

Career Development and Employment Preparation

A Policy Framework for California's Foster Youth



Prepared for the Foster Youth
Career Development and Employment Summit

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**Foster Youth
Career Development and Employment Summit
Sacramento, California
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The Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit Executive Summary

On January 8th and 9th, 2008, more than 300 foster youth, former foster youth, caretakers, community-based organizations, employers, and professionals from child welfare, workforce development, education, and probation from across California came together in Sacramento to address employment and career development issues, and forge solutions for the nearly 85,000 young people in foster care in California. The summit culminated in a state legislative hearing attended by members and staff of the Assembly and Senate. Sponsored by Casey Family Programs, New Ways to Work, and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California, the summit was the first statewide gathering of its kind in California.

The Issue

Early career development and employment opportunities are essential to ensuring successful transition to adulthood for foster youth. A recent study of alumni of foster care by Casey Family Programs found that “youth with extensive employment experience are over four times more likely to graduate (from high school) than youth with no employment experience.”¹

While significant attention has been given to youth aging out of foster care since the passage of the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act, much more must be done to effectively prepare youth for employment and life on their own as adults. While the Act provides fiscal incentives to states to provide enhanced services to foster youth, the provision of high quality, sequenced career development and employment preparation opportunities are often missed due to systemic issues and other obstacles.

Our commitment to better serve this population of young people must have a greater focus on long term planning and preparation for self-sufficiency. The time for action is now. The priority actions addressed in this executive summary are the result of a two-day solutions-focused summit and provide the framework for practical, achievable actions that will result in better outcomes for foster youth, and secure their place as productive adults in California’s future.

The Challenge

While career development, training and employment is key to every child’s development and preparation for adulthood, it is especially

Startling Reality

Of the more than 24,000 youth who leave foster care each year without a permanent family:

- **One in four is incarcerated within the first two years**
- **One in five becomes homeless at some time after the age of 18**
- **Only 58% complete high school (compared to 87% in the general population)**
- **Only 3% earn college degrees (compared to 28% in the general population)**

Pew Charitable Trust²

critical for children in foster care who must navigate multiple systems during and after care- often without the benefit of a permanent relationship with an adult, family, or community to support them on that journey. While studies show that youth outside of the foster care system receive support from their families until the age of 25, foster youth ‘age out’ of the foster care system at 18 and are often left to face this transition on their own, in the face of daunting odds.

Employment and economic outcomes for foster youth are particularly troubling. A recent study by researchers at the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago³ shows that former

² Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care (2004). *Fostering the Future: Safety Permanence and well-being for children in foster care*. Washington: Author. <http://pewfostercare.org/research/docs/FinalReport.pdf>

³ Courtney, M.E. & Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

¹ Pecora, Peter J., Jason Williams, Ronald C. Kessler, Chris Down, Kirk O’Brien, Eva Hiripi, and Sara Morello. *Assessing the effects of foster care: Early results from the Casey National Alumni Study*.

foster youth lag far behind the average American youth in employment and economic success.

Employment and Economic Success Threatened

- Only 51.5% of former foster youth were employed at age 21 compared to 63.9 % of non-foster youth;
- 26.5% of the former foster youth did not have enough money to pay their rent - compared to only 8.6 % of non-foster youth;
- 8.3% of the former foster youth were evicted from their place of residence compared to only 1.4% of non-foster youth.

Chapin Hall Center for Children
at the University of Chicago³

Similar results were found in a University of Chicago 2002 study⁴ of foster youth employment outcomes in three states, including California. Researchers found that youth aging out of foster care had very low levels of employment and earnings.

- **Youth aging out of foster care are underemployed.** No more than 45 percent of the aging out youth have any earnings in any of the three states during any one of the 13 quarters of the study. This is also the case for reunified youth. A slightly larger proportion of low-income youth has earnings, but never more than 50 percent.
- **About 23 percent of youth in California had no earnings** during the entire 13-quarter period.
- **Youth who do work begin to do so early.** In all three states, youth were more likely to earn income for the first time during the four quarters prior to and the quarter of their 18th birthday than in the 2 years following. For youth who exited foster care by aging out, half in California had earnings prior to their eighteenth birthday.
- **Youth aging out of foster care progress more slowly in the labor market than other youth.**

- **In California, if youth did not work prior to exit, there was only slightly more than a 50-50 chance that they would begin employment after exit.** In Illinois, youth who did not have earnings prior to their 18th birthday had less than a 50 percent chance of beginning to work by the age of 20.
- **Youth aging out of foster care have mean earnings below the poverty level.** Youth aging out of foster care earn significantly less than youth in any of the comparison groups both prior to and after their eighteenth birthday. Average quarterly earnings do grow significantly from the 4 quarters prior to the 18th birthdays to the 8 quarters after it. In each state, the average earnings increase roughly \$500 per quarter. However, even with these increases, these youth average less than \$6,000 per year in wages, which is substantially below the 1997 poverty level of \$7,890 for a single individual.

In California

According to an April 2008 study, at age 24, the average monthly earnings for youth in California who age out of foster care and who worked, is \$690.

Furthermore, the study found that California's foster youth experience the following employment outcomes at 24:

- Only 25% compare favorably to youth nationally in average earnings. This group appears to begin connecting to the workplace prior to age 18.
- An additional 20% experience positive outcomes in earnings. While their average earnings do not reach levels comparable to youth nationally, they do show an upward trend. This group does not appear to be connected to the workplace prior to age 18.
- Alarming, 55% experience poor employment outcomes, experience low probabilities of employment, and show little or declining earnings between the ages of 18 and 24.

Coming of Age: Employment Outcomes for Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care Through Their Middle Twenties⁵

⁴ George, R., et al. (2002). *Employment Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children. Available at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/fostercare-agingout02/>

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *Coming of Age: Employment Outcomes for Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care Through Their Middle Twenties*, 2008.

Policy Focus Areas and Statewide Priorities

48 counties were represented at the Summit which featured interactive strategic planning and priority setting sessions, cross-disciplinary county team sessions to develop local commitments and define next steps, and a panel of leaders from Child Welfare, Education, Workforce and Philanthropy who identified opportunities within their systems and shared the need for program alignment at the state and local levels. Participants at the summit which included the sponsoring partners, local practitioners from around the state, and current and former foster youth prioritized four Policy Areas to improve outcomes for foster youth and shared the following set of recommended priority actions with members and staff of the State Assembly and Senate.

Legislative Members and Staff present at the January 9, 2008 hearing:

- Karen Bass, Chair (D-Los Angeles)
- Bill Maze, Co-Chair (R-Visalia)
- Patty Berg (D-Eureka)
- Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa)
- Loni Hancock (D-Berkeley)
- Shirley Horton (R-San Diego)
- Dave Jones (D-Sacramento)
- Mark Leno (D-San Francisco)
- Roger Niello (D-Sacramento)
- Nicole Parra (D-Hanford)
- Ira Ruskin (D-Redwood City)

Staff representing:

- Pat Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa)
- Anthony Portantino (D-Pasadena)

I. Policy Focus Area One: Prioritize Career Development and Employment for Every Foster Youth

Goal: *Ensure that all the systems that support foster youth, and the caregivers with whom they live, prioritize and support a continuum of career development opportunities for foster youth over time.*

Ensuring the safety of the young people in their care has, for many years, been the primary focus of the courts, government agencies, professionals, and other caregivers that are responsible for foster youth in the child welfare and probation systems. More recently, child welfare practice has evolved to include promoting the overall well-being of the youth, providing for permanency, and preparing them for their future. Education and success in school, usually indicated by a high school diploma, has become a focus for the adults charged with caring for foster youth as well. With the exception of a few model initiatives and some entrepreneurial

Independent Living Skills programs, there has traditionally been little focus on workplace exposure and career development activities for foster youth prior to emancipation, leaving many youth inexperienced and unprepared for life as working young adults. Unemployment is a significant contributor to the high rates of homelessness and poverty among emancipated foster youth and needs to be addressed early in a child's experience while in care. The system needs to focus attention on the transition to adulthood for all youth beginning as early as the age of 12 to ensure that all those who emancipate from care are prepared for the transition to adulthood.

Priority Legislative and Regulatory Recommendations

- Develop a consolidation bill that creates a unified vision for transitioning foster youth, brings together the various pieces of existing law that address one or more related foster youth transition issues, and coordinates systems. A cross-disciplinary workgroup including youth should work with the Legislature and create uniform policies and an efficient coordinated

service system in which foster youth receive priority for services across departments.

- Ensure that all existing laws directly related to transition issues, career development, and/or employment preparation are fully implemented and resourced appropriately.
- The Child Welfare Council⁶ should prioritize the creation of common assessments and outcome measures in the areas of permanence, education, and employment across all systems working with transitioning youth. The Council should formalize Memoranda of Understanding among State Agencies and Departments that define ways to allow for the sharing of data and information about common program participants. Agencies and Departments should be charged with implementing common data systems and reporting cycles to maximize cross-program collaboration.

II. Policy Focus Area Two: Systematically Connect Foster Youth to Education and Workforce Development Programs

Goal: *Through collaboration, coordination, and integration of existing education and workforce systems, resources will be leveraged so that all foster youth will have priority access to, and the ability to make informed choices about mature, established, career development programs and initiatives.*

California offers a wide range of career development and employment preparation opportunities to its young people – through our public schools, community colleges, out-of-school time initiatives, community-based training programs, workforce development, apprenticeship, and employer-sponsored training. Unfortunately, most foster youth are not routinely being counseled and supported to take full advantage of these opportunities. In order to improve employment outcomes for foster youth it is critical to leverage and access what's in place for any young person in the state and make sure that it is available to all foster youth as well.

⁶ The Child Welfare Council was established in 2006 to consider recommendations to improve child and youth outcomes.

Priority Legislative and Regulatory Recommendations

- Actively support cross-program collaboration in order to leverage and link services across systems for foster youth by addressing issues of resource sharing, data alignment and reporting, program design, technical assistance, professional development, oversight, and governance.
- Establish a statewide program in which former foster youth are employed as transition navigators in each county to link foster youth to systems and services and ensure that when youth relocate their services are maintained. (Modeled after the current Disability Navigators⁷)
- Bring together the multiple plans that guide a youth's transition by creating a system for and requiring a common, youth-centered and youth-led transition plan across all agencies, departments, and programs that work with transitioning youth.

III. Policy Focus Area Three: Support Emancipating and Emancipated Youth in Their Transition to Adulthood

Goal: *Create a new investment to create a performance-based, cross-system service delivery continuum able to meet the individual needs of each transitioning foster youth and achieve the three fundamental goals of permanence, education, and employment.*

Despite California's best efforts to improve the readiness of foster youth for the transition to adulthood, far too many youth still leave care unprepared for life on their own – without the skills, preparation, and supported transitional opportunities that will enable them to find and maintain stable employment, continue their education, and experience permanent connections to adults, peers, and their communities. Achieving the goals of permanence, education, and employment requires time, connections, and resources beyond the age of

⁷ In October 2002 the Department of Labor (DOL) and Social Security Administration (SSA) announced a partnership to establish and evaluate a new Disability Program Navigator (DPN) position within DOL's [One-Stop Career Centers](#). The "Navigator" assists individuals with disabilities in navigating through the variety of programs and services for which they are eligible.

18 for most young adults. At the same time as the movement to improve the systems that serve foster youth and reduce the number of youth who emancipate out of care are being intensified, new approaches to support and provide services to transitioning foster youth in their communities must also be put in place. Emancipated foster youth, along with other populations of transitioning youth, need a stable set of focused and developmentally appropriate services and opportunities to succeed as young adults, along with supportive families and communities to nurture their success.

Priority Legislative and Regulatory Recommendations

- Support or establish comprehensive, youth-led transition centers that coordinate existing resources and provide a place for youth to be supported and connected to one another and their community.
- Expand eligibility and resources for career development and employment supportive services and Independent Living Programs to ages 12-25.
- Build on the successes of the Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus)⁸ model and create additional transitional housing opportunities. Adjust program eligibility and program participation requirements to allow youth to maintain housing while pursuing the goals of permanence, education (including secondary and post-secondary), and employment. Transitional housing and affordable residential opportunities must be developed on or near community college campuses.

⁸ The Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus) program, administered by the California Dept. of Social Services, provides affordable housing and comprehensive supportive services for up to 24 months for former foster care and probation youth ages 18 to 24. www.thpplus.org

IV. Policy Focus Area Four: Provide Work Experience and Job Opportunities that Lead to Economic Success

Goal: *Encourage public and private employers to hire current and former foster youth and provide opportunities to ensure that all foster youth are exposed to a series of workplace opportunities and experiences, including meaningful employment, prior to their transition from care.*

Youth need early access to a continuum of opportunities that gradually introduce the concepts of employer expectations, workplace culture, and the skills necessary to be successful in the workplace. Employer supports should include information about the various ways in which they can be involved in providing work-based learning experiences for youth such as informational interviews, job shadowing, career mentoring and internships. The goal is to encourage public and private employers to hire current and former foster youth and provide opportunities to ensure that all foster youth are exposed to a series of workplace opportunities and experiences, including meaningful employment, prior to their transition from care.

Priority Legislative and Regulatory Recommendations

- Encourage the hiring of youth in entry level, career pathway positions through a subsidized, transitional work-experience program in partnership with the private and public sectors, Independent Living Program, and Workforce Investment Boards. The program should include the provision of support to worksite supervisors to maximize their participation, youth to build confidence and skills, and foster families to support youth participation.
- Encourage the State Youth Vision Team⁹ and the California Workforce Investment Board to develop a statewide “Hire-a-Youth” campaign in partnership with the California Chamber of Commerce and other state-level business groups.

⁹ In 2003, The *White House Task Force Report on Disadvantaged Youth*, recommended that an interagency group be created to help facilitate interagency collaboration at the state and local levels for federally funded youth programs.

