	54.5%	8.7%	No data	33.0%
Substance abuse	13.8%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	No data	4.1%
Other	64.7%	86.2%	31.8%	45.9%	4.7%	45.9%
Number of youth	214	152	358	207	127	1,058

Note: Variable definitions can be found in Table 2.

Of all the services the sites offered, by far the highest percentage of youth received job preparation. This is not surprising given the employment focus of these projects. Over 75 percent of all youth received job preparation services. In Detroit, over 96 percent of the youth received job preparation service. In contrast, less than 50 percent of youth received job preparation services in New York City, which is probably due, at least in part, to a broader focus

on youth development at The Door. Just under one-third of youth across all sites received college preparation services. Chicago, which mostly serves youth already enrolled in high school at entry, offered the highest proportion of its participants this service (over 80 percent). Across all sites, just over 20 percent of youth received GED or basic education training, fewer than 7 percent received parenting services, slightly less than 35 percent received health services, and approximately 45 percent received other services, such as housing assistance, transportation, or childcare. One-third of all participants received income support services, but this variable was defined very broadly to include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), as well as funds from Chaffee or Pell grants. Sites recorded very few instances of youth receiving substance abuse services; just 4 percent of youth were reported to have received these services. Since this service tends to be provided through referral to another agency, it may be that the service did not get captured in all cases.

Overview of Outcomes Achieved

Table 5 shows the percentage of youth who achieved each of three specific outcomes: attained a GED or diploma, entered postsecondary school, or achieved an employment outcome. The last row shows the percentage of youth who achieved any one of these three outcomes: 45 percent of youth served by all sites attained at least one of the three positive outcomes. Further, as seen in this table, just under one-quarter of those participants who were in high school or were high school dropouts at enrollment obtained a GED or diploma while in the program. Similarly, of those youth who were not enrolled at a postsecondary school at intake, fewer than 17 percent entered postsecondary school while in the program. Finally, just over one-third of all participants obtained an employment outcome.

Table 5. Outcomes Achieved—by Site and Overall

Attained the Following Outcomes	Chicago	Detroit	Houston	Los Angeles	New York City	Total for All Sites
GED or diploma ^a	43.6%	4.6%	27.9%	15.0%	8.7%	23.0%
Postsecondary ^b	33.5%	10.5%	19.3%	9.2%	0.8%	16.8%
Employment	56.4%	38.8%	31.8%	24.2%	20.5%	35.0%
Any positive outcome	66.1%	45.4%	46.4%	32.4%	23.6%	44.8%
Number of youth	214	152	358	207	127	1,058

Note: Variable definitions can be found in Table 2.

^a Only youth who were in high school or were high school dropouts at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

^b Only youth who were not in postsecondary school at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

We noted wide variations in outcomes across the sites. These variations occur for all types of outcomes. Some can be explained by the specific program model used at a site. For example, Chicago has the highest GED or diploma rate, and Chicago is also the site where most of the youth are in high school at the time of enrollment. Detroit has the lowest GED/diploma rate, which is consistent with what we learned from the site regarding their programming challenges with education.

Slightly more than one-third of participants attained an employment outcome for all the sites combined. While this figure seems low, staff from all sites stressed how the needs and challenges of youth in the foster care population make getting and retaining a job particularly challenging. In addition, staff at a number of sites said that they had not been sure how to record part-time employment outcomes; thus, it is possible that the sites did in fact place more youth in part-time jobs than the data reflect. In total, almost 45 percent of youth attained at least one of the positive outcomes while in the program.

How Service Receipt Varies for Youth with Particular Characteristics

Table 6 shows the percentage of youth with particular characteristics, such as male or female, who received particular services. This cross-tabulation offers insights into which participants are more or less likely to receive particular services. Although data may be presented for groups with greater than 10 participants, a variable was only evaluated when there were two or more groups. For example, school status at entry includes four groups, but some of the groups did not have enough participants for certain service areas to be evaluated (e.g., parenting). As long as services were provided to two or more groups, statistical tests were run to determine if they differed significantly. For school status at entry, groups were tested for differences in receipt of GED/Basic education services, but not parenting services.

Table 6. Services Received Based on Youth Characteristics at Entry

Characteristics at Entry	Category	Job Prep	College Prep	GED/Basic Ed	Life Skills	Parenting	Health	Income	Substance Abuse	Other
Age	Under 17	60.3%*	21.7%*	18.9%*	30.4%*	--	18.6%*	23.7%*	--	24.7%*
	17 & older	81.9%	35.3%	30.8%	43.9%	16.5%	39.3%	36.4%	4.8%	52.2%
Race/Ethnicity	White	80.0%*	--	36.0%	15.0%*	--	51.0%*	45.0%*	--	38.0%*
	Black	78.3%	37.8%*	27.1%	46.1%	16.5%	32.6%	32.1%	4.0%	50.9%
	Hispanic	65.1%	25.0%	21.5%	37.5%	--	32.9%	30.3%	--	28.9%

Characteristics at Entry	Category	Job Prep	College Prep	GED/ Basic Ed	Life Skills	Parenting	Health	Income	Substance Abuse	Other
	Other	76.5%	24.4%	33.3%	27.5%	--	39.2%	31.4%	--	41.2%
Gender	Male	74.9%	29.2%	29.7%*	39.0%	--	36.7%	32.1%	5.7%*	40.3%*
	Female	77.5%	34.9%	23.7%	42.5%	15.9%	33.7%	33.7%	2.9%	50.1%
School status at entry	In high school	73.8%	41.7%*	16.6%*	49.8%*	21.7%	33.4%*	31.8%*	7.2%	45.5%*
	In postsecondary	83.5%	--	--	22.0%	--	51.6%	46.2%	--	33.0%
	Dropout	77.6%	18.3%	46.9%	35.3%	--	33.2%	27.4%	--	52.7%
	High school graduate but not enrolled in postsecondary education	77.5%	30.4%	--	38.4%	--	33.7%	35.9%	--	45.3%
Housing at entry	Stable housing	73.7%*	36.4%*	26.3%	45.4%*	19.5%	24.8%*	24.1%*	4.6%	45.2%*
	Independent living	81.6%	24.9%	25.2%	30.6%	16.4%	49.7%	48.0%	3.6%	41.1%
	Temporary/homeless	76.6%	33.2%	32.6%	44.8%	--	40.3%	34.8%	--	55.2%
Foster care	In care at entry	76.2%	42.3%*	24.4%*	51.2%*	21.8%	28.0%*	28.4%*	5.2%*	50.0%*
	Out of care	76.7%	18.5%	34.4%	28.1%	--	43.1%	38.3%	2.4%	40.7%
Incarcerated/ Adjudicated	Yes	71.7%	28.7%	20.1%	39.5%	--	41.5%	36.1%	6.3%	40.5%
	No	74.3%	34.7%	22.9%	39.6%	16.1%	36.2%	34.7%	4.0%	40.6%
Parental status	Not a parent	75.1%	29.1%*	25.0%*	37.3%*	--	32.7%*	29.7%*	4.0%	42.1%*
	Non-custodial	76.2%	39.3%	37.7%	46.0%	--	42.9%	41.3%	--	52.4%
	Custodial	83.2%	49.6%	34.4%	61.5%	17.5%	44.1%	49.0%	--	65.7%
Quarters in program	1-3	47.4%*	15.2%*	15.5%*	13.0%*	--	32.6%	24.3%*	--	21.3%*
	4-6	80.5%	21.6%	27.5%	42.2%	--	35.6%	35.9%	--	38.6%
	7-9	89.9%	48.4%	34.6%	53.9%	18.9%	36.4%	37.0%	7.2%	64.7%
Number of youth		1,058	964	687	1,058	206	1,058	1,058	1058	1,058

Notes: (a) variable definitions can be found in Table 2; (b) * denotes statistical significance at the .05 level and is placed for the uppermost category with data for a variable (for example, * is placed next to the percentage for Under 17, not 17 & older, when a difference between the two was significant); (c) cells containing fewer than 10 participants are suppressed, and marked with --.

