

TRANSITION: TEAMS IN ACTION



The Newsletter of the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative

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Engaging Youth in Case Planning: Three Counties Share Their Strategies

In September, New Ways to Work hosted an audio conference on the topic of Engaging Youth in Case Planning. The call highlighted successful and innovative strategies for youth engagement in case planning involving both the Independent Living Program (ILP) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. Presenters for this call included Bob Malmberg and Irene Briggs of Orange County, Heather Storer of Fostering the Future in San Mateo County, and Dustin Pack of Project YES in Stanislaus County.

Orange County

Orange County is committed to encouraging creativity and decision making in the youth they serve. Bob Malmberg, Program Manager with the Orange County Social Services Agency, and Irene Briggs, MFT with Orange County's Emancipation Services/Independent Living Program (ILP), presented information about Orange County's youth focused, youth driven transition planning conferences; the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP); the Youth Advisory Board; and the development of their ILP Website.

The Transitional Independent Living Plan is their recipe for youth engagement. The plan is youth driven and gives young people the opportunity to identify goals with no real limits on the goals that can be set. The TILP holds all those who work with foster youth accountable for involving them in the planning and decision making process.

Transitional Planning Conferences are an opportunity for foster youth (14 years old and older) to be in charge of planning for their transition to adulthood. The youth identify who will be present at the conference and may choose to include peer mentors, friends, Independent Living Coaches, relatives, or anyone else they feel connected to. The conferences reinforce the goals discussed in the TILP and allow for open, creative, and supportive discussions.

The Orange County Emancipation Services Program is currently establishing a Youth Advisory Board (YAB), modeled after the Youth Advisory Board in Santa Clara County. Youth serving on the YAB will represent Social Services and Probation youth from both pre and post emancipation populations. One of the projects being conducted by the advisory board will be the development of a youth website that will provide a wealth of information intended to better connect foster youth to the services that are available to them.

“Give youth a chance to make good decisions and learn from their mistakes as young adults”

Bob Malmberg

San Mateo County

Fostering the Future (FTF) empowers foster and kinship youth to develop an optimistic view of their future and provides them with the supports they need to make a successful transition into adulthood. FTF works to create a sense of community for youth that helps them to connect with one another through enrichment activities and at a community drop-in center. The program also allows young people to collaborate with FTF staff to create action plans, develop a strong network of outside resources and options,

Fostering the Future uses the following foundational principles to guide their work:

- A sense of hope, vision of the future and sense of self-determination is imperative to youth success.
- All youth are creative, resilient, powerful resourceful, and capable of finding the answers they need with resources and support from caring adults.
- Valuing intergenerational knowledge and developing collaborative youth/adult partnerships is paramount to developing youth-centered programming.

and make a difference in their communities.

Asset Coaching allows for one on one involvement with youth, using the lens of the 41 developmental assets in developing programs. One goal of the project is to help young people create a sense of interdependence by nurturing individual asset development.

Fostering the Future does not have clients, they have members. They do not have case loads, they have cohorts. The youth advisory board is seen as a group of consultants to the program, helping to guide the work. Participation is voluntary and youth can opt in or out of the program. Members come to the program through self referral as well as adult referral.

Fostering the Future offers a menu of services to address the various unmet needs of foster and kinship care youth. These services include:

- Encouraging youth to get involved in community activities
- Civic engagement
- Personal enrichment activities
- Risk-taking
- Team building and leadership opportunities
- Financial literacy
- Career, internship, and college exposures
- Supportive adult allies
- A supportive community of peers.

As San Mateo County is a large geographic area, Fostering the Future’s goal is to develop more drop-in sites throughout the county to allow for better access for youth across the county.

Fostering the Future’s longitudinal benchmarks for program success are:

- Healthy sense of cultural and personal identity
- Stronger connection to a supportive community where youth know they are valued
- Improved independent living skills
- Youth have stronger feelings of self-efficacy and control over their lives
- Self Advocacy skills

- Youth report feeling valued in their communities
- Youth have an optimistic view of their futures and confidence in their ability to achieve their goals
- Youth can name at least one caring and supportive adult in their lives.