Local Implementation Strategies to Improve Youth Outcomes

The following strategies have been identified as a way to implement solutions that can be pursued at the local level to improve access to career development and employment opportunities for foster youth:

1. Adult Advocacy and Support of Career Development Opportunities

- Ensure that adult advocates connect foster youth to and support them in career development and employment opportunities in schools.
- Clarify who holds the education rights of foster youth, and provide education surrogates for youth in middle school and above. Ensure that these individuals are aware of the career-related educational opportunities available through the local schools.
- Develop mechanisms to assist youth in retaining employment and provide support to the supervisors that hire them.
- Encourage and support youth to advocate for themselves.

2. Access to Information

- Expand awareness about and access to existing programs focused on providing career development and employment opportunities.
- Develop and implement coordinated information services and resource guides for youth.
- Provide easy and consistent access to youth appropriate career development and employment information and services.
- Use technology to facilitate coordination and provide information about career development opportunities, training, and programs.
- Provide information to child welfare and Independent Living Program staff about existing free and low cost career development resources.

3. Coordinating Bodies

- Form local coordinating bodies to facilitate collaboration and coordination between child welfare, workforce, education, consumers, caretakers, and other system partners.
- Create partnerships with civic and faith-based organizations to create career development opportunities.
- Build on the work of local Youth Councils to prioritize services to foster youth and develop coordinated systems that prepare youth for transition.
- Align employer engagement strategies to economic development initiatives such as the California EDGE Campaign and industry pipeline initiatives.

4. Cross-Training

- Identify and require cross system representation at all transition meetings.
- Train career guidance counselors and others who are advising youth about the particular needs of foster youth.
- Provide training for education and workforce development professionals, as well as caregivers and guardians, regarding the needs of foster youth and to raise awareness about appropriate opportunities and resources.
- Provide ongoing cross-training that addresses transitional youth issues for all staff of child welfare agencies, workforce development boards, educational partners, and service providers.
- Provide cross-agency youth development coordination to ensure that every adult interaction with foster youth is focused on guiding them in their transition to adulthood.
- Provide youth development training to those in youth-serving systems should be made available to those in the adult system that work with youth and young adults.
- Examine how services within adult systems are delivered to young adults and consider new, developmentally appropriate approaches to ensure the effectiveness of those services.

5. Training for Child Welfare, Probation and Independent Living Programs

- Train child welfare and probation staff to better facilitate access to career development and employment opportunities.
- Shift the thinking of caregivers, providers, and caseworkers to view career development and employment as a right, not a privilege.
- Clarify roles and expectations of child welfare and probation staff, caregivers, and other adults connected to foster youth as to how their interactions with youth should support positive education, employment, and permanence outcomes.

6. Define and Expand Activities for youth ages 12-24

- Encourage county departments to create public system internship opportunities for current and former foster youth.
- Begin transition planning early (at the age of 12) and provide a range of career development and employment experiences throughout a young person's life in care.
- Create a timeline of graduated responsibilities and opportunities for youth ages 12 to 18 that is incorporated into early and continuing transition planning and caregiver training.

Conclusion

A focus on Career Development is important for all youth as they prepare for life as working adults, but it is especially important for foster youth who “age out” of the foster care system at the age of 18.

Foster youth are often left to face the transition to adulthood on their own in the face of daunting odds and without the support of family or community.

Today in California we are well positioned to change the way in which foster youth are prepared for their transition to adulthood. In communities all around the state, local practitioners are taking action to bring together the services, supports, and opportunities provided to current and former foster youth, and local systems are aligning their work to make these services a priority. At the state level, cross-system planning bodies are tackling the issue of service coordination, and the Legislature is taking action to support new laws to help these young people in transition.

We must continue to work together to encourage the Legislature, State and County Agencies, and local practitioners to implement the priorities identified in this paper in order to expand and improve career development and employment opportunities and programs, and ensure that every youth who ages out of care is prepared for the transition to adulthood.

Prioritize Career Development and Employment for Every Foster Youth

1. The Issue

Ensuring the safety of the young people in their care has, for many years, been the primary focus of the courts, government agencies, professionals, and other caregivers that are responsible for foster youth in the child welfare and probation systems. More recently, child welfare practice has evolved to include promoting the overall well-being of the youth, providing for permanency, and preparing them for their future. Education and success in school, usually indicated by a high school diploma, has become a focus for the adults charged with caring for foster youth as well. With the exception of a few model initiatives and some entrepreneurial Independent Living Skills programs, there has traditionally been little focus on workplace exposure and career development activities for foster youth prior to emancipation, leaving many youth inexperienced and unprepared for life as working young adults. Unemployment is a significant contributor to the high rates of homelessness and poverty among emancipated foster youth and needs to be addressed early in a child's experience while in care. The system needs to focus attention on the transition to adulthood for all youth beginning as early as the age of twelve to ensure that all those who emancipate from care are prepared for the transition to adulthood.

2. The Goal

In order for foster youth to make appropriate career choices and achieve success in both employment and financial security, it is essential that career exploration and employment be supported as a critical part of development and preparation for adulthood for all youth in care, beginning early upon placement in foster care. Effective career development and employment preparation engages a young person early and often – in a sequence of experiences that provide for awareness and workplace exposures, exploration in fields of interests, and formal preparation for career areas of choice and relationships with interesting, connected, supportive adults. The goal is to ensure that all the systems that support foster youth, and the caregivers with whom they live, prioritize and support a continuum of career development opportunities for foster youth over time.

3. The Situation

Adolescents who live in foster care have the same need as all adolescents to develop career aspirations, and experience the workplace as part of their development. Like all young people, they need support and guidance in this process, as well as opportunities to explore and prepare for life as a successful working adult. Foster youth, and the systems that govern their lives, face some special challenges in meeting these developmental needs. Historically, many youth in foster care have faced constant changes in their living arrangements, which have resulted in disruptions in their education, home, school, and community life. These disruptions have a negative impact on the development of life skills and the ability to meet educational goals. Too few foster youth finish high school. Their 50% completion rate is lower than the 70% on-time graduation rate with a high school diploma for all youth. The

findings of the Casey Family Programs Alumni Study show that “among the risk factors facing youth in foster care, low educational achievement may have the most adverse effect on long-term adjustment.” This same study found that “*youth with extensive employment experience are over four times more likely to graduate than youth with no experience.*”⁴ Given the many and varied issues facing foster youth, it is important that multiple strategies be in place to help them achieve educational success at the highest levels possible, which will in turn assist them developing a successful and sustaining career. Whether or not they have college goals and aspirations, it is often difficult for foster youth to graduate from high school with the full college preparation coursework needed to take advantage of all the opportunities available to them. Many foster youth are funneled into getting their GED, while other options, such as charter schools, partnership academies, alternative education, adult education, and community college can often offer a stronger foundation and more opportunities for the future.

Reforms in California’s child welfare system are beginning to address the need for greater stability in foster placements and school assignment, as well as the need for each young person to develop permanent connections with caring adults. To date, there has been less focus on addressing the specific need for career awareness, exploration, and preparation opportunities for every foster youth, including the need for employment experience prior to leaving care. The Child Welfare system itself has begun to recognize the need for career development and workplace experience for youth in care, but child welfare professionals need support, guidance, and assistance in designing and implementing approaches to provide these opportunities for the youth they serve.

There are other barriers that inhibit a young person’s ability to prepare for and experience the workplace prior to emancipation. Despite recent legislation that makes it possible for foster youth to get a driver’s license, by the age of 18 only a third of California foster youth have done so. In many cases, this creates a barrier to successful job placement and retention. Employment is often viewed by some as a privilege to be earned rather than an expectation for each youth in care. Others perceive employment as being in conflict with educational success or other transition goals and activities. Even for youth assisted by caregivers and/or professionals to find jobs during high school, the jobs in which they work are generally not connected to a long-term career plan, education or training activities, or part of a sequence of developmental activities intentionally delivered over time. Furthermore, caregivers are free to use attendance at the job as an incentive for good behavior – a privilege that can be taken away as punishment for any behavioral infraction – delivering a message inconsistent with the expectations of any workplace regarding employee behavior. These situations often work together to either prevent or disrupt employment preparation and experience for youth before they leave care.

⁴ Pecora, Peter J., Jason Williams, Ronald C. Kessler, Chris Down, Kirk O’Bien, Eva Hiripi, and Sara Morello. Assessing the effects of foster care: Early results from the Casey National Alumni Study. Casey Family Programs. <http://www.casey.org>

4. The Challenges

- 1. System priorities do not universally encourage a focus on career development and employment outcomes for foster youth.** Along with the existing priorities of safety, permanence, and well-being, the foster care system needs to prioritize education, career development, and employment as key measures of success for youth in care. The research is clear about the importance of education and employment to adult success, but there is currently no systematic way of assessing a youth's needs and interests, providing meaningful preparation activities for them, or holding the system accountable for timely attention to these issues.
- 2. Caregivers and youth don't always understand the importance of career preparation and employment experiences, and have not been made aware of the supports and opportunities available in their community.** Caregivers do not always understand that they can provide the foundation for critical job readiness skills and career exploration through everyday experiences and expectations. Youth often do not fully understand the importance of employment as part of their developmental experience as a young adult.
- 3. The parts of the system that do focus on preparation for and experience in the workplace, most often begin that focus as youth are nearing emancipation, too late to support a continuum of developmental experiences for youth.** Multiple career-related opportunities exist for youth in high school settings, but often the decision point to attend a particular school with special offerings occurs at the transition from middle school – long before caseworkers and/or care givers are focused on transition issues. Similarly, those programs within the system begin working with youth at sixteen – too late to offer a full range of opportunities and experiences to ensure effective preparation for the future.
- 4. The instability of foster youth placements, in home as well as school, is a major challenge for youth and creates barriers of many kinds.** Lack of continuity in school affects academic achievement, the ability to gather enough credits to graduate, building relationships with school counselors and other advisers who might assist with access to specialized programs or career planning, and peer and other relationships that can provide information about opportunities. A Casey Family Programs study found that more than thirty percent of youth in foster care had eight or more placements with foster families or group homes.⁵ Sixty-five percent experienced seven or more school changes from elementary through high school.⁶
- 5. The systems responsible for the care and support don't always share a common understanding of adolescent development.** Although research and information about quality practices are becoming more available in the fields of adolescent development, resiliency, and pathways to successful adulthood, many caregivers and professionals who

⁵ Peter J. Pecora, Ronald C. Kessler, Jason Williams, Kirk O'Brien, A. Chris Downs, Diana English, James White, Eva Hiripi, Catherine Roller White, Tamera Wiggins, and Kate Holmes, 2005, *Improving Family Foster Care, Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*, page 26,

⁶ Erbes, Karissa MSW, 2007, *Southern Area Consortium of Human Services Emancipating Foster Youth Literature Review*, Southern Area Consortium of Human Services and San Diego State University.

come in contact with youth in the child welfare and probation systems do not have ready access to the very information that would assist them in supporting the development of the youth in their charge.

- 6. Caregivers and youth cite transportation to programs and jobs as a barrier to facilitating participation.** Although foster youth are eligible to get driver's licenses, the manner in which this option is implemented varies widely across the state. For example, local policy on car insurance for foster youth differs. Some counties use ILP funds to help pay for insurance, some do not. In some instances, group homes do not allow youth to drive or take public transportation to work because of liability and mental health concerns.
- 7. Liability concerns often restrict the activities made available to foster youth.** Traveling alone on public transportation to and from work, or in some cases working, visiting workplaces, or attending career focused classes or programs in non-school hours is sometimes restricted or prohibited by caregivers because of liability concerns. The "prudent parent" standard needs consistent definition and implementation to allow youth to engage in employment preparation and experience while in care.
- 8. Youth do not have ready access to documents necessary for employment and career development activities.** All youth need certain documents in order to be employed or to access specialized programs that are designed to prepare them for the world of work. When a public system has taken jurisdiction as the parent of a young person, it is the system's responsibility to ensure that their papers are in order so that they have full access to opportunities for which they are otherwise eligible. Currently, many foster youth have difficulty furnishing to employers their social security card, birth certificate, or immigration papers.

5. The Opportunities

A number of conditions are in place that makes it timely to address this issue in California, including the following.

1. Current efforts focused on improving outcomes across the state offer opportunities in a growing culture of reform and improvement in the child welfare field, including the Breakthrough Series Collaborative focused on reform and redesign of ILP in the state.
2. There is an increase in general public awareness of the needs of and challenges facing foster youth.
3. In many areas, cities and counties are collaborating to improve employment opportunities and outcomes for foster youth without state guidance or support.
4. Public and private child welfare providers have increased their collaborative work as well as understanding that support from and connection to other systems is essential to effectively prepare youth for the future.
5. SB 81 (amended by AB 191) the Juvenile Justice Realignment Provisions passed in 2007 and to be implemented in 2008 will result in non-violent juvenile offenders being retained in their counties of residence, rather than being sent into the State system. This

will increase the need for enhanced resources for foster care probation placements at the county level.

6. A new three-state study which includes California specific data on emancipation and employment outcomes is expected within the next 30-60 days, which will provide needed data on the status of emancipated youth in California.

6. The Suggested Solutions

1. Support culture shifts and refocus mandates in the Child Welfare and Probation systems to support employment outcomes for foster youth.