Across all of the characteristics and services, the most significant findings related to age, schooling status at entry, housing status at entry, foster care status, and quarters in the program. As seen in Table 6, older youth were more likely than younger youth to receive services offered by the sites. For example, nearly 82 percent of youth aged 17 and older received job preparation services, while just over 60 percent of youth under 17 received such services.

The receipt of services did not vary by race in a consistent way. For job preparation services and other services, Hispanics were less likely to receive the service than participants of other races. For life skills services, white participants received the services at lower rates than participants of other races or ethnic categories, while for health services and income support services they received the service at higher rates. Black participants were more likely to receive college preparation services, life skills services, and other services than participants in other racial or ethnic categories. Receipt of GED/ Basic Education services did not differ notably across racial/ethnic categories.

Males and females did not differ notably in terms of the percentage receiving a particular service. The exceptions were other services (including childcare and transportation), GED/ Basic Education services, and substance abuse services. A higher proportion of female youth received other services than male youth, while a higher proportion of males received GED/ Basic Education and substance abuse services.

For school status at entry, the differences among youth in different categories were notable for all services except job preparation. Not surprisingly, higher proportions of youth who were either in high school or had a high school diploma at entry received college preparation services than those who were high school dropouts. Likewise, a much higher percentage of high school dropouts received GED/ Basic Education services than youth who were in high school at entry. Youth in high school at entry were more likely to receive life skills services than youth in other schooling categories. Finally, youth in postsecondary school were more likely to receive health services than were youth in other schooling categories.

For housing status at entry, there were differences between the proportions of youth in stable housing, independent living, or temporary/homeless situations who received the following services: job preparation services, college preparation, life skills, health, income support, and other. Youth in the independent living category tended to have either higher or lower percentages receiving the service than youth in the other categories. For example, nearly 82 percent of youth in independent living received job preparation compared to 74 percent of youth in stable housing and 77 percent in temporary or homeless living situations. Similarly, a higher percentage of youth in independent living at entry received health and income support services than youth in other categories. In contrast, only 25 percent of youth in independent living who had not already entered postsecondary school received college preparation services compared

to about one-third of youth in stable or temporary situations who had not entered postsecondary school. Similarly, only 31 percent of youth in independent living received life skills services, compared to nearly 45 percent of youth in the other two categories.

Higher percentages of youth in foster care received college preparation services, life skills services, substance abuse services, and other services than youth out of foster care. For example, 42 percent of youth in foster care who had not already entered postsecondary school received college preparation services compared to about 19 percent of youth out of foster care who had not already entered postsecondary school. In contrast, lower percentages of youth in foster care received GED/ Basic Education services, health services, and income support services than youth out of foster care.

The data do not show notable differences in service receipt between those youth who had been adjudicated or incarcerated at entry and those youth who had not been adjudicated or incarcerated. Some differences do emerge based upon parenting status. Not surprisingly, the contrast in service receipt is most striking between those youth who are not parents at entry and those who are custodial parents, with the percentage of non-custodial parents receiving a service typically falling between the two extremes. For example, 62 percent of custodial parents received life skills training, 46 percent of non-custodial parents received such training, and 37 percent of non-parents received it. Similarly, 50 percent of custodial parents received college preparation, compared to 39 percent of non-custodial parents and 29 percent of non-parents. It is not immediately apparent why a higher proportion of custodial parents should have received college preparation services than other youth, but it is possible that despite, or perhaps because of, their significantly increased responsibility, they sought out and received college preparation services.

How Outcome Attainment Varies for Youth with Particular Characteristics

This section examines how the attainment of particular outcomes, such as obtaining an employment outcome, varies for subgroups of participants. Table 7 shows the percentage of youth in particular categories, such as male or female, who attained each of the following four outcomes: employment, GED or diploma, postsecondary, or any positive outcome. This cross-tabulation can offer insights into which participants are more or less likely to attain particular outcomes.

Table 7. Percentage of Youth with Specific Characteristics Who Attain Different Outcomes

Characteristics at Entry	Category	Attained the Following Outcomes			
		Employment	GED or Diploma ^a	Postsecondary ^b	Any Positive Outcome
Age	Under 17	18.6%*	16.5%*	6.9%*	27.3%*
	17 & older	40.1%	25.8%	17.3%	50.4%
Race/Ethnicity	White	37.0%	--	--	45.0%
	Black	36.1%	24.5%	16.6%*	46.2%
	Hispanic	31.6%	20.6%	10.7%	40.8%
	Other	29.4%	--	--	39.2%
Gender	Male	33.7%	21.1%	14.0%	43.7%
	Female	36.1%	24.3%	15.3%	45.9%
School status at entry	In high school	34.5%*	29.8%*	17.3%*	47.1%*
	In postsecondary	54.9%	N/A	N/A	67.0%
	Dropout	28.6%	10.4%	5.0%	35.7%
	High school graduate but not enrolled in postsecondary education	35.1%	N/A	19.2%	42.4%
Housing at entry	Stable housing	31.1%*	22.4%	12.6%*	41.2%*
	Independent living	43.4%	27.5%	19.7%	53.9%
	Temporary/homeless	34.3%	21.3%	14.5%	42.8%
Foster care at entry	Yes	36.1%	25.3%*	17.0%*	45.8%
	No	34.0%	18.5%	11.6%	44.0%
Incarcerated/Adjudicated	Yes	32.7%	21.5%	14.9%	40.5%
	No	34.4%	26.2%	15.7%	45.6%
Parental status	Not a parent	32.1%*	21.6%	12.5%*	41.7%*
	Non-custodial	36.5%	22.6%	26.2%	49.2%
	Custodial	51.7%	31.2%	22.6%	61.5%
Number of youth		1,058	687	964	1,058

Notes: (a) variable definitions can be found in Table 2; (b) * denotes statistical significance at the .05 level and is placed for the uppermost category with data for a variable (for example, * is placed next to the percentage for Under 17, not 17 & older, when a difference between the two was significant); (c) cells containing fewer than 10 participants are suppressed, and marked with --.

^a Only youth who were in high school or were high school dropouts at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

^b Only youth who were not in postsecondary school at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

As shown in Table 7, older youth were significantly more likely to achieve each of the four outcomes than younger youth. Specifically, 40 percent of youth 17 and older obtained an employment outcome compared to less than 20 percent of youth under 17. Similarly, 26 percent of older youth who had not already earned a GED or diploma at entry did so while in the program, compared to 17 percent of younger youth. While 17 percent of older youth attained a

postsecondary outcome, only 7 percent of younger youth did so. Overall, just over half of all older youth attained any positive outcome, compared to just over one-quarter of younger youth.

The data demonstrate that participants of different race/ethnicity achieve fairly similar outcomes. There were no significant differences between males and females or youth who were incarcerated or adjudicated at entry than those who were not.

