

WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

August 2005

Site of the Month

Recently, Kids Count grantees were invited to participate in a brown bag conference call on innovative employment and educational programs for youth aging out of foster care. Assigned reading material for the call was a paper co-authored by one of the conference call presenters, Peter Pecore of the Casey Family Programs. The paper, "Providing Better Opportunities for Older Children in the Child Welfare System," is published in the *Future of Children* and can be accessed at http://www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/9-hussings.pdf.

The paper's authors, Ruth Massinga and Peter J. Pecora, examine the developmental needs and outcomes of older children in foster care, highlight the negative outcomes of those who transition out of foster care, discuss policies and programs that have supported older youth in foster care, and report on services for transitioning out of foster care. In conclusion, they recommend the following 10 changes to improve transition services for older youth:

1. Use goal-oriented case planning and family involvement
2. Provide youths with a voice in their care
3. Facilitate youth adjustment and development
4. Hire and coach highly skilled workers
5. Promote parental visitation
6. Involve schools and communities as part of a "system of care" approach
7. Focus on independent living skills
8. Build youth support networks
9. Encourage states to sponsor foster care alumni scholarships
10. Provide new and creative supplemental independent living services

Along with the assigned reading material, Kids Count grantees were sent the following comprehensive resource list, which was compiled by John Emerson and Eric Steiner of the Casey Family Programs. I'd like to also share it with you.

Selected Resources for Improving Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care¹

A Road Map for Learning: Improving Educational Outcomes in Foster Care

A Road Map for Learning is a guide for everyone working towards successful educational outcomes for youth in foster care or out-of-home care. The book provides a modular framework for achieving collaboration across the federal, state, and local legal, educational, and child welfare systems. Emphasizing the needs of K-12 students, it contains resources for parents, caregivers, teachers, and child welfare professionals. It shows how to integrate the predictors of academic success into an educational plan and encourages letting youth in out-of-home care be the primary voice in their own decision-making.

Introduction: (with link to document): www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/RoadMapForLearning.htm

Frequently Asked Questions I, II & III: Helping child welfare professionals, advocates, and young people to use and understand the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program

The national Foster Care Coalition has published a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) helping state agencies, child welfare professionals, advocates, and young people to use and understand Chafee programs – including educational support:

- FAQ I (February 2000) focuses on Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) basics, highlighting differences between FCIA and previous legislation. The FAQ includes information about program eligibility, funding amounts and administration, Medicaid, and accountability.
- FAQ II (December 2000) updates FAQ I, and provides new information about housing, youth involvement, convening stakeholders, young people with special needs, and tribal involvement.
- FAQ III (May 2005) updates FAQs I and II, and provides information about Education and Training Vouchers, other education and vocation supports, and youth development and engagement.

www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ChafeeFAQ.htm

Higher Education Reform: Incorporating the Needs of Foster Youth

This 12-page report makes three recommendations for the reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act (HEA):

- Require the U.S. General Accounting Office to study how to expand the concept of “ability to benefit” to increase the number of deserving foster youth who have access to a higher education.
- Require the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance to provide recommendations for expanding foster youth access to federal financial aid.
- Encourage TRIO and GEAR UP programs to make foster youth a priority.

Modest changes to the federal Higher Education Act can begin to remove obstacles and to open doors for youth formerly in foster care.

Available at: <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/HigherEducationReform.htm>

It's My Life: A Framework for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Successful Adulthood

It's My Life was created by, for, and with youth. It draws on the expertise and insights of youth in foster care, alumni of care, social workers, researchers, and education specialists. It is designed for child welfare professionals and others responsible for guiding and supporting teens as they prepare for adulthood. It focuses on seven key elements that determine a young person's ability to succeed – including education. For each of these necessary and related elements, the book offers:

- Ways for young people to be actively involved in their care
- Social work practice guidelines
- Ways for youth, caregivers, communities, and agencies to work together
- Information about policy decisions that affect the lives of young people leaving foster care
- Ways to measure outcomes of transition practice

Available at: www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ItsMyLife.htm

Selected Youth Employment Resources²

It's My Life: Employment: A Guide to Employment and Career Development for Youth and Young Adults
Career and employment success for young people from foster care is rooted in an ongoing journey connecting parents, caregivers, friends, mentors, advocates, communities, schools, and employers. Specific tools and strategies can help in this process. Expanding on the *It's My Life* framework, this practical, concise handbook is intended for child welfare professionals and others responsible for helping young people prepare for transition to adulthood. Introduction: (with link to document): www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ItsMyLifeEmployment.htm

Innovative Transition and Employment Models for Foster Youth

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has identified four models that improve connections between youth in care and transitional services, including employment. Services profiled in this article include Community Transition Services Center in San Antonio, Texas; Lighthouse Youth Services in Cincinnati, Ohio; the UPS School-to-Career Partnership in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Preparation for Adult Living Program of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. www.aecf.org/publications/advocasey/fall2001/whoelse.htm

Getting the Job Done: Effectively Preparing Foster Youth for Employment

Every year in California, more than 4,000 young adults “age out” of foster care when they turn 18. This 16-page “What Works Policy Brief” contains recommendations to improve employment outcomes for youth in care and includes models that have been successful. Highlighted programs include the Marriott Foundation’s “Bridges from School to Work,” Project TRENDSS (Teens Reaching for Employment Now and Developing Self-Sufficiency) of the Ventura County Workforce Board, the San Diego Workforce Partnership, and the UPS School-to-Work Program. www.foundationconsortium.org/how/library/policybriefs/policy9.pdf

America’s Service Locator: www.servicelocator.org

America’s Service Locator is a no-cost web based tool from the US Department of Labor that lists, by ZIP code, locations of Comprehensive and Affiliate One Stop Career Centers, libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs, Neighborhood Centers funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Job Corps Centers, and other community services online.

US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) administers federal government job training and worker dislocation programs, federal grants to states for public employment service programs, and unemployment insurance benefits. These services are primarily provided through state and local workforce development systems. Youth Services Home Page: www.doleta.gov/youth_services/

Joint Action in Community Service’s Amicus Mentorship Program

JACS is a major national Job Corps contractor and the Amicus program is designed specifically to help 16-17 year-old youth in foster care in the greater Denver metropolitan area served by JACS. Two links provide additional information on this service targeted to youth in foster care: www.jacsmentors.org/denver/Amicus.htm and www.jacsinc.org/youth_services/foster_care.htm

(Footnotes)

¹ Prepared by John Emerson, Casey Family Programs (jemerson@casey.org)

² Prepared by Eric Steiner, Casey Family Programs (esteiner@casey.org)