- a. In addition to the federal outcome priorities for all foster youth of safety, permanence, and well-being; education, employment, and permanence should be prioritized and measured for those youth approaching emancipation (those aged twelve and up). All funding sources and outcome measurements for youth in this age range should prioritize and support positive results in education (including career development), employment, and permanence. At the practice level, there should be clarity on roles and expectations so that Child Welfare and Probation staff, as well as the caregivers with whom foster youth live, know that their interactions with youth should be leading to these outcomes. Caregiver training should emphasize that this relationship makes them important teachers, advisors, and mentors in the lives of the youth they serve.
- b. Job descriptions, training, and expectations for Child Welfare and Probation need to include the duties of ensuring and facilitating foster youth access to available opportunities to explore careers, build skills, and experience the workplace. High quality career development and pre-employment preparation can be accessed through a number of avenues for these youth. Awareness of, and access to, career development and preparation activities in the K-12 system, WIA programs, and other public settings must be included in training for foster youth, their care providers, and other professionals serving them.
- c. The state should mandate certain aspects of the system so that implementation is uniform across the state. Training and information should be made available to all caregivers and staff; and the prudent parent standard should be implemented using the same definitions across the state. In addition, a focus on transition issues including career development and employment preparation needs to begin early in a young person's life no matter where they are placed, and continue through their experience in care.
- d. As research and information about quality practices become available on adolescent development, resiliency, and pathways to successful adulthood, these topics must also become part of the expected skills and training for all caregivers. Particular attention should be given to providing caretakers the tools needed to assist youth in overcoming the developmental impacts of the trauma and disruptions that they may have experienced.
- e. All foster youth should have all necessary documents (birth certificate, immigration papers, and social security cards) by age 15. Each caseworker should be responsible

for ensuring that youth have these documents and can access them as needed.

2. Align transition planning across systems, and include career development and employment outcomes in their plans.

- a. The transition services plans of all foster youth should include career development activities, such as internships in their area of career interest and meaningful employment experiences prior to emancipation.
- b. Transition plans should be coordinated across all of the systems that touch a youth's life.
- c. The process of developing a transition service plan should be youth driven and empower a young person to make informed decisions about their life.

3. Reshape the Independent Living Program to better support the transition to employment.

- a. The eligibility age for both Chaffee Act and state ILP services should be lowered to age 12. While some local programs do begin earlier, youth must be in foster care on their 16th birthday to be eligible for ILP. If the state-supported age of eligibility is lowered to 12 the necessary resources must also be provided to extend these opportunities to more youth.
- b. Independent Living Services Programs should be evaluated for their efficacy and funding should be connected to defined outcomes, including career development and employment preparation.

4. Build connections to other systems that provide career development and employment preparation opportunities.

- a. Each county should create a collaborative and comprehensive plan to use Medi-cal, Mental Health Services Act, and other funds to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of youth through age 24, who are either in care or who have lived in care.
- b. Use of existing career development resources such as the free and low cost resources of the California Career Resource Network (CalCRN, a California state agency created to develop career exploration resources) should be encouraged. Anyone working with youth should be aware of this agency and promote use of its resources as broadly as possible.
- c. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) should be expanded to include trained volunteers to work specifically with older youth to support career development and employment preparation priorities.
- d. Information and data sharing issues across systems must be addressed.

7. Examples of Innovation and Success

San Diego County Joint RFP between County ILP and Youth WIA System

In 2004, the San Diego Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) and the San Diego Independent Living Services workgroup joined to become the YTAT/Tiger Team after discovering that there were roughly 15 different groups serving adolescent foster youth in

San Diego County. The team became concerned about inefficient use of funding and difficulty accessing services that may be caused by duplication among disconnected providers. An opportunity to utilize funding from both the San Diego Workforce Partnership and county Child Welfare Services came when the procurement cycle for both ILP and WIA programs ended at nearly the same time. The end of this cycle meant that San Diego's Independent Living Program and the Workforce Partnership would both have to issue new RFPs for their respective programs. They seized the opportunity to craft an RFP for a jointly funded Independent Living Skills and youth workforce, education, and training program. To meet the needs of both funders, the program was awarded in Fall 2007 to one service provider through two separate contracts.

Placer County: Kaleidoscope of Employment for Youth Success (K.E.Y.S)

K.E.Y.S. is a collaborative contract among the Placer County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services, the Department of Rehabilitation, and PRIDE Industries. K.E.Y.S. helps address some of the issues facing foster youth in Placer County by providing specialized employment services for youth ages 16 to 19. K.E.Y.S. helps youth develop job skills and job retention through comprehensive employment assessments, job-specific tours, search techniques, resume development, interviewing techniques, paid work experiences, job placement, money management, and peer support.

Shasta County Independent Living Program

Shasta County ILP has restructured their program in order to ensure that each and every foster youth in Shasta County who accesses their services gets connected to the pre- and post-emancipation support that they need. Beginning in 2005, the Youth and Family Programs Agency has contracted with Shasta County to run the ILP for youth ages 16 to 21. Youth and Family Programs has created an ILP that combines experiential learning with a relationship-based approach; each youth is assigned a permanent caseworker. In each young person's initial transition plan, the ILP staff establish a support network as they help each youth develop short- and long-term goals. An active support system includes the provision of employment skills as well as other critical life skills. Opportunities exist for youth to participate in paid work experience programs and receive preparation for employment from the Smart Center, the area's One Stop Center. The interactive program provides youth the tools to not only survive, but to become successful at living independently.

For more information, see the Shasta County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/ShastaILP.pdf.

Fresno County Foster Bridge Youth Program

The Fresno County Foster Bridge Youth Program is delivered by a collaborative group of partners including the Fresno County Independent Living Program, the Fresno County Workforce Investment Board, Arbor Education and Training, Fresno City College, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. The Foster Bridge Program has created two separate tracks, one for older and one for younger foster youth. The program is designed to help foster care youth ages 18-21 make the transition into college and/or vocational training opportunities more manageable. Services available to an older foster youth are financial assistance, college and vocational training, career planning, assessments, assistance with enrollment at Fresno City College, childcare assistance, transportation assistance, peer support, college

preparation, and Fresno City College faculty support. Students enrolling in this program participate in English, Math, and Guidance Studies classes.

The program also serves younger youth through two separate, age appropriate, basic skills opportunities. Fourteen to 16 year olds are provided opportunities to grapple with the issues that surround independent living such as housing, financial education, choices and consequences, education, career development, and employment. Students 17 years and up establish their own unique curriculum of school and community-based activities based on assessment outcomes and the identification of areas that need improvement.

For more information, see the Fresno County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/FresnoFosterBridge.pdf

San Mateo County Adolescent Services

San Mateo County has developed a one stop multi-disciplinary unit for foster youth. Adolescent Services supports current and former foster youth to meet life's challenges and work towards becoming self sufficient, successful adults. Youth are simultaneously prepared for self sufficiency and a permanent relationship with a lifelong committed, caring adult. County staff consists of one ILP social worker, two Employment Services Specialists, six case carrying child welfare social workers, one permanency social worker, a social work supervisor, the Adolescent Services Manager, and contractual services for Transitional Housing and Aftercare. This program offers a continuum of services beginning with the Independent Living Skills program, which is taught on the campus of the College of San Mateo. Classes are taught weekly and transportation is provided. Youth are referred at age 15 ½ by their social worker or probation officer to the regular ILP. An early ILP is also offered for youth 14 to 15 years old. Current and emancipated foster youth ages 15 to 24 are also eligible for WIA Youth Education and Employment Services, offering one-on-one intensive employment and educational services.

Alameda County CASA Group Homes Project

In 2003, Alameda County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) determined that it was imperative to advocate for and address the needs of group home youth and improve emancipation outcomes. Grants from The California Endowment and the Zellerbach Family Foundation funded the conception and implementation of the Group Homes Project. As a result of this project, Alameda became the first county in the nation to formally appoint volunteers to group homes, rather than to individual children. Group home volunteer responsibilities include facilitating referrals to the ILSP program, assisting in the completion of college or vocational school applications, helping youth secure employment preparation services as well as internships and/or employment, monitoring the youth's education plan, assisting youth in achieving permanency, and other services determined by individual needs. By assigning volunteers to group homes, they are able to advocate for all Alameda County youth residing in the group homes, even those not on the CASA waitlist.

Merced County Human Service Agency – Foster Youth Assistance Workers

Merced County witnessed that foster youth were aging out of the system with little to no work experience, in part the result of a communication barrier between a range of available foster youth support services and foster youth themselves. The human services staff recognized the problem and knew they had to create better linkages between youth and

services in order to effectively prepare foster youth for the transition to adulthood. The Human Services Agency created two new positions, Extra Help Foster Youth Assistance Workers, to serve as the link between foster youth and their support services. The Assistance Worker provides support services to participants preparing to transition out of the foster care system. The positions are only offered to former foster youth, who know and understand the needs, challenges, and attitudes of youth who have been touched by the foster care system. The department has a strong belief that to truly understand foster youth, workers need to have experienced the foster care system first hand.

For more information, see the Merced County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/MercedCounty2007.pdf

8. Actions to Improve Youth Outcomes across the State

Legislative/Statutory Remedies

1. Support AB 184 (Bass), a 2 year bill to extend ILP to youth living with non related legal guardians. http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab_0151-0200/ab_184_cfa_20070323_122405_asm_comm.html
2. Fully fund and implement existing legislation across the state. This includes AB 490, THP+ and all others directly related to transition issues, career development, and/or employment preparation.
3. Consider a Transition Omnibus Bill, bringing together the various pieces of legislation addressing one or more of the related foster youth transition issues.
4. Shift the age of eligibility for Chaffee Act and ILP services to 12 to 24.
5. Consider dedicated funding for foster youth specific career development services.

Policy and Regulatory Changes

1. Assign accountability for providing each youth with the “Guaranteed Preparation Package”, including all needed documents by age 15.⁷
2. Formalize Memorandums of Understanding between child welfare and other state agencies and departments regarding data collection, information sharing, incentives and priority for foster youth, and common outcome measures.
3. Prioritize and require professional and caregiver professional development focused on adolescent development and resiliency, as well as career development and employment preparation with youth input and engagement.
4. Clarify definition and implementation of the “Prudent Parent” standard for caregivers and group homes and ensure that they support career development activities.
5. Incorporate common career development and employment measures into required data sets to ensure accountability across systems.

⁷ Guaranteed Preparation Package by definition in the *Child Welfare Redesign: The Future of California’s Child Welfare Services Final Report, September 2003* includes a healthy sense of cultural and personal identity; a close, positive and lasting relationship with at least one adult; other supportive relationships and community connections; access to physical and mental health services; a high school diploma, equivalency certificate, or GED; income sufficient to meet basic needs; and a safe and stable living situation.

6. Ensure that both ILP Redesign and Residential Based Services Reform efforts include attention to career development and employment preparation for all foster youth.
7. Clarify that career development and employment experiences for youth at the high school level are not in conflict with high academic achievement, earning a high school diploma, or meeting college entrance requirements (including the University of California and California State University “A-G” requirements).
8. Ensure that transition plans developed within CWS and Probation are aligned with all other plans developed for an individual youth and include career development and employment preparation activities.
9. Ensure that youth are actively involved in their own transition planning.
10. Establish outcome priorities for all foster youth that include well-being indicators that focus on education, employment and permanence.

Local Practice

1. Create a timeline of graduated responsibilities and opportunities for youth ages 12 to 18 that is incorporated into early and continuing transition planning and caregiver training.
2. Provide one-on-one opportunities for youth to impact, and provide feedback on the system and the services it provides, including the activities, experiences, and opportunities provided
3. Shift the thinking of caregivers, providers, and caseworkers to view career development and employment as a right, not a privilege.
4. Clarify who holds the education rights of foster youth, and provide education surrogates for youth in middle school and above. Ensure that these individuals are aware of the career-related educational opportunities available through the local schools.
5. Begin transition planning early (at the age of 12) and provide a range of career development and employment experiences throughout a young person’s life in care.
6. Clarify roles and expectations of child welfare and probation staff, caregivers, and other adults connected to foster youth as to how their interactions with youth should support positive education, employment, and permanence outcomes.
7. Train child welfare and probation staff to better facilitate access to career development and employment opportunities.
8. Create county-based collaboratives that coordinate medi-cal, MHSA, and other funds to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of youth through age 24.
9. Provide access to and information about existing free and low cost career development resources.

Systematically Connect Foster Youth to Education and Workforce Development Programs

1. The Issue

California offers a wide range of career development and employment preparation opportunities to its young people – through our public schools, community colleges, out-of-school time initiatives, community-based training programs, workforce development, apprenticeship, and employer-sponsored training. Unfortunately, most foster youth are not routinely being counseled and supported to take full advantage of these opportunities. In order to improve employment outcomes for foster youth it is critical to leverage and access what's in place for any young person in the state and make sure that it is available to all foster youth as well.

2. The Goal

Foster youth cannot make informed choices if they are not aware of the array of services that are available to them or if those systems and programs don't effectively reach out to and recruit them for program participation. In particular, foster youth should be encouraged and supported to engage in and take advantage of a sequence of career development activities in school and the workplace that lead to readiness for post-secondary education and entry-level, career ladder employment. The goal is that through collaboration, coordination, and integration of existing education and workforce systems, resources will be leveraged so that all foster youth will have priority access to, and the ability to make informed choices about mature, established, career development programs and initiatives.

3. The Situation

California's public education systems offer a wide variety of career focused opportunities through high schools, County Offices of Education and community colleges. Many high schools across the state offer sequenced instruction in the context of a career area through career academies, pathway programs, and other collections of course offerings. Through our high schools and County Offices of Education, formal Career Technical Education options are available through Regional Occupational Programs and Centers, 2+2 and Tech Prep programs that link high school to community colleges, and other state initiatives that focus instruction in an industry context. Work Experience programs are available, and smaller learning communities, small alternative high schools, and a range of educational options also exist, providing smaller, nurturing environments that combine high quality academics within a college and career context. Decisions about enrollment in these schools and programs often happen at the transition from middle school to high school, long before advocates and supporters in the child welfare system and/or Independent Living Programs are focusing attention on the transition from care. This, along with a number of other factors, results in low participation rates in these programs for foster youth, who without strong guidance, effective advocates, timely support, and stable school placements, are unable to take advantage of these opportunities.