Some differences in outcome attainment did emerge based on school status at entry. For example, over half of youth in postsecondary school at entry attained an employment outcome, compared to 35 percent of youth in high school at intake, 35 percent of high school graduates who had not entered postsecondary school, and 29 percent of high school dropouts. As expected, a lower percentage of high school dropouts than youth in high school at entry obtained a GED or diploma, 10 percent compared to 30 percent. Similarly, only 5 percent of youth who were high school dropouts at entry entered postsecondary school while in the program, compared to 17 percent of youth in high school at entry and 19 percent of high school graduates who had not previously entered postsecondary school. Overall, 67 percent of youth who were in postsecondary school at intake obtained any positive outcome while in the program, compared to 47 percent of youth in high school at entry, 42 percent of high school graduates, and 36 percent of high school dropouts. This may reflect both the abilities and motivation levels of youth coming into the program, which would be expected to be related to the likelihood of attaining positive outcomes in the program.

For housing at entry, the data show that youth who start the program in independent living tend to achieve more positive outcomes than youth who start the program in stable housing or who are homeless or living in temporary housing at entry. For example, 43 percent of youth in independent living attained an employment outcome, compared to approximately one-third of youth in stable housing or who were in temporary housing or homeless. Overall, 54 percent of youth in independent living attained any positive outcome, compared to 41 percent of youth in stable housing and 43 percent of youth who were in temporary housing or homeless at entry.

The percentage of youth in foster care at entry who attained an employment outcome did not differ notably from the percentage of youth out of foster care who attained such an outcome. However, youth in foster care were more likely to attain a GED or diploma than youth out of foster care—25 percent of the former group compared to 19 percent of the latter group. Youth in

foster care were also more likely to attain a postsecondary outcome than youth out of foster care—17 percent of the former group compared to 12 percent of the latter group.

Finally, the data show that higher percentages of parents attain employment outcomes, postsecondary outcomes, and any positive outcome than non-parents. Specifically, 52 percent of custodial parents attained an employment outcome compared to 32 percent of non-parents; 23 percent of custodial parents attained a postsecondary outcome compared to 13 percent of non-parents; and 62 percent of custodial parents achieved any positive outcome compared to 42 percent of non-parents. Generally speaking, non-custodial parents achieved somewhere between custodial parents and non-parents. It is not clear why custodial parents, who have so many additional demands on their time, should be more successful at attaining positive outcomes than non-parents. This counter-intuitive finding may indicate that the parenting status variable is capturing some other significant differences in the youth served, such as their level of motivation to provide for their family.

How Outcome Attainment Varies Depending on How Long Youth Have Received Particular Services

This section examines how the attainment of particular outcomes, such as an employment outcome, varies depending on what services participants received and for how many quarters they received that service. Table 8 shows the percentage of youth who participated in different services and for different durations, and who attained an employment outcome, a GED or diploma, a postsecondary outcome, or any outcome.

Table 8. Percentage of Youth Who Attained Outcomes by Service Provision

Quarters in Program and Services Received		Attained the Following Outcomes			
		Employment	GED or Diploma ^a	Postsecondary ^b	Any Positive Outcome
All Participants		35.0%	23.0%	14.7%	44.8 %
Quarters in program	1–3	5.2%*	11.2%*	--	15.2%*
	4–6	32.2%	23.4%	10.0%*	43.8%
	7–9	53.1%	30.4%	24.4%	61.9%
Outcomes by Service Area and Number of Quarters Served (0-9)					
Job preparation	0	8.3%*	8.2%*	--	13.5%*
	1–3	31.7%	17.8%	9.7%*	42.9%
	4–6	69.2%	55.2%	43.9%	83.0%
	7–9	100%	69.2%	44.1%	100%

Quarters in Program and Services Received		Attained the Following Outcomes			
		Employment	GED or Diploma ^a	Postsecondary ^b	Any Positive Outcome
College preparation	0	26.8%*	16.0%*	7.7%*	36.6%*
	1–3	42.5%	24.7%	20.9%	52.9%
	4–6	80.3%	62.7%	48.6%	90.1%
	7–9	88.2%	66.7%	62.5%	94.1%
GED/ Basic Education	0	32.2%*	23.4%	14.8%	42.1%*
	1–3	45.9%	22.9%	14.7%	55.6%
	4–6	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50%
	7–9	--	--	--	--
Life skills	0	25.1%*	15.3%*	8.3%*	35.0%*
	1–3	40.2%	24.8%	16.9%	51.1%
	4–6	75.3%	51.6%	42.3%	82.7%
	7–9	100%	73.3%	50.0%	100%
Parenting	0	33.6%*	21.2%*	13.9%*	43.3%*
	1–3	51.6%	44.9%	25.8%	64.1%
	4–6	--	--	--	--
	7–9	--	--	--	--
Health	0	28.0%*	16.6%*	10.9%*	36.4%*
	1–3	46.4%	34.8%	20.8%	59.4%
	4–6	73.7%	--	--	78.9%
	7–9	--	--	0.0%	--
Income support	0	27.5%*	12.3%*	8.1%*	34.7%*
	1–3	48.9%	46.0%	27.6%	64.8%
	4–6	68.0%	68.4%	44.0%	76.0%
	7–9	--	--	--	--
Substance abuse	0	34.4%	22.2%*	14.0%*	44.1%
	1–3	50.0%	43.3%	28.6%	66.1%
	4–6	--	0.0%	--	--
	7–9	--	--	--	--
Other	0	23.6%*	18.2%*	8.2%*	33.9%*
	1–3	51.7%	26.5%	24.1%	60.7%
	4–6	73.9%	64.5%	34.1%	82.6%
	7–9	--	--	--	--
Number of youth		1,058	687	964	1,058

Notes: (a) variable definitions can be found in Table 2; (b) * denotes statistical significance at the .05 level and is placed for the uppermost category with data for a variable (for example, * is placed next to the percentage for 0 quarters of services, not 1–3, 4–6, or 7–9, when a difference was significant); (c) cells containing fewer than 10 participants are suppressed, and marked with --.

^a Only youth who were in high school or were high school dropouts at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

^b Only youth who were not in postsecondary school at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from the data is that youth who receive services for more quarters are much more likely to attain a positive outcome than youth who receive the same service for fewer quarters. For example, only 8 percent of participants who did not receive

job preparation achieved an employment outcome. Of those youth who received between 1–3 quarters of job preparation service, 32 percent attained an employment outcome. The percentage who achieved this outcome rose to 69 percent for youth receiving the service for 4–6 quarters and to 100 percent for youth receiving the service for 7–9 quarters. Similarly, the more quarters a participant received college preparation service, the higher the percentage of youth who achieved a postsecondary outcome. Only 8 percent of participants who did not receive college preparation achieved a postsecondary outcome. In contrast, the percentage of youth who attained a postsecondary outcome was 21 percent for youth receiving college preparation service for 1–3 quarters, 49 percent of youth receiving it for 4–6 quarters, and 63 percent of youth receiving it for 7–9 quarters.

This relationship even holds true for some relationships that are not immediately intuitive. For example, duration of receiving college preparation service was associated with achieving an employment outcome. Ironically, one of the few instances in which this pattern does not hold occurs in the relationship between receiving GED/ Basic Education services and achieving a GED or diploma. The data show that a comparable percentage of youth who did not receive GED/ Basic Education services achieved the GED or diploma outcome as those youth who received the service for 1–3 quarters, and that none of the youth who obtained these services for 4–6 quarters obtained this outcome. This may reflect the lower ability level or motivation of youth who receive such services over the long-term, which could be expected to be negatively associated with obtaining a GED or diploma.

Regression Results

The cross-tabulations presented above show how outcomes vary with participant characteristics and services received. A limitation of these tables is that they do not isolate the impacts of specific characteristics and services on outcomes. For example, if older youth are more likely to receive college preparation services than younger youth, then a finding that older youth are more likely than younger youth to attend a postsecondary school could be due to the age factor or could be due to the fact that the older youth received more college preparation services. Regression analysis provides an estimate of the effect of a characteristic or service on outcomes of interest while holding constant other factors that might influence the outcomes of interest. In layman's terms, we will identify which participant characteristics and services

increase or decrease a participant's chances of achieving a positive outcome, holding all other characteristics and services constant.⁷

Table 9 shows the regression results for the outcomes of employment, GED/diploma, postsecondary enrollment, and any positive outcome. Variables for which the F- and t-statistic are marked with an asterisk (*) were significant at the .05 level.

⁷ In this section we report the results using ordinary least squares (OLS) analysis. This approach produces parameters that are easy to interpret, but OLS can produce estimated outcomes that are impossible (such as probabilities greater than 1.0 or less than 0), and the estimates may not be the most efficient estimates. In future work we will use logistic analysis, which avoids the technical problems that sometimes arise with OLS. It should be noted that logistic analyses and OLS usually produce similar results.

Table 9. Regression Results

Comparison Group	Group	Employment			GED/Diploma ^a			Postsecondary Enrollment ^b			Any Positive Outcome		
		R ² =.301 F(29, 893)=13.273*			R ² =.256 F(27, 577)=7.361*			R ² =.226 F(28, 810)=8.436*			R ² =.318 F(29, 893)=14.326*		
		b	t	B	b	t	B	b	t	B	b	t	B
Under 17	17 & Older	0.080	2.195*	0.072	0.085	2.085*	0.089	0.042	1.408	0.050	0.128	3.392*	0.110
Female	Male	-0.016	-0.548	-0.017	-0.040	-1.156	-0.046	-0.014	-0.562	-0.019	-0.012	-0.411	-0.012
0–3 Quarters	4–6 Quarters	0.185	4.886*	0.182	0.073	1.657	0.079	0.012	0.390	0.016	0.182	4.639*	0.171
	7–9 Quarters	0.346	8.884*	0.358	0.096	2.070*	0.108	0.122	3.684*	0.164	0.312	7.723*	0.308
White	Black	-0.058	-1.169	-0.057	0.083	1.234	0.088	0.075	1.734	0.095	0.008	0.155	0.007
	Hispanic	-0.016	-0.280	-0.013	0.068	0.918	0.060	0.056	1.131	0.057	0.047	0.793	0.035
	Other Race	-0.075	-1.007	-0.035	0.015	0.164	0.008	0.013	0.205	0.008	-0.027	-0.347	-0.012
In High School	Dropout	-0.001	-0.035	-0.001	-0.119	-2.942*	-0.125	-0.067	-2.044*	-0.075	-0.071	-1.708	-0.057
	HS Graduate/GED	0.003	0.083	0.003	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.029	0.982	0.035	-0.070	-1.893	-0.062
	In postsecondary	0.174	3.184*	0.105	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.107	1.897	0.062
Stable Housing	Independent Living	0.088	2.298*	0.085	-0.096	-1.974*	-0.090	0.020	0.614	0.025	0.021	0.534	0.020
	Temporary/homeless	0.021	0.542	0.017	-0.046	-1.056	-0.043	0.003	0.097	0.003	-0.010	-0.255	-0.008
In Foster Care	Out of Foster Care	-0.035	-0.955	-0.037	0.035	0.792	0.038	-0.001	-0.031	-0.001	-0.034	-0.897	-0.034
Not a Parent	Custodial Parent	-0.038	-0.773	-0.025	-0.094	-1.623	-0.069	-0.042	-1.012	-0.037	-0.019	-0.376	-0.012
	Non-Custodial	-0.021	-0.348	-0.010	-0.040	-0.619	-0.024	0.079	1.588	0.051	0.011	0.180	0.005
Did not Receive this Service	Job Prep	0.100	2.535*	0.093	0.042	0.883	0.043	0.039	1.175	0.048	0.164	3.998*	0.145
	College Prep	0.108	2.704*	0.106	-0.020	-0.437	-0.023	0.071	2.134*	0.092	0.081	1.952	0.076
	GED Basic Ed	0.066	1.671	0.052	0.020	0.480	0.019	-0.006	-0.187	-0.006	0.057	1.394	0.043
	Life skills	0.046	1.203	0.047	0.035	0.785	0.040	0.039	1.215	0.053	0.051	1.290	0.050
	Parenting Class	0.037	0.654	0.020	0.152	2.427*	0.095	0.007	0.151	0.005	0.058	0.995	0.030
	Health	0.019	0.471	0.020	-0.074	-1.512	-0.081	-0.067	-1.936	-0.088	-0.035	-0.815	-0.034
	Income Support	0.076	2.007*	0.076	0.276	6.211*	0.297	0.153	4.805*	0.198	0.140	3.588*	0.134
	Substance Abuse	-0.160	-2.239*	-0.068	-0.119	-1.566	-0.063	-0.004	-0.075	-0.003	-0.169	-2.293*	-0.069
Other	0.056	1.582	0.058	0.039	0.935	0.044	0.061	2.057*	0.083	0.062	1.700	0.061	
Not Adjudicated	Adjudicated	-0.008	-0.226	-0.007	-0.045	-1.185	-0.045	0.007	0.237	0.008	-0.048	-1.384	-0.040

Notes: (a) variable definitions can be found in Table 2; (b) although included in analyses, site specific results are not reported; (c) unstandardized regression coefficient = b; standardized regression coefficient = B; (d) * denotes statistical significance at the .05 level.

^a Only youth who were in high school or were high school dropouts at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

^b Only youth who were not in postsecondary school at enrollment were considered for this outcome.

Employment

As reported in Table 9, the predictors accounted for nearly 30 percent of the variance in the employment outcome ($R^2=.301$), which is typical for this type of regression. The unstandardized regression coefficients (b) from Table 9 provide estimates of the percentage point increase or decrease in the likelihood of obtaining a particular outcome, such as an employment outcome, that is associated with a particular characteristic, holding all other factors constant. For example, older youth (age 17 and older) were 8.0 percentage points ($b=0.080$) more likely to get a job than were younger youth (under age 17, the comparison group). Tenure in the program was also significantly associated with improved likelihood of attaining an employment outcome. Youth who remained in the program 4–6 quarters were 19 percentage points more likely to get a job than those who were in the program 3 or fewer quarters. Moreover, those youth who remained in the program 7–9 quarters had a probability of obtaining a job that was nearly 35 percentage points higher than those who were in the program 3 or fewer quarters.

Analyses showed that race/ethnicity did not significantly affect the likelihood of a youth obtaining a job; youth who were white, black, Hispanic, or of another race/ethnicity did not differ significantly in their attainment of job outcomes. For schooling status at intake, only youth who were in postsecondary school differed significantly in their attainment of job outcomes from the attainment rates of high school youth. Participants who were in postsecondary school at entry were just over 17 percent more likely than youth in high school at entry to get a job while in the program.

Additionally, regression analyses demonstrated that youth in independent living were nearly 9 percentage points more likely to obtain a job than youth in stable housing at entry. It is not immediately apparent why this should be the case. Foster and parenting status were not associated significantly with employment.