In 2004, AB 490 was signed into law to “ensure that foster children are eligible for the same education opportunities as the general student population and that education decisions are

made in the best interest of the child”⁸. It requires “schools, courts, and all other related welfare agencies to work together to ensure that children and youth in foster care receive continuity of education, are placed in the least restrictive education environment, and have equal access to academic and extracurricular activities and resources”. It also established an educational liaison for foster youth and requires schools to enroll foster youth immediately and transfer records quickly when they are moved to a new school placement. While this focus on the educational rights of foster youth is critical, it, by itself, is not enough. Foster youth, caregivers, and others need to be aware of, and ensure access to, a range of school-based activities that can effectively prepare youth for both college and careers.

Workforce development programs, by way of the Workforce Investment Act, support career preparation and training opportunities for youth and young adults through both their youth and adult programs. Delivered through the Workforce Investment Boards, their youth councils, and contracted service providers, these programs have established the target of serving disadvantaged young people, with foster youth identified nationally as a priority population. Yet despite this focus, many program providers cite systems barriers in recruitment, eligibility determination, and participation support that prevent foster youth from enrolling and succeeding in these programs. The workforce system is also able to provide services through the one-stop system to emancipated foster youth, yet many of the centers are identified as not being youth friendly, attuned to the needs and issues facing foster youth, or developmentally appropriate for young adults.

Apprenticeship opportunities abound in California, with over 600 currently active apprenticeship programs in more than 500 occupations identified and supported in the state. Yet without awareness and preparation for these opportunities at an early age, foster youth aren’t taking advantage of the training and employment offered by the apprenticeship system.

There are many reasons that the systems designed to address these issues have not been completely successful in serving foster youth. Fragmented and often absent collaboration among systems results in inconsistent sharing of information across those systems. Information gaps interfere with the referral of foster youth to career development and employment programs and resources. Even in situations where a court order has been issued, dictating that staff across systems communicate and share information with each other, staff at the line-level have not always been informed of this arrangement and may still be hesitant to share pertinent information in their effort to maintain confidentiality. In some cases, conflicting directives and legal interpretations prevent the sharing of information across programs.

Also of note are the following:

One Idaho study based on interviews with youth and professionals, recommends that foster youth “should receive far greater vocational training both during”...and after emancipation regardless of whether they have plans for college or not. Vocational training should be heavily targeted to help them secure service or industrial sector employment...”⁹

⁸ Waugh, Regina. State legislation impacting the education of children and youth in foster care. National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk. <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org>

⁹ Center for Family and Demographic Research. Ohio population news: Aging out of foster care. Bowling Green State University

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (authorized through FY 2012) requires local plans to indicate “How career guidance and academic counseling will be provided to CTE students, including linkages to future education and training opportunities.”¹⁰

A study of Casey Family Programs Alumni found that the provision of scholarships for college or job training was a reliable predictor of successful transitions for foster youth.¹¹

In California, eligibility policies, program administration, funding and services for foster youth vary from county to county. The Southern Area consortium of Human Services concluded that programs for emancipating foster youth “are fragmented and under-funded, fail to provide comprehensive assistance and services, and do not reach a significant number” of current and former foster youth in a meaningful way.¹²

4. The Challenges

- 1. Existing connections among systems are often inefficient and inconsistent.** Linkages between systems are not formalized and do not include all youth in care. Often there are perceived barriers as a result of confidentiality concerns and conflict between program goals, outcomes, and objectives.
- 2. Competing priorities and outcomes among education, workforce development, and child welfare systems at the state, federal and local levels makes integration of program services difficult.** Service to foster youth specifically has not been prioritized at the highest levels by the education and workforce systems, and as a result program staff have not been instructed to make services to this population a high priority. Advocacy for foster youth at the state and federal levels has been inadequate and inconsistent. Current laws designed to benefit foster youth are met with a shortage of staff and resources to implement them effectively and at times are in conflict with each other.
- 3. Case workers are not always well informed about the education, employment, and career development resources and opportunities that are available to foster youth.** Offerings vary greatly from county to county and information is not centralized nor regularly shared with youth in a consistent and equitable way.
- 4. Transition and individualized learning plans are required by the multiple systems serving young people, in many cases involving the same youth in multiple plan development and implementation processes.** Key players representing different elements of a youth’s transition rarely come together to develop a single, comprehensive youth-centered plan. Each system’s or program’s plan comes with a different set of requirements and elements. Some youth may have as many as ten or more transition

¹⁰ Association for Career and Technical Education. Summary and analysis of major provisions and changes “Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006”. www.acteonline.org

¹¹ Harbert, Anita, Donald Dudley, and Karissa Erbes. Southern rea consortium of human services emancipating foster youth literature review. Academy for Professional Excellence San Diego State University School of Social Work

¹² Erbes, Karissa MSW, 2007, *Southern Area Consortium of Human Services Emancipating Foster Youth Literature Review*, Southern Area Consortium of Human Services and San Diego State University, page 4.

plans, each with their own case manager, with little or no coordination across plans. In addition, youth involvement in the transition planning process is limited.

5. **The instability of foster youth placements, which affects school placement, is a major issue for youth** and creates barriers of many kinds including inconsistency in career development and employment program participation. Placement stability and permanent relationships for foster youth are being addressed in the child welfare system, albeit unevenly across the state. Often there is no informed advocate or anyone to ensure access to existing career development programs.
6. **The Workforce Investment Act system, while an important resource and partner, has suffered huge reductions in funding.** In addition, the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program funding has decreased by approximately \$3.6 million between 2000 and 2007, while the number of youth served has nearly doubled in the same time period. Reductions in funding often result in fewer opportunities to partner across systems as programs struggle to sustain services.
7. **The Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) in each jurisdiction is a vehicle that already exists that could (and in some places does) help connect youth with existing career development and workforce programs.** The drawback is that SARBs don't have resources dedicated to foster youth and only become engaged once there is an attendance problem at school.
8. **Currently some foster youth attend schools that do not offer the full range of educational and career development options available though most public school districts.** Some foster youth attend high school in isolated settings – often at group homes – which lack the capacity to provide robust career development options to their students.
9. **Responsibility for addressing the safety, permanence, and well being of older foster youth and providing them transition supports and services is spread among many team members and agencies.** No one person is responsible for listening to the youth and then knowing, tracking, and managing all of the aspects of a youth's case and services or ensuring that foster youth are able to access all the programs for which they're eligible.
10. **Adolescents, foster youth included, often don't understand the importance of participating in career development programs** that lead to better employment outcomes and often say "I just need a job".
11. **Some WIA providers are wary of serving foster youth** because they believe these youth are not likely to complete program activities and reach their identified outcomes, which is a risk to the program meeting its performance objectives.
12. **When youth emancipate from care, many of the services available to them are offered through adult systems.** These systems provide a host of new processes, procedures, and adults for youth to navigate, and the adult systems themselves are not geared to effectively serve adolescents.

5. The Opportunities

1. More and more professionals from child welfare, education, workforce, and other systems are talking about and experimenting with cross-system, multidisciplinary partnerships. These efforts have resulted in some cross-system training and information sharing, and have produced a number of promising program and system models that are improving outcomes for transitioning foster youth.
2. Cross-system partnership practitioners are looking for ways to share information among programs through existing data systems or are looking for new tools to facilitate data sharing.
3. The New Vision for Youth under the Workforce Investment Act system released by the Department of Labor in 2004 encourages jurisdictions to focus on the neediest youth including foster youth. This has created an increased focus within the youth workforce system on developing partnerships with child welfare agencies and resolving historical barriers to serving foster youth.
4. There has been a recent focus in education on expanding Career Technical Education as well as programs that create bridges to college and career.
5. There is a growing recognition among child welfare and probation professionals that transition planning, career development, and employment preparation must begin as early as the age of 12, and that services should be available post-emancipation, to the age of 24.
6. The newly seated California Child Welfare Council is in a position to address issues of aligning and sharing data regarding youth outcomes across systems.

6. The Suggested Solutions

- 1. Encourage, support, and facilitate cross-system connections.**
 - a. Form and/or maintain an active Youth Transition Action Team or other collaborative body focused on the needs of transitional foster youth in each county or consortium of counties.
 - b. Cultivate and engage state leadership that convenes the multiple systems that address transition-age youth issues and prioritizes services in all state systems to foster youth.
 - c. Build and invest in the capacity of existing systems to address transition age youth issues.
- 2. Provide easy and consistent access to information, services, and referrals.**
 - a. Develop truly youth-friendly one-stops as part of California's Workforce system. One-stop certification process should include specific language around what "youth friendly" means. Involve youth in this process so that one-stops are comfortable, welcoming places where youth do not feel intimidated and ask for assistance.
 - b. Launch and support youth one-stops, coalescing services, supports, and opportunities in a youth-only setting – focused on providing a safe and welcoming environment, with developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive approaches to engaging and serving young people.

- c. Include peer counseling staff and others who are knowledgeable about what youth-appropriate resources exist and how they can be accessed at local one-stops.
 - d. Develop the concept of the “virtual front door” to enable youth to initially access information about the services and programs available to them through web-based systems. Use technology as a tool for capturing youth interests and providing information.
 - e. Expand career guidance counseling in our schools. Ensure that foster youth are accessing counseling services and that counselors are trained and aware of the particular needs of the foster youth population.
 - f. Find ways to enhance existing programs that exist within communities to provide accessible services to youth. Engage school districts in finding creative ways to provide access to services on school campuses both during and after school hours perhaps through use of school career centers or job clubs.
- 3. Develop a single, comprehensive plan for each youth, and align case management across systems.**
- a. Develop a single (or linked) transition plan across all the agencies where a particular youth is engaged (child welfare, special education, academies, and workforce). Ensure that all information about the opportunities available to the youth is known as the plan is developed. Review these plans on a recurring basis with youth and all systems represented so that the plan can grow and change with the needs of the youth. Consider the use of technology in creating a single place where the youth’s transition plan can reside electronically so that all appropriate parties can have access to it when needed. Each youth should have a single, unified transition plan that is youth driven and coordinated across programs with a designated point person and limited number of case managers who are working together to support the implementation of the plan.
 - b. Appoint an advocate that assists youth in navigating multiple systems within counties and across counties.
 - c. Ensure that all transition plans are unified, youth-driven, and reviewed by a group of key people and the youth on a regular, scheduled basis so that the plan can grow and evolve along with the youth’s needs and interests.
- 4. Refocus training, information dissemination, and professional development across agencies, programs, and departments.**
- a. Provide on-going cross-training that addresses transitional youth issues for all staff of child welfare agencies, workforce development boards, education partners, and service providers, including training on how to utilize Chafee vouchers to support education and training activities.
 - b. Conduct special outreach to foster youth and their caregivers regarding options such as Regional Occupational Programs, Career Technical Education, career academies, and other career related instruction opportunities in our schools. Provide support to them to ensure successful engagement in and completion of these programs. Improve connections to school districts and apprenticeship programs.
 - c. Network with civic and faith-based organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, churches) to

encourage their members to provide career development opportunities such as job shadowing, internships, career mentoring, and other opportunities.

- d. Provide cross-training on cultural, LGBTQ, and disability issues.

7. Examples of Innovation and Success

Los Angeles County Youth Transition Action Team

When the City of Los Angeles and City of Long Beach Workforce Investment Boards released a study in 2004 on their cities' out-of-school and out-of-work youth, it served as a tipping point for city-county collaboration on supporting youth. In May 2005, the City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board presented the study's findings to the wider community, including elected officials, leaders of community-based organizations, and business and other local leaders. Beginning in February of 2006, the City's Community Development Department took the lead in spearheading the Los Angeles Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT). They knew that in order to be successful, they would need the county on board, so the city invited representatives from the county to co-convene the YTAT. This has provided the city and county with an opportunity to understand who the stakeholders are, what each system provides, and which youth each system serves. Currently, the Los Angeles YTAT includes representatives from City of Los Angeles' Community Development Department, Youth Opportunity System, Workforce Development System, and Youth Council; Department of Children and Family Services, Emancipation Services; Los Angeles County Probation; the Los Angeles Unified School District; the Education Coordination Council; and the LA County Human Services and Family Development. Since early 2006, city and county agencies across systems have been working together through their YTAT to pilot and develop programs and implement policy changes to support youth employment.

Orange County Court-Ordered Cross-System Information Sharing

Orange County serves 2,800 foster and dependent youth. For workforce development agencies, there is an increased focus on serving foster youth through Workforce Investment Act funded programs. Leaders of both Orange County's Social Service Agency (SSA) and workforce development in Orange County have made serving foster youth a high priority. The Workforce Board and Social Services Agency have worked together to secure a miscellaneous court order, making explicit what is already in the law, that allows five agencies to share information in the county. The court order permits them to share "all relevant information and recordings including, but not limited to, Transitional Independent Living Plans, Vocational Assessments, WIA contract progress reports, and outcome reports among the members of multidisciplinary services teams."

The County of Orange Social Services Agency has developed a contract with the Orange County Department of Education Foster Youth Services (FYS) to provide educational data by semester on enrollment, coursework completed, grades, reading and math competencies, completion of California High School Exit Exam elements, and credits earned towards graduation. Through an additional collaboration with the County of Sacramento FYS, all of the AB 490 Foster Care Liaisons in the 28 School Districts in Orange County are linked to a secure socket web-based database, which allows rapid transmittal of transcripts and other data essential for enrollment of foster youth when they change placements. This data and the use of the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) also facilitate expedited enrollment of foster youth in services by the three Workforce Investment Boards within the county, and

participation in a Department of Labor Employment Training and Work Experience program for foster youth entitled the Career Adventure Project (CAP).

For more information, see the Orange County Promising Practice at:

www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/OrangeCtyCourtOrder.pdf

Alameda County Project HOPE

Project HOPE is a youth employment program established by the Alameda County Workforce Investment Board (ACWIB) and the Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services to empower current and former foster youth to become self-sufficient through career exploration, educational planning, and leadership development. The ACWIB prepares aging-out and emancipated foster youth for adulthood and the labor market through a county-wide partnership with the child welfare system known as Project HOPE: Helping Our Young People with Education and Employment. Through interagency collaboration between the County's workforce development system and the child welfare system, Project HOPE offers transitioning and former foster youth an array of employment and educational preparation services made available by the Workforce Investment Act. By connecting foster youth to WIA youth funded programs, Project HOPE makes it possible for youth to participate in academic enhancement and/or job preparation activities.

For more information see the Alameda County Promising Practice online at

www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/alamedaprojecthope.pdf

Glenn County Youth Employment Services Program (Y.E.S.)

The Glenn County Y.E.S. Program (Youth Employment Services) is a semester-based, after-school program which includes a classroom component (teaching pre-employment and work maturity skills) followed by a "real-life" paid work experience with a local employer. The classroom portion is an ROP course which affords students academic credit. The paid work experience (typically 100 hours) follows only upon successful completion of the classroom portion of the program. Special accommodations (priority enrollment and late entry) are afforded to foster youth. Funding for the limited number of slots within YES represents a collaborative effort from multiple Glenn County agencies, including the Human Resources Agency, the County Office of Education, Probation, and the Health Services Department. This collaborative pools their resources to fund slots for the paid work experiences, as well as shared staffing (ROP instructor and classroom aides) and shared case-management responsibilities.

For more information, see the Glenn County Promising Practice online at:

www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/GLENNYES.pdf.

Kern County Project Success

Project Success is a partnership between the Kern High School District Career Resource Department and the Kern County Workforce Investment Board. The program provides foster youth the opportunity to obtain five credits towards high school graduation through an 8th period class in Career Development. In response to youth requests to receive earlier exposure to work experience opportunities, the District's Career Resource Center (CRC) staff decided to apply a portion of their existing in-school Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant to provide work preparation classes, one-on-one counseling, and paid work experience for foster youth who were enrolled in school. Called Project Success, this cluster of services is evaluated using the WIA criteria: improving basic skills, gaining

employment, earning certificates or diplomas, and/or enrollment in continued education or training.

For more information see the Kern County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/KernCountyProjectSuccess.pdf.

Contra Costa County Foster Youth Services Program

The Contra Costa County Office of Education convenes countywide foster youth service providers meetings in order to better address educational and employment outcomes for group home youth. One strategy involves having Workforce Investment Act counselors work closely with the Independent Living Skills program to further support high school completion, post-secondary educational opportunities, and career preparation. The WIA counselors are located at school districts and at One-Stops throughout the county. Strategic planning took place through a Foster Youth Services Advisory group that developed the co-location plan and provides oversight. The Advisory Group meets quarterly.

For more information see the Contra Costa County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/ContraCostaFYServices.pdf.

Sacramento County Casey Great Start – Youth Friendly One-Stop

The Casey Great Start Young Adult Program provides employment focused self-sufficiency transitional services to transition-aged foster youth, foster care alumni, and group home youth. The Young Adult Program is a collaborative program, with the sole purpose of helping foster youth make a successful transition from the foster care system to an independent, self-sufficient, adult life. Casey Great Start builds self-esteem and counsels and coaches youth to enter post-secondary training and employment. Each youth is assigned to one of two CGS Youth Specialist case managers. Because many youth need help with all of their basic needs, the Youth Specialists are available to assist youth with everything from job training and interview tips to apartment hunting and life skills assessments. If a Youth Specialist does not offer services to address a specific youth's needs, he or she will assist the youth in finding and collaborating with other programs to address those needs, while continuing to manage the case.

For more information, see the Sacramento County Promising Practice at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/SacramentoCaseyGreatStart.pdf

Humboldt County Youth Employment Opportunity Program Peer Counselors

The job market in Eureka, the county seat, is the focus of workforce development services in Humboldt County and serves as the locations for One-Stop Center. Seven partners are co-located in the One-Stop, and it has proven to be a very effective model for employers and for adult job seekers. Youth, however, were not finding the Eureka One-Stop to be friendly, and the self-service model wasn't effective in meeting their needs. To address the issue, the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Social Services Branch, made a significant change to make the Eureka One-Stop more youth friendly. In response to a suggestion from young people themselves, the partners decided to have Youth Employment Opportunity Program (YEOP) youth counselors automatically meet with any youth who come to the center and help them get connected to services. As a result, youth accessing WIA services has increased significantly (over 50%). In addition, access to the One-Stop center is now a piece of ILS staff training as a result of this paradigm shift. ILS staff and youth take

tours of the center and conduct classes on site.

For more information, see the Humboldt County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/HumboldtPeerCounselors.pdf

Glenn County “BustNOut” Foster Youth-Friendly Website

Glenn County Human Resources Agency staff pooled and leveraged resources from counties across their region to develop a cross-county website to help foster youth find a local One-Stop center as an effective way to make information and services more readily accessible to youth transitioning from foster care. The result of the regional effort was a foster youth-friendly website called BustNOut.com. On-line since 2004, the site features information about services and opportunities from each of the participating counties. Employment information is showcased for each county as well as agency contact information to assist with health and safety issues. Former foster youth who have successfully made the transition to adulthood offer advice through a regular column, and a message board is provided to facilitate timely communication. Discussion forums are also provide peer support, engaging foster youth, foster youth alumni, and former foster youth (youth who returned to their families before emancipating).

For more information, see the Glenn County Promising Practice at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/GLENNBustNOut.pdf

Tulare County Youth Force Cross-Agency Meetings

In 2002, the Tulare County Workforce Investment Department (TCWID) and Workforce Investment Act Youth Council created *Youth Force* to facilitate cross-agency communication and collaboration. *Youth Force* conducts quarterly cross-agency, staff development sessions: informal meetings that are open to all provider staff. Typically, front-line staff attend the meetings and are free to ask questions and speak openly if they need help or have a troubling client that requires additional services. Case workers and job developers share job orders, providing details and offering to set up the interview for anyone with a qualified candidate. Bringing partners and potential partners into to these informal meetings has allowed for open communication about how to better work together. A focus of the conversations has been to improve linkages between workforce providers and foster care agencies, including the Independent Living Skills program providers. The *Youth Force* meetings have provided an opportunity for staff from a variety of programs and agencies to discuss how to link services without duplication. Foster youth who are involved in both WIA and ILP programs have attended *Youth Force* meetings to share their thoughts and experiences in both systems.

For more information, see the Tulare County YCidea at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/yci/separateycideas/Ch2CoordinatingYouthServices/Service%20Providers%20Connect%20to%20Improve%20Placement%20Rates.pdf.

San Mateo County Fostering the Future

Fostering the Future (FTF) is a collaboration of nonprofits, governmental agencies, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s Center for Venture Philanthropy. Launched in 2005 after two years of extensive planning, FTF has implemented a model of delivering transition support to youth aged 11 to 25 who are in foster or kinship care or who have emancipated from child welfare. The model is based on the asset team approach, which offers three distinct support services. These support services include Asset Coaches to help youth create goals and access opportunities, a Housing Advocate that works directly with those seeking

transitional housing as well as preparing youth to be able to locate and retain housing on their own, and a Legal Advocate to work with youth, caregivers, social workers, and school personnel on educational rights and other issues. In addition to providing direct services to young people, the program also seeks to address local systems change to improve outcomes for the young people it serves. Another important component of the FTF program is a Youth Consulting Council (YCC) that meets monthly to plan group activities and advise the program.

For more information, see the Fostering the Future promising practice at:

<http://www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/SanMateoFosteringTheFuture.pdf>

8. Actions to Improve Youth Outcomes across the State

Legislative Policies/Statutory Remedies

1. Encourage the State Interagency Team or other body to implement a strategy based on the Federal Youth Coordination Act that includes addressing common outcomes across systems with compatible, streamlined data collection systems and coordinated case planning.
2. Develop state legislation that establishes coordination bodies in counties to facilitate collaboration and coordination between child welfare, workforce development, education, consumers, caretakers, and other system partners.
3. Fund all current policy mandates.
4. Expand AB 490 (Steinberg) to include the need to address transition issues.
http://www.youthlaw.org/fileadmin/ncyl/youthlaw/events_trainings/ab490/AB490_Summary.pdf
5. Create legislation to mandate a common transition plan across all agencies, departments, and programs that work with transitioning youth.
6. Develop legislation that creates a navigator position within ILP, modeled after the current disability navigators, in each county that links foster youth to systems and services in their county and provides assistance and consistency when they relocate.

Policy and Regulatory Changes

1. Encourage the Child Welfare Council to create common outcomes across systems working with transitioning youth and define ways to allow for the sharing of data and information about common program participants.
2. Include youth-friendly guidelines in the issuance of one-stop certification guidelines.
3. Create pilot projects to develop and implement a youth-led, common transition plan.
4. Encourage the California Workforce Investment Board to continue Youth Councils if they are no longer mandated under federal legislation and encourage local Youth Councils to focus on youth transition issues.
5. Require early targeted outreach to foster youth and their caregivers regarding education based career development opportunities.

Local Practice

1. Expand access to existing programs focused on providing career development and employment opportunities.
2. Fully implement current policy mandates.
3. Identify and require cross system representation at all transition meetings.
4. Ensure that adult advocates connect foster youth to and support them in career development and employment opportunities in schools.
5. Develop a campaign that creates a logo or some other indicator that designates an establishment is a foster youth friendly place.
6. Build on the work of local Youth Councils to prioritize services to foster youth and develop coordinated systems that prepare youth for transition.
7. Provide ongoing cross-training that addresses transitional youth issues for all staff of child welfare agencies, workforce development boards, educational partners and service providers.
8. Create partnerships with civic and faith-based organizations to create career development opportunities.
9. Form local coordinating bodies to facilitate collaboration and coordination between child welfare, workforce, education, consumers, caretakers and other system partners.
10. Provide easy and consistent access to youth appropriate career development and employment information and services.
11. Use technology to facilitate coordination and provide information about career development opportunities, training, and programs.
12. Train career guidance counselors and others who are advising youth about the particular needs of foster youth.

Support Emancipating and Emancipated Youth in Their Transition to Adulthood

1. The Issue

Despite California's best efforts to improve the readiness of foster youth for the transition to adulthood, far too many youth still leave care unprepared for life on their own – without the skills, preparation, and supported transitional opportunities that will enable them to find and maintain stable employment, continue their education, and experience permanent connections to adults, peers, and their communities. Achieving the goals of permanence, education, and employment requires time, connections, and resources beyond the age of 18 for most young adults. At the same time as the movement to improve the systems that serve foster youth and reduce the number of youth who emancipate out of care are being intensified, new approaches to support and provide services to transitioning foster youth in their communities must also be put in place. Emancipated foster youth, along with other populations of transitioning youth, need a stable set of focused and developmentally appropriate services and opportunities to succeed as young adults, along with supportive families and communities to nurture their success.

2. The Goal

California must target resources and provide systematic supports to increase the ability of foster youth who are emancipating, or who have already emancipated from foster care, to achieve their goals and successfully make the transition to adulthood. The goal is to create a new investment to create a performance-based, cross-system service delivery continuum able to meet the individual needs of each transitioning foster youth and achieve the following three fundamental goals:

Permanence – every youth has lifelong connections with family, peers, supportive adults, and services;

Education – every youth receives a quality education, earns a high school diploma, and is provided support in pursuing and succeeding in post-secondary education and training;

Employment – every youth has work experience and training opportunities that prepare them for (and place them in) living wage employment and careers.

3. The Situation

The US Census Bureau tells us that about half of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 in the United States live at home with their parents. For young people who have been removed from their families by the court and live in foster care, that level of support and stability is seldom available after their 18th birthday. Only Vermont, Illinois, and the District of Columbia currently provide continuing foster care support after the age of 18, and that is wholly supported with state and local dollars as federal funding is not currently available to extend care and/or services past that age. Eighteen states, including California, provide Medicaid eligibility up to the age of 21 to youth who have emancipated from foster care, addressing at least the need for continuing medical coverage for emancipated youth. In

California, if youth are likely to earn a high school diploma or GED by age 19, they can stay in care between their 18th and 19th birthdays until that goal is achieved. It is also possible for a California county to use county resources to extend care for foster youth under certain circumstances (if they are still in school) until age 21, but only a minimal patchwork of state and federal funds are available to meet the needs of these young adults, which means that counties must bear the expense of extended care. This is done at the discretion of the court, and is usually reserved for individual cases with unusual circumstances. Few counties are able to offer this option because of the added costs that must be supported locally.

According to the Pew Charitable Trusts' report "Time For Reform: Aging Out and On Their Own," of the more than 24,000 youth who leave foster care each year without a permanent family, one in four is incarcerated within the first two years, one in five becomes homeless at some time after the age of 18; only 58% complete high school (compared to 87% in the general population); and only 3% earn college degrees (compared to 28% in the general population). These are just some of the statistics that make it clear that the developmental needs of these young people have not been met by the system(s) that have assumed parental control over them.

About 65% of foster youth emancipate from care without a place to live.¹³ One study found that youth have difficulty finding housing because of a "lack of employment history, a credit history, or a co-signer."¹⁴ Instead of ending up on the street, more than a third of the youth who age out of foster care go back to live with their biological family, even where the circumstances that precipitated their entry into foster care have not been resolved.¹⁵ Many others are homeless as they do not have families, communities, or adult supporters, or have been disconnected from them as a result of their foster care experiences.

"The lack of a 'safety net' for these former foster youth – now young adults – means that they truly struggle to 'make ends meet', often ultimately becoming a more burdensome and larger cost to society than if a much smaller, up-front investment had simply been made to better prepare and advise them during transition and the years preceding it."¹⁶

The cost to society is significant. For example, according to a May 12, 2006 Select Committee Hearing of the California Legislature, more than 70% of all State Penitentiary inmates has spent time in the foster care system.¹⁷

Research by the Workforce Strategy Center found that, "there is a need for the development of a long-term and comprehensive college and career program and policy strategy for foster care youth." Additionally, researchers concluded that, "there is a significant resource base

¹³ Delgado, Melanie, Robert Fellmeth, Thomas R. Packard, Karen Prosek, and Elisa Weichel. Expanding transitional services for emancipated foster youth: An investment in California's tomorrow. Children's Advocacy Institute University of San Diego School of Law. www.caichildlaw.org

¹⁴ Scarcella, Cynthia Andrews, Roseana Bess, Erica Hecht Zielewski, and Rob Green. The cost of protecting vulnerable children V. The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/311314.html>

¹⁵ Krinsky, M. (June 28, 2005). Kids Without Family Need Extra Leg-Up Into Adulthood. *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, Forum Column.