Regressions showed that youth who received particular services were significantly more likely to attain a job than youth who did not receive these services. Specifically, those youth who received job preparation services had a probability of obtaining a job that was 10 percentage points higher than those who did not. Those youth who received college preparation services also had the probability of obtaining a job 11 percentage points higher, and although the link between college preparatory services and job attainment is not intuitive, the relationship was

statistically significant. Income support service also was found to have a positive impact on employment; those youth receiving income support had a probability of obtaining a job that was 8 percentage points higher than those who did not. Finally, receipt of substance abuse services was associated with a 16 percentage point lower likelihood of attaining a job, although this is likely because substance abuse problems may interfere with obtaining and maintaining employment.

GED/Diploma

As reported in Table 9, the predictors accounted for nearly 26 percent of the variance in the GED/Diploma outcome ($R^2=.256$). The regression results for obtaining a diploma or GED are fairly consistent with those for obtaining a job. Not surprisingly, youth age 17 and older had over an 8 percentage point higher probability of obtaining a diploma or GED than youth under 17. Moreover, tenure in the program also significantly increased the likelihood of getting a diploma or GED. Those youth who were in the program for 7–9 quarters had a probability of obtaining a diploma or GED that was nearly 10 percentage points higher than youth who were in the program for 3 or fewer quarters. Males and females did not differ significantly in their attainment rates of diplomas and GEDs, nor did participants of different racial categories.

As would be expected, high school dropouts were significantly less likely to obtain a diploma or GED than youth who were in high school at intake; those who had dropped out of high school had a 12-percentage-point lower probability of obtaining a GED or diploma than participants who were in high school at entry. Although it is not immediately apparent why, youth in independent living arrangements at entry were nearly 10 percentage points less likely to get a diploma or GED than youth who were in stable housing at entry. This is in contrast to the result for the employment outcome regression, where youth in independent living arrangements were more likely than youth in stable housing to get a job.

Although it is not apparent why, those youth who received parenting classes had a 15 percentage point higher probability of obtaining a diploma or GED than those youth who did not receive this service. It is possible that receiving parenting services is serving as a proxy for some other characteristic, such as a higher motivation level to succeed. As with the regression for employment outcomes, youth who received income support services were more likely to obtain a diploma or GED than those who did not; the probability of receiving a diploma or GED

was nearly 28 percentage points higher for youth who received this service than for those who did not.

Postsecondary Enrollment

As reported in Table 9, the predictors accounted for nearly 23 percent of the variance in the postsecondary enrollment outcome ($R^2=.226$). As shown in Table 9, a number of factors were significantly related to a participant's chances of beginning a postsecondary education, all other factors held constant. For example, enrollment for 7 or more quarters significantly increased a participant's probability of entering postsecondary school by 12 percentage points compared to enrollment for 3 or fewer quarters. Age, gender, and race or ethnicity did not have a statistically significant effect on whether or not a youth entered postsecondary school, holding all other factors constant.

As would be expected, youth who had dropped out of high school at entry were significantly less likely to enter postsecondary school than those youth who were enrolled in high school at entry. Specifically, youth who had dropped out of high school were nearly 7 percentage points less likely to begin postsecondary school than were youth who had been in high school at entry.

In terms of services, those youth who received college preparatory services were 7 percentage points more likely to enter postsecondary school than similar youth who did not receive such services. Further, youth who received income support had a 15 percentage point higher probability of enrolling in postsecondary education. Those who received other services, which included transportation and childcare, had their probability of enrollment in postsecondary education increased by 6 percentage points than those who did not.

Any Positive Outcome

As reported in Table 9, the predictors accounted for nearly 32 percent of the variance in any positive outcome ($R^2=.318$). Gender and race or ethnicity were not associated with achieving any positive outcome. In contrast, youth age 17 and older were 13 percentage points more likely to achieve any positive outcome than youth under age 17. Remaining in the program for 4–6 quarters was associated with an 18 percentage-point higher probability of achieving a positive outcome than for youth in the program for 3 or fewer quarters. Youth who remained in the program for 7 or more quarters had a 31 percentage-point increase in the probability of

achieving a positive outcome than youth who had been in the program for 3 or fewer quarters. It is noteworthy that, holding all other factors constant, the longer youth remained in the program, the higher their likelihood of obtaining a positive outcome. In terms of services, job preparation and income support services were shown to significantly increase a participant's likelihood to obtain a positive outcome by approximately 16 and 14 percentage points, respectively. Lastly, participants who received substance abuse services were approximately 17 percentage points less likely to attain a positive outcome than youth who did not receive such services.

IV. Observations and Lessons Learned across Sites

Although the sites operated within a common framework, each brought its own interpretation to improving transition outcomes through provision of services. Lead service providers represented a mix of child welfare, workforce development, and education providers. The characteristics of the youth served varied among the sites. These sites offer a unique opportunity for learning about practices that show promise and the many challenges involved in helping youth from foster care make the difficult transition from the child welfare system to independent living and adulthood. Following are some observations about these challenges and practices organized around some common themes and a common framework of service.

Staff Relationships with the Youth—We have deliberately listed this first. According to youth focus groups, no single program component rose to the level of importance in the young person's life than having a caring adult who guided and supported the youth through this transition period. One of the youth in the focus group said, "I never had people care about me this much. I would definitely not be in college if it were not for this program." This is not new information, and it is consistent with the evolving definition of and focus within child welfare of the importance of permanent lifelong relationships for youth exiting the foster care system. In each of the first two years of the evaluation, we held focus groups with youth at each site. We asked the youth what they valued most about the programs. Overwhelmingly, the participants said that it was the individual who worked most directly with them.

The staff was clearly more than case managers. The youth workers assisted the young people in developing and implementing their life plan and in accessing services, and they served as mentors. Interestingly, the staff/youth relationships were not limited to the youth's designated

youth specialist. Many of the youth commented about how they felt they could talk with any of the staff and that the entire staff was there to help them.

Several of the sites employ alumni of foster care. For example, in Detroit and Los Angeles, peer advocates help strengthen the connection between youth and project staff. The positive connection between the project participants and the staff can be summarized in a few words: size (relatively low caseloads), structure, mentoring, motivation, and accessibility.

Some of the staff comments reinforce the strength of these relationships. A number noted that many of the youth leave the program, often for months at a time, but seem to find their way back when they are struggling or need some assistance. Unlike traditional child welfare services, which are time-limited, this model is what some would refer to as a recovery model where you return to obtain services when you need them.

Program Design and Services—To their credit, none of these programs have remained static. As they gained experience in working with the youth, they have made changes to their programs. The biggest change that several of the sites made was to move away from a cohort approach to serving youth to a more individualized, open-entry/open-exit approach. Several of the programs, most notably New York and Los Angeles, had designed their programs so that youth would follow a structured program model of classes and activities. The sites found that this didn't work well. The youth who come to them have a multitude of needs and are at very different places, both academically and emotionally. Sites found that they had to individualize the services provided to youth.

A number of sites have struggled with the work preparation component of their program. For example, after the first year, Chicago found that the in-school mentors were not paying enough attention to job preparation activities. As a result, the site added a career exploration and preparation curriculum, and each youth is guaranteed a summer job as well as opportunities for internships. Houston has continued to refine its job-readiness *Blueprint* program. The Houston site has tried to address the youth's inconsistent attendance by making it a "job" where youth are paid for on-time and consistent attendance. Still, staff members feel that the program needs further refinement and improvement. Incentives are also an important part of New York's programs. Youth who reach specific milestones are rewarded.