¹⁶ Erbes, Karissa MSW, 2007, Southern Area Consortium of Human Services Emancipating Foster Youth LiteratureReview, Southern Area Consortium of Human Services and San Diego State University

¹⁷ Erbes, Karissa MSW, 2007, Southern Area Consortium of Human Services Emancipating Foster Youth LiteratureReview, Southern Area Consortium of Human Services and San Diego State University

available for support of foster care programs and programs to connect foster care youth to college and career.”¹⁸

Foster youth are not the only population facing the difficulty of transition from youth to adulthood. A recent study conducted in Long Beach and Los Angeles by Northeastern University identified that one in five youth and young adults ages 16-24 were both out of work and out of school.¹⁹

4. The Challenges

- 1. There are multiple service delivery systems (such as transitional housing, mental health, workforce development, community colleges, independent living) that provide various services that young adults need, but they are offered in very different venues, have differing eligibility criteria, and information about them is scattered.** In most cases, youth are expected to navigate this maze of service and support opportunities in the adult system without a guide.
- 2. There is no single place for a young person to go to learn about and access the range of services, support, and opportunities that may be available to them.** While some communities have developed transitional youth centers, they are varied in their approaches, have access to only some of the available services, are marginally funded, and struggle to sustain operations.
- 3. California’s adult systems are not focused on the specific needs of young people.** They are not geared to apply developmentally appropriate approaches to working with youth and young adults and the systems themselves are fractured and not well connected to each other. When services are available at all, emancipated youth face a new world of regulations, eligibility requirements, expectations, and fragmented service strategies. They must also develop relationships with an entirely new group of caseworkers, counselors, and service providers – not necessarily trained or attuned to the developmental needs of youth as a group, or the specific needs and circumstances facing emancipated foster youth.
- 4. Training in youth and adolescent development is seldom a part of required training** for those who work with these youth, so developmental needs may not be identified or addressed. In addition, many foster youth face the special challenges of unresolved trauma and other developmental hindrances that place them at a disadvantage in transitioning to life on their own. As a result, foster youth often lack the capacity to be effective advocates for themselves as they emancipate, or to fully utilize the supports that are available.
- 5. Among the barriers to comprehensive services is the fact the various programs have differing age criteria.** Some specialized programs offer services for youth beginning at the age of 18 and continuing until they are 21, 24, or 30.

¹⁸ Workforce Strategy Center. Promising practices: School to career and postsecondary education for foster care youth. <http://www.workforcestrategy.org/publications/promisingpractices2.pdf> page 2

¹⁹ Fogg, Neeta, Harrington, Paul, 2004, “*One Out of Five*” *Out of School and Out of Work Youth in Los Angeles and Long Beach*, Center for Labor Market Studies Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts

- 6. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program offers limited funds for education, housing, and career training.** Actual funding levels have decreased by approximately \$3.6 Million between 2000 and 2007, while the number of youth served has nearly doubled in the same time period.

5. The Opportunities

A number of conditions are in place that make it timely to address this issue in California, including the following:

1. There is a heightened awareness of foster youth transition issues in the state and in the nation.
2. Strong and innovative pilot programs providing consolidated and coordinated services and opportunities to transitioning youth are working in communities across the state.
3. Efforts to ensure permanent connections to caring adults for all youth as they leave care are taking hold across the state.
4. New legislation requiring that high schools keep students enrolled until they are 22 years old if they do not pass the California High School Exit Exam, will become effective in January 2008.
5. Senator Barbara Boxer has proposed S. 1512, The Foster Care Continuing Opportunities Act, which would provide federal matching funds to help states provide essential foster-care services such as food, housing, and legal help to youth to age 21.
6. Senator Hillary Clinton has introduced legislation to provide individual development accounts to youth ‘aging out’ of foster care. The Focusing Investments and Resources for a Safe Transition (FIRST) Act provides foster youth financial support for critical independent living needs as they set out to develop self-sufficient, goal-oriented lives beyond the child welfare system. Senators Jay Rockefeller and Mary Landrieu are original cosponsors of the legislation.

6. The Suggested Solutions

- 1. Provide easy and consistent access to information, services, and referrals**
 - a. Form and support comprehensive, youth-driven “opportunity” centers that hire and mentor youth, and provide access to career development and employment opportunities, life skills, behavioral health services, emancipation preparation, and a place to connect to a community of peers. These centers should leverage the best that is available in the community for youth, and may expand on already existing opportunities, such as youth one-stops.
 - b. Develop and implement coordinated information services and resource guides for youth.

2. Expand targeted services to transitioning foster youth

- a. Develop and implement a voucher program targeted to foster youth and building on the concept of Individual Training Accounts in the workforce system. Vouchers could be made available to pay for services identified in a unified Transitional Plan.
- b. Implement expanded THP+ programs in every county of the state.
- c. Extend eligibility for foster care benefits and services to at least age 21, and preferably to age 25.
- d. Extend targeted support in permanency, education, housing, mental health, career development, and employment to age 25, and design a system to connect these supports to each other and to ensure access for the young adults.

3. Provide effective transition support for every youth in and emancipated from care

- a. Ensure that Transition Planning Conferences are held for every youth in care beginning at age 15, and require all counties to include connections to important adults (permanency) and critical employment services in their plans.
- b. Provide coordinated services and cross-agency youth development and resiliency training, planning, and coordination to ensure that every adult interaction is focused on helping to guide youth in their transition to adulthood.
- c. Develop a system that stores critical youth data and information in an electronic file - all in one place. Further develop the concept of a “smart card” that would include this information on an electronic card that each youth can carry with them.

7. Examples of Innovation and Success

San Francisco Larkin Street Youth Services – Avenues to Independence

Larkin Street Youth Services provides a full spectrum of the services needed to help San Francisco’s most vulnerable youth move beyond life on the street. Larkin Street serves homeless and runaway youth, ages 12 to 24 (80% are age 18 to 24). They offer a range of housing options – from emergency shelter to permanent supportive housing – in addition to essential wraparound services including education, technology and employment training; healthcare, including mental health, substance abuse and HIV services; and case management.

Larkin Street Youth Services provides a path to self-sufficiency for youth aged 18 to 24 through Avenues to Independence (ATI). ATI assists young adults as they step from adolescence to adulthood by offering comprehensive services along with stable long-term housing. From schooling and immediate work opportunities to long-term career training, Larkin Street works with each youth to ensure that they develop the skills and access the resources that will keep them off the streets for good.

Napa County V.O.I.C.E.S. Youth-Led and Youth-Run Emancipation Center

The Voice Our Independent Choices for Emancipation Support (V.O.I.C.E.S.) Emancipation Center of Napa County opened in 2005, and became - as far as the leaders know - the first-ever youth-led emancipation center in the United States. The center provides a place for youth to gather and get connected to a range of services. V.O.I.C.E.S. provides emancipating foster youth a comprehensive array of individual support services, opportunities for leadership and community development, and structured initiatives that require a commitment over time and are focused on meeting a specific set of needs.

For more information, see the Napa County Promising Practice at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/NapaVOICES.pdf

San Diego Youth Employment Services (YES) Transition Network

In 2000, a set of key partners - Casey Family Programs (Casey), the San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP), and ACCESS, Inc. - developed the Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Program. The YES Program, now called the YES Transition Network, provides services that address the unmet needs of many emancipating foster youth, especially in the areas of remedial education, housing, work readiness skills, and connections to employment opportunities.

The YES Transition Network serves current and former foster youth as well as other at-risk youth from ages 13 through 24. YES has a strong and active employment services component, but staff recognize the fact that youth cannot successfully deal with employment and career issues until they have addressed other life challenges as well. To that end, they work with youth on a continuum of services and activities that blend employment with the other transition issues they must handle.

For more information see the San Diego County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/SanDiegoYes.pdf.

Alameda County Pivotal Point Youth Services

Pivotal Point is a non-profit organization designed to promote self-sufficiency among high risk, underserved youth age 16 to 24. Through intensive employment training, vocational skills development, entrepreneurship training, case management, and other comprehensive supportive services, Pivotal Point helps youth successfully make the transition to productive, prosperous adulthood. Their programs focus on providing young people with services, referrals, and resources needed to obtain self-sufficiency and stability to ensure progress toward their life goals.

For more information, see Pivotal Point's website at www.ppys.org.

San Francisco Transitional Youth Taskforce Proposes Transitional Youth Centers

In March 2006, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, in partnership with the San Francisco Youth Commission, created the Mayor's Transitional Youth Task Force (TYTF). He asked leaders of City departments, representatives of community-based organizations, and young people to come together to develop recommendations on how the City could improve outcomes for San Francisco's most vulnerable transitional youth, defined as those ages 16 through 24 who are disconnected from education, employment, and social support systems.

In October 2007, the Task Force released a report reflecting the group's work in its first year --*Disconnected Youth in San Francisco: A Roadmap to Improve the Life Chances of San Francisco's Most Vulnerable Young Adults*. Among the recommendations in the report is a proposal for the development of four comprehensive, neighborhood-based, multi-service centers to provide high quality services for disconnected transitional age youth.

For more information about the San Francisco TYTF and to read the report, go to www.dcyf.org/Content.aspx?id=1566¬e=1572&ekmense1=14_submenu_26_link_2

Kern County ACT – Adolescent Career Transition

Kern County's ACT program is designed to assist youth who are emancipating from the foster care system achieve self-sufficiency. Paid work experience of up to 500 hours is coupled with life skills courses to assist youth with the transition to adulthood. Referrals to this program are made through the Department of Human Services Independent Living Program staff who work with Career Resource Development staff at the school district to ensure the success of the young adults. Monthly workshops are conducted around topics of interest as determined by participants to further assist their transition to adulthood. Monthly incentives are available to eligible participants providing further external motivation for success.

For more information see the Kern County Promising Practice online at www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/KernCountyACT.pdf

Mendocino County Transition-Aged Youth Resource Center

In 2006, Redwood Children's Services in Mendocino County received a grant from the S.H. Cowell Foundation to develop a plan for a youth resource center. The Arbor on Main came together due to the united collaboration of youth stakeholders and public and private entities all currently serving the 15-24 year old population. The Arbor is a youth driven and designed project that will provide needs assessment, planning, service integration, and a wide range of programs for all community young people. The Youth Resource Center combines the philosophies of youth development programs with the structure and functions previously associated with family resource centers. This site-based facility will help prepare young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, long-term, progressive series of youth development experiences that enhance life skills and develop social, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies which enable the youth to fully participate in the workforce and their community.

The Youth Resource Center facility and outreach programs will provide supports and services to transitioning youth in the Ukiah Valley that focus on such things as workforce preparation and practice, social, emotional and health assistance, housing information and assistance, skill building, peer mentoring, youth development workshops, referrals and assistance in making community connections, as well as assistance in obtaining access to entrepreneurial and vocational opportunities. The partners in the project include agencies and organizations in child welfare, social services, workforce investment, county office of education, parks and recreation, and several community-based organizations and schools.

8. Actions to Improve Youth Outcomes across the State

Legislative/Statutory Remedies

1. Establish and fund Comprehensive Youth Opportunity Centers for transitional youth, with flexibility for communities to leverage and expand existing less comprehensive centers or build “virtual centers.”
2. Establish a Youth Transitions taskforce in every county to eliminate cross-system barriers to universal transition plans, and limit numbers of case workers involved with an individual youth. Coordinate the development of transition plans across systems that are youth centered, youth led, and designed, that increase resources and emphasize locating permanent people to support youth in their transition.
3. Establish a voucher system, similar to Individual Training Accounts, tied to a youth’s transition services plan.
4. Extend the timeline of eligibility for flexible foster care services, to include “family finding,” to age 25.
5. At a minimum, allow foster youth to remain in care until they complete high school (or to age 25).
6. Allocate funding for training caregivers and families in youth and adolescent development and to support their readiness to help youth plan for youth transition to adulthood.
7. Expand eligibility and resources for supportive services and independent living programs to ages 12-25.
8. Establish a cross-agency data system that serves as an electronic file to store critical youth data and information in one place.

Policy and Regulatory Changes

1. Ensure that access to housing through THP+ is available to every emancipated foster youth and that the conditions for initial eligibility and continued support are consistent with and support the goals of permanence, education, and employment.
2. Establish priority targets for current and former foster youth at all levels in adult systems and incentivize targeting developmentally appropriate services to youth and young adults in transition.
3. Increase affordable residential opportunities on or near community college campuses.
4. Provide free tuition and support for emancipated foster youth in California’s public higher education systems.
5. Include criteria of what it takes to be “youth –friendly” in the certification process of local one-stop centers under WIA. Explore the application of current one-stop resources and approaches to support youth one-stops or opportunity centers.
6. Ensure that Transition Planning Conferences are held for every youth in care beginning at age 15, and require all counties to include connections to important adults (permanency) and critical career development and employment services in their plans.

Local Practice

1. Local housing agencies should provide priority for section 8 vouchers to former foster youth.
2. Local Youth Councils should ensure that existing one-stops are youth-friendly, and explore the development of youth one-stops or youth opportunity centers.
3. Youth development training provided to those in youth-serving systems should be made available to those in the adult system that work with youth and young adults. The adult systems should examine how services are delivered to young adults and consider new, developmentally appropriate approaches to ensure the effectiveness of those services.
4. Provide cross-agency youth development and resiliency training, planning, and coordination to ensure that every adult interaction with foster youth is focused on guiding them in their transition to adulthood.
5. Develop and implement coordinated information services and resource guides for youth.