The Detroit site has struggled with its GED preparation program as staff members found that many youth were not prepared to pass the GED exam. Over the past year, they restructured their program and made staffing changes to individualize the GED preparation. As a result, the staff reports that it is seeing progress in the educational attainment of the youth, although many are still not ready to take and pass the GED test.

Houston, in particular, prides itself on being a youth-driven program and seeks the input of its participants in all aspects of the services and activities provided at the Center. A youth leadership group meets regularly to discuss operations at the Center and to make recommendations. Other sites also seek youth input although not in as formal approach as Houston.

Program Staffing—Program staffing across the sites has remained remarkably stable, given the challenging nature of the work and the relatively low pay. All the sites report that many, if not all, of the initial staff are still with the program. Stability in staffing is important for relationship development with the youth, and it is a testament to the good decisions that sites have made regarding staffing that there has been limited turnover. The three sites with the fewest staffing changes were Houston, New York, and the Community Build site in Los Angeles. Both the Chicago and the Los Angeles Foothill sites have increased their staff over the past year. In Chicago, the staffing increases occurred at ASN in response to the growing number of youth who had finished the alternative school and were in need of postsecondary support and services. Foothill increased its staff in order to provide more individualized attention to the youth.

Sites have also given added attention to staff development, some more than others. For instance, during the second year, Houston saw that more of the youth coming into the program had anger management issues that the staff was not well equipped to address. In response, project leadership arranged for a series of staff development sessions on how to address this issue. The leadership noted that it wished it had foreseen the need for this training earlier, a lesson applicable to all the sites.

Several of the sites, notably Detroit, have hired alumni from foster care to assist with the program. Sites have found that these alumni relate particularly well to the program participants, and, although these staff serve different roles, they are particularly effective at guiding new

participants through the enrollment process and explaining the services the program has to offer.

Program Partnerships/Collaborations across Agencies—Three of the five program providers (Detroit, Los Angeles, and New York City) have their deepest institutional experience in employment and training or in youth development. In Chicago, the program agency is an association of alternative schools, experienced in youth employment, but bringing a principal focus on education. Only one site, Houston, is a child welfare program provider, although the entity funding the project is the state workforce agency. Thus, for four of the program providers, developing a relationship to the child welfare system is critical both for accessing child welfare funds and coordinating additional services. These relationships, for the most part, appear to have been difficult to build, particularly as they relate to cross-agency coordination of services. The sites report that they have been successful in accessing the resources that are available to the youth through the Chafee funds. There is little routine coordination between child welfare caseworkers and project staff, however.

On the other hand, while access to employment and training resources seems to have been more direct for the four agencies with deeper experience and contacts in that arena, even Houston seems to have done pretty well, primarily through the advocacy of the state-based Texas Workforce Commission.

The sites report that they have been successful in accessing the Chafee resources available to youth. Success facilitated by strong interagency relationships.

Relationships between agencies did not always run smoothly, however. In New York City, the relationship between the project and the city's Administration for Children Services (ACS) was particularly strained because of the long period of time it took for the city to award the contract and program transition issues. Over the last year, though, the relationship has improved. Last year, youth from the program participated in an internship program sponsored by the child welfare agency and staff now participates in cross-agency/service provider meetings sponsored by ACS.

Interestingly, even though Chicago's alternative schools receive funding from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for educating youth from foster care, the relationship

among the schools, ASN, and DCFS is not particularly strong, and for the most part, the project staff and the caseworkers have little contact. This is true at most of the sites: there is little coordination between child welfare caseworkers and project staff.

Houston clearly has an advantage in this regard as their staff serve as the child welfare transition caseworkers as well as the project staff. They have, however, experienced some difficulties in defining and solidifying their relationship with the local WorkSource Center, Houston's One-Stop Career Center system.

Sites have developed some notable partnerships in other areas. For example, the Los Angeles Foothill site has a relationship with the local office of Casey Family Programs, allowing the youth to participate in both programs. Houston has been successful in tapping into the services provided by the local mental health agency, which sends staff to the Center to work with the youth, individually or in groups. Community Build, which has always housed multiple service providers, recently entered into an agreement with the local mental health agency to increase its presence and services at the Center. A few of the sites have established relationships with the Job Corps. This would seem to be a good option for youth, particularly the many who have difficulty finding housing. Yet, all the sites report that few youth want to participate in the Job Corps as they find the structure too difficult after their experiences with the regimen of the child welfare system.

Sites have also had some success in establishing relationships with the juvenile justice system. A number of youth in foster care have been involved in the juvenile justice system. Several of the sites, including Houston and Los Angeles Community Build, have been successful in having a probation officer at their site. Community Build also provides youth from care with legal services.

Houston and Community Build (Los Angeles), as well as Chicago, also have developed good relationships with local community colleges. These seem to be particularly productive partnerships as community colleges generally are able to provide youth with extra supports they may need to successfully continue their education.

Job Placement and Follow-up—Sites have had little difficulty in finding entry-level jobs for youth. Detroit, with the highest unemployment rate of any of the sites, reports that there are still

entry-level jobs available. Job placement specialists at the sites work directly with employers and provide post-placement follow-up and support to both employers and to the young people. These specialists tended to develop relationships with specific employers in the community and have been able to make multiple placements with the employers. In the first two years, Chicago relied on the alternative school staff and other programs it operated for job placements. This past year, however, a job placement specialist was hired to work for the project.

Two larger issues center on job placement. First, many of the youth are unprepared for work, even for part-time employment. Second, many, if not most, of the placements are short-lived. We acknowledge that young people typically move from job to job before settling in a career track. The fact that the youth tend not to keep their first job is not, therefore, the major concern. Rather, it is the fact that the sites have continued to tell us how unprepared the youth are for work, in spite of the work-readiness program offerings of the sites. One way that sites have tried to address this issue is through their job developers, who follow up with the employers and the youth on a regular basis to try to resolve issues while the young person is still employed. Internships and summer employment are a part of the program offerings across the sites, and they serve as a way to introduce youth to work. It appears that more needs to be done so that the first job is a positive experience for both young worker and the employer.

Management Information Systems (MIS)—DOL instituted quarterly reporting from the sites. These reports covered characteristics of the youth, activities, and outcomes. In addition, performance measures were established around placements in employment and postsecondary education; attainment of a high school, occupational, or postsecondary credential; and retention in placements six months after the placement. Sites had a great deal of difficulty capturing the data accurately. The sites lacked a common system for capturing the information, as well as a complete understanding of how the data elements were defined. Further, there was considerable confusion around the definition of the outcome measures; as a result, the sites did not capture every outcome possibility, particularly as it relates to part-time work. Staff from all sites indicated that the outcomes and measures did not fully reflect the progress and interim accomplishments of the youth. Casey Family Programs is addressing this issue. It has developed an Internet-based system that will capture more complete service and outcome data.

V. Conclusions

We have had the opportunity to follow these projects from their beginning in late 2005 through our last phone interviews in September 2007. These sites have taught us, the evaluators, much about the needs of this population and how to address them. This evaluation was always intended to be instructive to state and local policymakers and practitioners across the many systems who touch the lives of these youth. We offer the following conclusions that sum up what we have learned. We hope they will serve as useful advice to individuals who are part of insuring a successful transition of youth from foster care to productive adulthood.

A multisystem approach is needed, as no single agency can meet all needs. Not surprisingly, the sites have come to understand that the best approach to working with this population is a multisystem one. This approach is especially important to help youth navigate the rocky waters of transition. Many youth exiting foster care lack both the skills and maturity to be successful in the adult workforce because they have not had employment role models while growing up and the employment connections that family can sometimes provide. However, because they must provide for themselves (and in many cases for their own children or younger siblings), they need full-time employment for survival. They need an integrated multisystem wraparound approach to support them while they acquire the skills necessary for succeeding in the adult workforce.

Clearly, the most significant challenges across the sites—housing, physical and mental health, transportation, substance abuse, teen parenting, low academic skills, and effective legal representation for youth—require more partnerships than the sites have generally been able to create. Partnerships are critical design elements for these types of programs and, as such, need to be part of the original program plans. Many of these relationships were formed after the programs were launched. Some never came to fruition.

Communities seeking to begin similar programs or improve existing programs for youth from foster care are advised to take note of the experience of these sites and make sure that at least the following critical partners are in alignment and in agreement about how they will collectively serve this population of youth: child welfare, secondary and postsecondary education, workforce development (both One-Stop Career Centers and youth service providers), physical and mental health care providers, transportation, juvenile justice, and other legal advocacy providers. To the

greatest extent possible, it is recommended that multiple providers be co-located in a single location, as they are in Houston, at The Door in New York City, and at Community Build in Los Angeles.

Staffing, including specialists who work directly with the youth, is resource-intensive but highly valued by the youth. As noted earlier, focus groups of youth were conducted in each of the first two years that sites were visited and youth were asked what they liked most about the program. Their first response was the project staff, particularly their youth worker. These were not case managers in the traditional sense but rather mentors, who model behavior for the young people, provide unconditional support, maintain high expectations, and expect them to stay on track. Further, some sites employ former alumni of care. Youth participants are encouraged to know there are individuals who have shared their experiences and will not give up on them. For their part, the staff noted that they see many of the youth “disappear” for periods of time but then come back when they need help, attesting to the value of these relationships. These five sites have gone a long way in creating a practice model that combines the roles of social worker, counselor, mentor, navigator, teacher, and listener.

Not surprisingly, staffing was the biggest cost for most sites. Houston was able to mitigate this expense because it also administers the state-funded Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program for youth transitioning out of foster care. The youth transition counselors under the PAL program served a dual role, allowing their staffing costs to be absorbed by the PAL program. This model holds promise for other communities that want to implement similar programs or merely want to improve how they deliver transition services through their child welfare systems.

The sites lacked complete data and comprehensive outcome measures. The sites were unanimous in observing that the DOL data reporting system was confusing at best and that the measures did not fully reflect youth outcomes, particularly around part-time employment and milestones in the youth’s development. DOL launched the program quickly, and few people in the employment field are familiar with the unique needs of youth in foster care. Performance measures for demonstration projects such as these should capture the progress of the youth and reflect the interest and needs of both the child welfare and workforce development systems.

In retrospect, sites would have benefited from having a comprehensive management information system that captured individual youth characteristics,

Highlighted practices from across the sites:

- Creating a center where youth feel comfortable and where a variety of services are available on site, rather than through referrals.
- Focusing on mental health by providing additional training for staff and more services to youth on site.
- Implementing a youth development approach where youth are involved in the design and operation of the center.
- Sticking with the youth as they come and go from the program when they are in need of assistance.
- Focusing on asset building by developing the youth's ability to live independently.
- Identifying job developers who place youth in jobs and who work closely with the employer and the youth to provide post-placement follow-up and support.
- Providing paid work experience as part of a work-readiness program.

services, and activities provided, including referrals to other agencies, milestones, and completion of activities, as well as outcomes. This issue is being addressed with the sites' move to Casey Family Programs funding and support. Casey Family Programs has provided the sites with a comprehensive system, developed in consultation with the sites, and has provided extensive training in how to use it. This is an important lesson for future demonstration and new program implementation efforts. Good data inform work, are a vehicle for tracking and following up on individual progress, and are needed to sell the program to the community and to prospective funders.

Some program models are better defined than others, and these tended to be more successful in leveraging other services. Programs that start out as demonstration projects, such as these, use what they learn to refine and improve their service models. All of the sites have done this, as noted above. After more than two years of programming, the program model needs clarification. What are the program components? How do youth move from one component to another? What does completion look like? Of the sites, New York, Los Angeles (particularly Community Build), and perhaps Houston seem the farthest along in this regard. Interestingly enough, of all the sites, both Los Angeles Community Build and the New York City site are located within existing youth service providers, allowing the youth-from-care participants to also take advantage of the range of services and activities that are available at the facility. Locating these programs within existing agencies seems to provide benefits both in leveraging resources and in helping to structure and define the programs.

What constitutes formal program completion should be defined for all programs. Sites continue to explore the criteria for closing a case, and as a result, sites reported few youth exiting their programs. Typically, youth exit the program when they leave the area or reach an age when he or she can no longer be served. Program completion should be a goal and a milestone for youth that is defined and recognized through a graduation ceremony of some sort or a certificate of completion.

Program completion or exit should not mean that the young people who exit the program can no longer be served. As noted in the report, youth frequently leave the program for extended periods and then come back. Even youth who successfully leave the program for a job or full-time education or training might benefit from services after they formally terminate their participation. Thus, provision should be made for youth to retain access to the program, even after their formal participation ends. Both Houston and Detroit support peer groups of program alumni that come together periodically to learn about resources and for peer support. In addition, Detroit produces a newsletter for its former program participants. Alumni groups show promise as a way to transition youth away from the program supports that they have grown used to as well as to address some of the unmet permanency and relational needs these youth frequently experience.

Sites value and need well-defined, intensive technical assistance. Sites unanimously found little value, aside from encouragement, in the technical assistance provided through DOL. Sustained technical assistance was inconsistent—it started and stopped and started again—and the resources weren't sufficient to support in-depth assistance. In addition, most of the local service providers had no, or limited, experience working with this population of youth and with the child welfare system. DOL did not have technical experts with sufficient background in the child welfare system. DOL's federal partner at the Department of Health and Human Services, however, might have been the appropriate source for providing this type of assistance to the sites.

All the sites noted that they were open to a more substantial level of technical assistance and were encouraged by the help that is beginning to come from Casey Family Programs. The sites particularly found value in the peer learning opportunities.

Technical assistance with this type of project is critical and should be a required part of the partnership agreement between the funder and the sites. Sites need to have an important role in determining what kind of technical assistance will be most useful for them, beginning with an inventory of the existing resources and expertise available locally and identification of gaps. The assistance should include a focus on the many challenges the young people who have been in foster care face as they struggle to become independent and productive. An effective technical assistance strategy is especially important for replicating the promising approaches and for sustaining the projects. Future technical assistance elements should be customized for each site and combined with the opportunity for cross-site learning.

Sustainability is an elusive goal. None of the sites have yet created a credible plan for sustainability. This was evidenced by the significant jolt that occurred within all of the sites when DOL discontinued their funding support. This action took the sites by surprise, and many were still refining their model. Although Casey Family Programs has assumed funding, few sites have taken the opportunity to generate a sustainability plan. This plan should include how the program will highlight its efforts in the community and across the state, if not nationally. Specifically, the role of public and private partnerships, possible new funding sources, and fund-raising options need to be articulated in this plan.