Provide Work Experience and Job Opportunities that Lead to Economic Success

1. The Issue

It is difficult enough for young people with the support of a stable family, broad community connections, and educational success to find their way from their first job to stable employment, and from there to a growing and engaging career. Often adolescents find their first job through family or community connections. Foster youth, who have been removed from their family, community, and school, do not have the same level of support as most young people, and have even a tougher time securing employment, succeeding at their first job, and establishing a solid work history that leads to economic and personal success and stability. Public and private sector employers, if given the right encouragement, incentives, and support, can play a role in providing early employment opportunities and career pathway opportunities to foster youth.

In order for foster youth to be truly prepared for economic self-sufficiency, they need access to opportunities that allow for relevant learning and varied experiences in the workplace. Employers should be recruited and supported to not only provide career track employment opportunities for youth, but also to play the role of career mentor in providing real-world, hands-on information that prepares youth to successfully obtain and maintain employment.

2. The Goal

Youth need early access to a continuum of opportunities that gradually introduce the concepts of employer expectations, workplace culture, and the skills necessary to be successful in the workplace. Employer supports should include information about the various ways in which they can be involved in providing work-based learning experiences for youth such as informational interviews, job shadowing, career mentoring and internships. The goal is to encourage public and private employers to hire current and former foster youth and provide opportunities to ensure that all foster youth are exposed to a series of workplace opportunities and experiences, including meaningful employment, prior to their transition from care.

3. The Situation

If employed at all, former foster youth earn significantly lower wages than other young people. According to a Casey Family Programs study, one-third have incomes averaging \$6,000, well below the poverty level, which is \$7,890 for a single individual. Without full-time employment, 25% of foster youth find themselves homeless after emancipation and end up in more expensive systems of care.²⁰ Unemployment among foster youth is a critical problem, preventing them from obtaining housing and the normal supports of adulthood, contributing to a cycle of poverty and their dependence on public systems as adults. Currently, employment preparation and work experience are not emphasized enough during

²⁰ Erbes, Karissa MSW, 2007, *Southern Area Consortium of Human Services Emancipating Foster Youth Literature Review*, Southern Area Consortium of Human Services and San Diego State University, page 6.

transition planning. They must be stressed early in adolescence and become expectations for youth prior to leaving care as a crucial element in successful transitions to adulthood and economic success.

4. The Challenges

1. A job-only focus can lead to dead end employment. Meaningful developmental opportunities in the workplace that provide stable entry-level employment leading to a career pathway, are needed to ensure success and stability for foster youth. A narrow focus on obtaining employment does not address the fact that these youth often lack the life skills, soft skills, and job readiness preparation that will help them to stay employed and reach for the economic success that in the long run dictates their self-sufficiency.
2. Employers are wary of “system” youth and have false perceptions about their backgrounds, needs, and potential. Employers tend to perceive that youth coming with a label (whether foster youth, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, or associated with a specific program) are problematic and potentially non-productive in the workplace.
3. Outreach to employers that specifically focuses on hiring foster youth often creates a stigma that discourages employers from offering employment opportunities.
4. Perceived and real union issues and personnel policies often impede the hiring of youth, particularly in our public systems, where civil service hiring and promotion practices may limit the ability of public agencies and programs to hire from a target population.

5. Opportunities

1. The California EDGE Campaign highlights the challenges and opportunities California faces in developing and maintaining a qualified workforce that will meet industry demands in light of growing globalization and increases in retirements. It outlines specific policy recommendations that include providing all Californians access to high quality postsecondary education and skills training, providing working adults with opportunities to move up the skill ladder, and linking workforce programs and institutions to create pathways to high wage jobs.
2. Industry pipeline initiatives exist in the adult workforce system and in communities around the state. Pipeline initiatives tied to high-wage, high growth industries are facilitated by workforce development areas throughout California. These initiatives offer a great opportunity for youth providers, schools, and others focused on preparing youth for economic success to connect to and build on in order to prepare youth to be successful.
3. Labor organizations continue to be interested in their future membership, and express that they are in desperate need of forming partnerships that help identify, recruit, and prepare youth for careers in the trades.
4. There is a trend in counties to develop public sector internships and/or employment opportunities specifically targeted to foster youth and other youth that are consumers of county services.

5. There is a move in some local areas to develop campaigns to hire youth and young adults, particularly through summer jobs programs.

6. The Suggested Solutions

1. Design and implement initiatives to provide access to private sector employment.

- a. Develop and fund a private/public sector employment initiative with a subsidized youth employment component - perhaps modeled after on-the-job training initiatives where the employer receives a subsidy for the training period for successful candidates.
- b. Create and implement a “hire a youth” campaign, with appropriate infra-structure through the Workforce Investment Act system and in conjunction with the California Chamber of Commerce and other state wide business associations.
- c. Provide targeted access to union apprenticeship programs and develop pre-apprenticeship activities in programs serving emancipating and emancipated foster youth in connection with the California EDGE Campaign.
- d. Encourage all employers (state, county, local government, and private) to establish hiring and internship programs for former foster youth as part of a broader strategy focused on all transitional youth.
- e. Align foster youth employment opportunities to connect to high wage, high growth industries and local pipeline initiatives.

2. Provide pathways to public sector employment.

- a. Encourage county departments to offer and support internships for current and former foster youth at age 16 and 17 by launching a state-supported public sector sequence of opportunities similar to the former Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Summer Youth Employment and Training Program (SYETP). This program provided; work experience, training, summer employment, internships, a case manager, stipends, subsidized pay, academic credit, and certificate programs.
- b. Encourage social service departments to offer internal career pathway opportunities, and job placement assistance to former foster youth seeking a career in child welfare.
- c. Adjust civil service regulations to allow departments to hire and retain qualified program participants (clients) in permanent career-track positions. Allow for a percentage of targeted participants who have been engaged in an internship or temporary positions in a department or agency to be hired without the same testing and “list” requirements of the civil service system.

3. Support youth success in the workplace.

- a. Develop a structured system for both youth and employers that ensures supports are in place to deal with issues that come up inside as well as outside the workplace that impede the ability of foster youth to be successful. This should include supports for employers who hire foster youth, the provision of on-site support for early developmental experiences, and the encouragement of career mentors or advisors for every foster youth.

- b. Provide cross-training for educators and workforce professionals, as well as caregivers and guardians to ensure they fully understand the needs of foster youth and are more aware of appropriate opportunities and resources to support their success in the workplace. Employers and staff working with youth need training and support in understanding the challenges inherent in working with this population, which include matching youth with experiences that are developmentally appropriate as well as skill-level appropriate. On-going support should be provided to facilitate strong employer relationships.

5. Recognize and celebrate employers who provide employment opportunities.

- a. Implement an award model similar to the Secretary of Labor's New Freedom Initiative Award that annually recognizes non-profits, small businesses, corporations, and individuals that have demonstrated exemplary and innovative efforts in furthering the employment and workplace environment for people with disabilities, a goal of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative.

7. Examples of Innovation and Success

Tulare County Youth Transitions Program

In 2006 the Tulare County Health and Human Services Department, along with the Department of Probation and a local provider, Community Services and Employment Training, began the Youth Transitions Program. This award-winning program provides both employment and leadership opportunities for vulnerable youth. This partnership has worked to open Extra Help positions in Tulare Works (in the department of Health and Human Services), and create a new job title, "Trainee," specifically designed for youth participating in the Youth Transitions Program. The Youth Transitions Program serves all WIA eligible youth with an emphasis on foster youth. The program serves about 35 youth continuously, some of whom go on to interview and attain permanent positions with the county. Others find permanent positions with local businesses after completing the program. Youth may keep their Trainee positions for up to 2 years for over 1500 hours each year.

For more information see the Tulare County Promising Practice
www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/TulareYouthTransition.pdf.

Los Angeles Summer Jobs Program

In 2007, the City of Los Angeles Community Development Department and partners within their Youth Transition Action Team connected 200 ILP-eligible foster and probation youth to their Summer Youth Employment program "Hire LA" by strengthening their cross-system connections. The successful pilot has led to increased expansion for 2008, including expanding the program to include a job shadowing and work internship month.

Santa Clara Emancipated Foster Youth Employment Program

In Santa Clara County, the Emancipated Foster Youth Employment Program provides entry-level job opportunities to emancipated foster youth ages 17 ¾ to 24 years old that emancipated from Santa Clara County. Prior to the development of this program, the county had limited job opportunities for qualified emancipated foster youth, and the existing job opportunities were only available within the Social Services Agency. In early 2006, three county departments came together to develop a pilot employment program for youth to

receive training for temporary, paid assignments. The program allows eligible youth the opportunity to be considered for entry-level County jobs through a special application process. Youth are hired as temporary employees with full health benefits. After a three month period of successful job performance, they are eligible for recommendation by their supervisor to become a permanent employee. At that time, they are required to take the employment test for their job classification. If they pass the test, they then become a permanent County employee. The program has recently been expanded to include 21 entry-level classifications, representing more than 500 alternately staffed entry-level positions county wide.

Mendocino County Office of Education Foster Youth Services

The Foster Youth Services Coordinator, through the Mendocino County Office of Education, uses Foster Youth Services resources funded through the California Department of Education to administer a small scale program for foster youth based on the Workability model. This program targets foster youth who do not have an IEP (required for all special education students), matching them with employment opportunities that align with their career interests. The program works with foster youth over age 16, with older students having priority. The number of students served varies year to year based on a variety of factors including how long students remain in their foster home placements and/or their jobs. Youth wages are subsidized for 10 hours per week at minimum wage for up to 180 hours and workers compensation costs are covered so there is no cost to the employer. As in the Workability model, the hope is that youth will be hired as a regular employee at the end of their training period or that additional hours will be added to the subsidized work by the employer. This program has seen many successes and has developed a number of positive employer partnerships.

Humboldt County STEP-UP Program

The Humboldt County STEP-UP program operates during the summertime and offers short term work experience and skill development opportunities for youth. It consists of three primary elements; business sponsored internships at non profit organizations and in public agencies, short term subsidized work experience opportunities, and the Digital Pathways Project. The Digital Pathways Project offers industry specific technical training in video editing and production on state-of-the-art equipment.

The STEP-UP program partners with local businesses to offer work experience opportunities in two ways, through sponsored internships and through subsidized summer employment. Businesses have the option of sponsoring a youth by contributing 1,500 dollars to support a sponsored internship. Sponsored youth work in various non profit and public agencies for around 150 hours. The majority of youth participants, however, work directly for private employers and the county uses Workforce Investment Act funds to help pay their wages. Humboldt County pays Workers Compensation Insurance for these youth out of the General Fund.

San Francisco Workforce Solutions

In San Francisco, WDD/Workforce Solutions has developed a comprehensive strategy of addressing the needs of employers and matching those needs with the best services their local One-Stops have to offer. Over the last few years, they have developed and sustained partnerships with major corporate employers to provide jobs for youth in their programs and have specifically targeted foster youth for these opportunities. Successful employer connections include Safeway, Steve and Berry's, and SkyWest Airlines.

8. Actions to Improve Youth Outcomes across the State

Legislative Policies/Statutory Remedies

1. Create legislation and appropriation for a public system-based internship program.
2. Shift eligibility to allow emancipated foster youth to be immediately eligible for Cal Works transition child care services.
3. Create legislation and appropriation for a subsidized on-the-job training program in partnership with the private sector, ILP, and Workforce Investment Boards modeled after OJT in the workforce system. Include support for staff to support supervisors and youth.
4. Create an award model similar to the *Secretary of Labor's New Freedom Initiative Award* that gives recognition for exemplary and innovative efforts in furthering the employment opportunities of foster youth.

Policy and Regulatory

1. Encourage the State Youth Vision Team and the California Workforce Investment Board to develop a statewide "Hire-a-Youth" campaign in conjunction with the California Chamber of Commerce.
2. Adjust civil service regulations to allow for a percentage of targeted participants who have been engaged in internship or temporary positions in a department or agency to be hired without the same testing and "list" requirements of the civil service system.
3. Encourage apprenticeship programs to target the recruitment of emancipating or emancipated foster youth.

Local Practice

1. Remove adult status requirement for eligibility to apply for county positions or create a student or trainee classification.
2. Create open dialogue about how to leverage recruitment and outreach to employers.
3. Develop mechanisms to provide support for youth in retaining employment and supervisors that hire them.
4. Align employer engagement strategies to economic development initiatives such as the California EDGE Campaign and industry pipeline initiatives.
5. Create supports for employers who hire foster youth.
6. Encourage local county departments to create public system internship opportunities for current and former foster youth.

7. Provide training for education and workforce development professionals, as well as caregivers and guardians regarding the needs of foster youth and to raise awareness about appropriate opportunities and resources.
8. Launch local summer and year round youth employment initiatives and include foster youth as a priority for placement.

Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit

Glossary

2+2 Programs	A four-year program of technical training is begun in the last two years of high school and continued through two years of community college.
A-G Requirements	The intent of the "a-g" Subject Requirement is to ensure that students can participate fully in the first-year program at the University in a wide variety of fields of study. The requirements are written deliberately for the benefit of all students expecting to enter the University of California /California State University, and not for preparation for specific majors. Faculty consider the Subject Requirement to be effective preparation, on many levels, for undergraduate work in California's public university systems.
Age Out	Refers to youth who exit the child welfare system simply because they reach the age of 18, and not because they are returned home to their families or adopted.
Apprenticeship	Apprenticeship is a system of learning while earning, and "learning by doing." It combines training on the job with related and supplemental instruction at school. Each program operates under apprenticeship training standards agreed to by labor and/or management in accordance with State and Federal laws, under which a person works with a skilled worker and gains on the job skills and "know-how" and in turn earns a portable certification of their skills.
Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)	A Breakthrough Series Collaborative is a quality improvement methodology developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and Associates in Process Improvement (API) in 1995. This methodology was adapted for the child welfare world by Casey Family Programs in 2001 and it is being used to bring together teams from multiple jurisdictions to focus intensively on a common challenge by simultaneously testing practices, strategies, and tools rapidly on a small scale in a shared learning environment. By sharing lessons learned in real time and spreading successes quickly, participating jurisdictions are able to make dramatic improvements in their programs and systems.