States clearly have a role in this type of program, but this role was inconsistent across the sites. States supported the sites in terms of funding and in their interest in seeing the programs succeed. In several of the states, these projects have informed state policy. For example, Illinois and Michigan state workforce development agencies are now more focused on the foster care population of youth, and they are pursuing avenues for replication across the state. Yet, with the exception of Texas, it is hard to see how these projects have brought the child welfare and workforce systems together in a truly collaborative way. In a few of the states, while Chafee funding contributed to the matching funding, the state public welfare agency was largely a silent partner. In New York, the state and local child welfare agencies held the grant relationship with the project, and workforce development agencies at both the state and local levels were not a part of the equation. Texas showed the most progress in this regard. Texas has the benefit of state legislation to support their efforts and a strong commitment on the part of the leaders in both state agencies to work together.

This has been one of the more disappointing aspects of these projects. Strong partnerships and leadership at the state level—especially between the workforce development and child welfare agencies, however how these partnerships are organized—can translate into aligning systems and services at the local level. Moreover, it is clear that these local programs need the help of the state to sustain their efforts.

It is not too late. With Casey Family Programs continuing funding for at least another year, states have the opportunity to step up and provide leadership and support. State agencies need to demonstrate to their local areas that state and local agencies can work together effectively to make policies that remove barriers to local level system alignment. The state agencies can jointly provide staff development across agencies and sponsor planning sessions for local partners leading to a better understanding of the different systems and to agreement on how best to coordinate services.

Policy changes in other arenas are needed to ensure success for youth transitioning from foster care. Many times, policies concerning high school graduation requirements, financial aid for postsecondary education, liability for obtaining drivers' licenses, or eligibility for subsidized housing directly affect youth transitioning from foster care and their opportunities for success. For example, without uniformity in policies regarding the transferability of high school credits, many youth in foster care find themselves attending more than four years of high school and still not showing enough credits to graduate. Once they do graduate, many of the youth served at all five sites have their sights set on college, although frequently they have to take remedial (non-credit-bearing) courses or participate in bridge programs to prepare them for a full college load. During this time, they have challenges meeting the criteria for typical college financial aid programs, which often require students to carry a minimum number of credit-bearing courses to receive financial aid. Thus, their opportunities to graduate are reduced.

Strong long-lasting adult relationships are not a “given” for this population, and assisting youth in building these relationships is vital at all stages of their lives. At all sites, several of the individuals interviewed recognized the important role that lasting adult connections can make in the lives of these youth. The lessons from this project should be built into strategic planning for reforms in services to younger children in foster care so they are less likely to reach this stage of their lives without the connections they need for stability and success in their adult lives.

“If we were starting over,” a child welfare official at one of the sites explained, “we would definitely create an expectation that assisting the youth in obtaining stability and permanency in their lives must be a priority.” To an extent, the project staff fills part of this gap and work toward developing “deep and strong” relationships with the youth. Even the best staffs realize, however, that they cannot be there for a young person at all hours of the night, or every weekend. “A family IS there 24-7,” one person noted, “unlike any agency under the sun.” The kind of safety net that only a family or other supportive, lifelong adult relationships can provide can often make the difference as to whether a young person can successfully transition into the adult workplace and take on his or her role as a contributing adult member of the community.

The sites show promise in serving youth in foster care and alumni, but it is too soon to draw conclusions about their success. A number of promising practices have been identified, and the sites have demonstrated flexibility by altering their programs so that they better meet the needs of the youth they serve. Sites are working to meet the multiple needs of this unique client group, whether by addressing academic and workforce preparation deficiencies, by teaching life skills, by providing adult guidance, or by meeting their varied supportive service needs. Yet the data present a mixed picture. Only one of the sites reports a positive outcome for more than half of the participants. Two of the sites report positive outcomes for less than one-third of the youth. As one person noted, “I believe it is wonderful to have good atmosphere, but we also need to have high expectations and service structure delivery. As a group, we need to move beyond the excuses that ‘youth are unreliable’ or ‘youth aren’t capable of coming to a meeting’ and develop systematic plans to address the issues that are affecting success.”

On a more positive note, the data show that the longer youth receive services, the better their outcomes. As an example, 100 percent of the youth who received job preparation services for 7–9 quarters were placed in a job. The site that has operated the longest, Chicago, had the highest rate of positive youth outcomes, while the site that has operated the shortest period of time, New York City, has the lowest rate. We draw from this data that most youth need intensive services over a longer period of time if they are to achieve successful outcomes. This is not surprising given what we know and have learned about this population of youth. Accordingly, if these programs are to achieve lasting success, they must move beyond demonstration projects to stable programs with sustained funding support.

VI. Contact Information

For the sites:

California: Los Angeles

State: Norma McKay
California Employment Development Department
800 Capitol Mall, MIC 50
Sacramento, CA 95814
916.654.6873
nmckay@edd.ca.gov

Local: Kim Ramsey
Community Build Inc.
4305 Degnan Blvd, #105
Los Angeles, CA 90008
323.290.6560
KimRam7070@aol.com

Dianne Russell-Carter
Foothill Employment and Training Connection
1207 E. Green Street
Pasadena, CA 91107
626.584.8301
Drussell@foothilletec.org

Illinois: Chicago

State: William Leslie
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
JR Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph Street, Suite 3-400
Chicago, Illinois 60601
312.814.6316
William.leslie@illinois.gov

Local: Jack Wuest
Alternative School Network
1807 W. Sunnyside
Chicago, Illinois
312.259.2360
jwuest@asnchicago.org

Michigan: Detroit

State: Yvette Harris
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth
201 N. Washington Square
Lansing, Michigan 48913
517.241.0092
harrys@michigan.gov

Local: Antoinette Wirth
Employment & Training Designs, Inc.
1300 Rosa Parks Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48216
313.628.2276
awirth@etdinc.com

New York: New York City

State: Kristen LaClair
New York State Office of Children and Family Services
52 Washington Street, Room 309 South
Rensselaer, New York 12144
518.473.1813
Kirsten.laclair@ocfs.state.ny.us

Local: Wendell Moore
The Door
555 Broome Street
New York, NY 10019
212.941.9090 x 3333
Wendell@door.org

Texas: Houston

State: Shannon Ramsey
Texas Workforce Commission
101 East 15th Street, Room 440T
Austin, Texas 78778
512.463.3847
Shannon.ramsey@twc.state.tx.us

Local Pam Walker
HAY Center
2103 North Main Street
Houston, Texas 77009
713.295.2716
Pam.walker@dfps.state.tx.us

Casey Family Programs

Kirk O'Brien
Casey Family Programs
1300 Dexter Avenue, Floor 3
Seattle, Washington 98109
206.282.7300
kobrien@casey.org

Eric Steiner
Casey Family Programs
1300 Dexter Avenue, Floor 3
Seattle, Washington 98109
206.282.7300
esteiner@casey.org

Renee Fellingner
Casey Family Programs
1300 Dexter Avenue, Floor 3
Seattle, Washington 98109
206.282.7300
rfellingner@casey.org

Peter Pecora
Casey Family Programs
1300 Dexter Avenue, Floor 3
Seattle, Washington 98109
206.282.7300
ppecora@casey.org

Department of Labor

Gregg Weltz
Employment and Training Administration
200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N4511
Washington, D.C. 20210
202.693.3527
weltz.gregg@dol.gov

Jenn Smith
Employment and Training Administration
200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N4511
Washington, D.C. 20210
202.693.3597
smith.jenn@dol.gov