CalCRN	California Career Resource Network - an interagency, state-level network created to support career guidance and academic counseling programs to promote improved career and education decisions.
Care Provider	The person or institution responsible for providing foster care as defined in regulation.
Career Academies	Career Academies have become a widely used high school reform initiative that aims to keep students engaged in school and prepare them for successful transitions to post-secondary education and employment. Typically serving between 150 and 200 high school students from grade 9 or 10 through grade 12, Career Academies are organized as small learning communities, combine academic and technical curricula around a career theme, and establish partnerships with local employers to provide work-based learning opportunities.
Career Development	The process of helping young people acquire basic skills, explore career opportunities, and gain experience within the workforce to prepare them for a career and successful employment.
Career Mentoring	A career exploration activity in which the student is matched one-to-one with an adult professional in a chosen field of interest to explore a career and related issues. Career mentoring relationships should be at least six months in duration and include structured activities as well as career and education-related activities.
Career Pathway	Career Pathways are broad groupings of careers that share similar characteristics and whose employment requirements call for many common interests, strengths and competencies. Often refers to a linked series of courses within a high school setting.
Career Technical Education (CTE)	A program of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers.
Caregivers	Refers to anyone providing care to youth in foster care including kinship care, foster families and group homes.
Case manager	A professional who serves as a point of contact for a youth in care. This person seeks out and coordinates resources, monitors progress, and communicates with the person, family, and other professionals.

Case Workers	A caseworker, often referred to as a Social Worker, is a person who is employed by a government agency or a private organization to take on an individual's case and provide them advocacy, information, or other services.
Chafee Act	The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. This program incorporates and expands the former Independent Living Program (ILP) and expands services for after care youth ages 18-21 who have exited care at age 18 or after, but have not reached age 21.
Child Welfare Services (CWS)	Used to describe a set of government and private services designed to protect children and encourage family stability. These typically include investigation of alleged child abuse (including child sexual abuse and neglect ("child protective services")), foster care, adoption services, and services aimed at supporting at-risk families so they can remain intact ("prevention services" or "family preservation services"). CWS is also used to describe the state-level and county level public agencies responsible for the oversight and delivery of foster care services in their jurisdiction.
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)	Trained community volunteers who speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court
Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program	A change to the Chafee program that provides for additional resources to make vouchers available for youth to receive post-secondary education and training.
Emancipation	Describes the moment in time when children age out of the Child Welfare System. This is usually at the age of 18 or when they finish high school, whichever is later. When children are emancipated they are no longer wards of the court and social services no longer has to provide for them.
Extended care	The extension of foster care beyond age 18.
Extended services	The extension of foster care services, but not necessarily foster care itself beyond age 18.

Foster Care	<p>The provision of 24-hour care and supervision to a child who has been placed by a child placing agency, including county child welfare services and probation departments, in one of the following types of foster homes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A licensed foster family home. • A licensed small family home. • A family home certified by a licensed foster family agency for its exclusive use. • An approved foster family home. • A licensed group home for children.
	<p>A home, pursuant to a court order or voluntary placement agreement.</p>
Foster youth	<p>Young people in foster care under child welfare supervision or probation supervision</p>
Foster Youth Services (FYS)	<p>A state-funded program that provide support services to foster children who suffer the traumatic effects of displacement from family and schools and multiple placements in foster care. FYS programs have the ability and authority to ensure that health and school records are obtained to establish appropriate placements and coordinate instruction, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, vocational training, emancipation services, training for independent living, and other related services. FYS programs increase the stability of placements for foster children and youth. These services are designed to improve the children's educational performance and personal achievement.</p>
General Educational Development (GED)	<p>A certificate awarded to a person who successfully passes exams measuring their educational level. The GED certificate is equivalent to a high school diploma.</p>
Group Home	<p>The term “group home” is used in California to cover wide array of programs of different size and structure providing various combinations of care, supervision, and services to meet the needs of diverse groups of children. Unlike many states, California does not distinguish between campus-based residential treatment programs and community-based group homes, or between group homes serving varying populations such as pregnant and parenting teens, juvenile offenders, emotionally disturbed children and transition-aged youth. “Group home,” as used in Community Care Licensing (CCL) regulations refers to a residential facility of any capacity that provides 24-hour non-medical care and supervision to children in a structured environment with the services provided at least in part by staff employed by the licensee.</p>

Guidance Counselors	Professionals who guide elementary, middle, and high school students, both academically and socially, through their school years.
ILP Redesign	The effort to redesign ILP to focus on attaining education, employment, and permanence outcomes by providing real opportunities for experience and learning.
Independent Living Skills Program (ILP/ILSP)	Provides training, services, and programs to assist current and former foster youth achieve self-sufficiency prior to and after leaving the foster care system. Some of the services provided through ILP include daily living skills, money management, decision making, building self-esteem, financial assistance with college or vocational schools, educational resources, housing (transitional housing), and employment.
Individual Education Plan (IEP)	Required in schools for children who have disabilities.
Internship	A highly structured, time limited, career preparation activity that occurs at the worksite. Internships may be paid or unpaid, depending on whether the student is performing productive work for the employer. Internships are designed to give students hands-on experience, providing them with a deeper understanding of the occupation or industry.
Job Shadowing	A career exploration activity, conducted at the workplace, designed to help students explore a field of interest while developing research skills and building occupational knowledge.
Kinship Care	The full-time nurturing of a child by someone related to the child by family ties or by prior relationship connection.
One Stop	Facility supported by the Workforce Investment Act offering comprehensive services and resources for employment training and career development under one roof.
Permanence	Both a process and a result that includes involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in finding a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe, stable and secure parenting relationship • Love • Unconditional commitment • Lifelong support in the context of reunification, a legal adoption, or guardianship, where possible, and in which the youth has the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons including brothers & sisters

Pipeline initiatives	Initiatives that address preparing workers for a specific industry or career to address current or projected workforce shortages. Initiatives are often aimed at the adult workforce, but some programs connect to career preparation activities focused at the high school level.
Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard	The standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the child's health, safety, and best interests.
Regional Occupational Programs (ROP)	Career and workforce preparation for high school students and adults, preparation for advanced training, and the upgrading of existing skills.
Residential Based Services Reform (RBS)	Designed to insure that group home placement is used judiciously, appropriately and effectively in order to obtain specific, affirmative outcomes that cannot be reached using services provided while a child or youth lives in a family setting in the community.
Social Worker	Child, family, and school social workers provide social services and assistance to improve the social and psychological functioning of children and their families and to maximize the well-being of families and the academic functioning of children.
Soft skills	Non-technical, intangible, personality-specific skills such as written and verbal communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, analytical and adaptability. These skills are viewed as transferable skills that can be applied to any job.
Systems	Refers to state, governmental, or other organizations that work with or provide public services.
Tech Prep	A planned sequence of courses designed as career pathways in vocational and technical fields.
Transition Plan	A plan that focuses on the development of independent living skills, including securing housing, developing a financial plan, obtaining and maintaining employment, continuing education, and creating social networks and connections.

Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP)

The THPP is a community care licensed placement opportunity for youth in foster care. The goal of THPP is to help participants emancipate successfully by providing a safe environment for youth to practice the skills learned in ILP. Participants may live alone, with departmental approval, or with roommates in apartments and single-family dwellings with regular support and supervision provided by THPP agency staff, county social workers, and ILP coordinators.

Transitioning youth

Typically refers to youth that are in the process of transitioning from one stage of life to another (i.e.: transitioning from adolescents to adulthood.)

Work experience

A career preparation activity in which students are at a worksite doing real work for pay. They are held to the same expectations as all employees. These experiences range from regular, paid employment to subsidized employment and learning-rich work experience.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) offers a comprehensive range of workforce development activities through statewide and local organizations. Available workforce development activities provided in local communities can benefit job seekers, laid off workers, youth, incumbent workers, new entrants to the workforce, veterans, persons with disabilities, and employers. The purpose of these activities is to promote an increase in the employment, job retention, earnings, and occupational skills improvement by participants. This, in turn, improves the quality of the workforce, reduces welfare dependency, and improves the productivity and competitiveness of the nation. California will receive approximately \$454 million from the federal government this year to provide services for adults, laid-off workers, and youth.

Youth friendly

A term that refers to how services and programs are structured to attract, retain, and serve youth in a respectful and engaging manner.

Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT)

An initiative of New Ways to Work and Casey Family Programs that focuses on bringing together the resources of the workforce, education, and child welfare systems to better prepare adolescents who are current or former foster youth to achieve economic, educational, and employment success as they transition into the adult world.

Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit

Policy Paper Development Process and Workgroup Members

The Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit is sponsored by Casey Family Programs and facilitated by New Ways to Work, in partnership with the Child and Family Policy Institute of California.

Policy Paper Development

The Policy Papers developed for The Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit were written by New Ways to Work, with significant advice and input from youth, caregivers, and hundreds of child welfare, workforce development, and education professionals. The papers build on the issues and solutions identified through the 2006 Foster Youth Employment Forums, the California NGA Policy Academy on Transitioning Foster Youth, the California Youth Connection's recommendations regarding employment preparation, Casey Family Program's work at the state-wide systems-building and county levels, New Ways to Work's national convening on Disconnected and Disconnecting Youth, the Youth Transition Action Team initiative, and other California initiatives and programs focused on the employment and career development elements of foster youth transition.

Workgroups were formed in each of four defined policy areas and guided the development of each paper. A planning committee provided oversight and final review of each paper, as well as providing assistance with the planning of the summit.

Each Policy Paper outlines the issues, goals, current situation, opportunities for change, suggested solutions, examples of innovation at the local level, and specific policy recommendations at the legislative, regulatory, and local practice levels.

The papers address the following four policy focus areas:

- Prioritize career development and employment for every foster youth
- Connect youth to education and workforce development programs
- Support emancipating and emancipated youth in their transition to adulthood
- Provide work experience and job opportunities that lead to economic success

Though the summit activities, participants will reflect on each paper, and provide priority recommendations in each of the four policy areas. The recommendations will be presented to members of the Select Committee on Foster Care and other key legislators, and published in a report following the Summit.

People

We wish to thank the following individuals who volunteered their time, energy, and wisdom over the last several months in order to ensure the success of this summit.

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Foster Youth Career Development and Employment Summit *About the Partners*

About the Partners

New Ways to Work

Building Community Connections that Prepare Youth for Success

The mission of New Ways to Work (New Ways) is to build community connections that prepare youth for success. New Ways helps create powerful partnerships among government and community partners - including schools, community organizations, social service agencies, philanthropy, and the private sector - to ensure better access to quality career and educational opportunities for youth, particularly our nation's most vulnerable young people. These partnerships provide the means to use public resources more effectively across funding streams to improve services to young people.



For the past twenty-five years, New Ways has been at the center of efforts to improve the way our public systems and local programs prepare youth for the future. Young people need better opportunities, both in and out of school, to gain the knowledge and skills critical for success in college and career. New Ways helps communities work together to build comprehensive youth-serving systems, and supports professional networks of leaders, policy makers, and practitioners engaged in its initiatives to maximize impacts, accelerate learning, and improve outcomes for youth. New Ways initiatives include the National Intermediary Network, the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative, the Youth Council Institute, and Diploma Plus California.

Through the **Youth Transition Action Teams (YTAT)** initiative New Ways supports a state-wide peer network of over eighteen California counties seeking to create a comprehensive, integrated, and sequenced set of services and supports for current and former foster youth. The goal of the YTAT initiative is to improve the likelihood that youth touched by the child welfare system will be prepared and ready to achieve success as adults.

New Ways to Work

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Casey Family Programs

Fostering families and fostering change since 1966

Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care.

Established by UPS founder Jim Casey, the Seattle-based national operating foundation has served children, youth, and families in the child welfare system since 1966.



The foundation operates in two ways. It provides direct services, and it promotes advances in child welfare practice and policy.

Casey collaborates with foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to provide safe, loving homes for youth in its direct care. The foundation also collaborates with counties, states, and American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to improve services and outcomes for the more than 500,000 young people in out-of-home care across the United States.

Drawing on four decades of front-line work with families and alumni of foster care, Casey Family Programs develops tools, practices, and policies to nurture all youth in care and to help parents strengthen families at risk of needing foster care.

For more information, contact Casey Family Programs at info@casey.org or 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109. Visit our Web site at www.casey.org

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Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC)

Supporting Human Services in Strengthening the Lives of California's Vulnerable Adults, Children and Families.

The Child and Family Policy Institute of California is a private non-profit organization incorporated in 2004 as a 501 c 3 entity under the auspices of the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA). The purpose of the CFPIC is to “advance the development of sound public policy and promote program excellence in county Human Services Agencies through research, education, training and technical assistance.”



Beginning in late 2000, CWDA was privileged to receive the services of the National Network for Child Safety and the Public Child Services Association of Ohio, with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for the purpose of assisting CWDA in identifying strategies for supporting and advancing best practices among its members. In 2002, reflecting on work that was being done in Ohio, the recommendation was made that the county Human Services directors consider establishing a private non-profit entity that could solicit private foundation funding to support their collective work. Over the course of many months, similar organizations, within and outside California, were researched. Finally, in 2004, a Board of Directors was named, by-laws were written, and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) was formally incorporated. Funding was obtained from the Casey Family Programs and Zellerbach Family Foundation to enable the hiring of an Executive Director and the establishment of an office in Sacramento. Since that time, the CFPIC has implemented a number of projects to support the work of California's Human Services Agencies.

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