Stanislaus County

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded Youth Employment Services Program (Project YES) in Stanislaus County, has adopted a different approach to engaging their clients. Youth participants are very involved in the program processes. The goal is to provide a very youth friendly environment that serves young people ages 17 to 21 with an emphasis on employment preparation and career development. Project YES serves youth who are dealing with a variety of barriers to achieving their goals. To help address these barriers, staff facilitate team building and orientation sessions, pointing out that all youth are facing some similar barriers. The reality is that the majority of young people are looking for jobs and searching for their place in society.

Project YES staff allow and encourage youth to share their stories. The stories are very powerful and are what often inspire other youth to make changes in their lives. Youth enrolled in the program seem to be comfortable sharing their stories and know they won't be judged by staff or other youth in the program. Staff understand that all young people make mistakes and do their best to help their clients learn from those mistakes, take responsibility, and be accountable for their actions. Program Staff do a good job of connecting with youth, working along side them, with them, and for them. The ultimate goal is to see real change and address the most pressing needs of the youth they serve first, even if those are not always in alignment with the program's outcome measures. Youth also need to see the value in their participation. When youth are active, their success rate in the program tends to be very high.

Project YES staff understand that modeling appropriate behavior is critical to success. A deliberate effort is made to engage youth who have gone through the program and have graduated and excelled, to act as ambassadors and mentors for current participants. When young people see modeling from another young adult, it is a much more powerful tool than simply receiving instruction or advice from a staff member.

The program focuses on obtainable life skills building while acknowledging that it is important to be realistic by addressing and recognizing barriers and developing strategies as to how to overcome them. Staff believe it is also important for youth to have high hopes and dreams and to share those dreams with others. No matter what has happened in the past, there is an expectation of success for each client. Project staff make it clear that sometimes achieving your goals is a lot of hard work and that success looks different for each person. They then try to model what working toward one's goals looks like, and stress that you must put in the work to get the results you desire.

Most importantly, a key to the success of Project YES is that staff enjoy youth and are passionate about making a difference in young people's lives.

“Program staff ask youth what they want to learn about and what they think they need to work on. Staff do not make assumptions about what youth need.”

Dustin Pack
Manager, Project YES

Connecting Foster Youth To Career Development Programs in High School

In November, 2008, New Ways to Work hosted a content conference call focused on the topic of Connecting Foster Youth to Career Development Programs in High Schools. Panelists on the call included Deanna Hanson of the National Academy Foundation, Gayle McLevich, Director of Regional Occupational Programs for the Yolo County Office of Education, and Art Cardoza, Director of the Workability and Transition Partnership Programs for the Humboldt County Office of Education. Akili Moses Israel of New Ways to Work also presented information regarding small learning communities, California Partnership Academies, multiple pathways, and career technical education.

Panelists discussed opportunities that are available in our public schools that are designed to prepare youth for both college and career. They also addressed the need to build awareness among those who work with foster youth as to how and when young people can access these opportunities.

Foster youth in particular, are often initially engaged in conversations about career development late in high school or near the time they age out of the system, too late to take full advantage of the opportunities that exist in our schools and training programs. This is often a result of that fact that those working with foster youth are simply unaware of what programs are available and how foster youth can gain access. Some connections are being made, but current transition plans do not always include accessing career development opportunities at the high school and post high school level.

National Academy Foundation (NAF)

The National Academy Foundation serves students in high schools throughout the nation. The NAF network has about 600 career themed academies, many of which are in California. They operate as small learning communities

within comprehensive high schools as well as stand-alone schools where the entire school might follow a career theme. NAF's goal is that their students are prepared to go on to employment as well as college. Currently NAF supports Academies of Finance, Hospitality, and Engineering and is working on a model for an Academy of Health Sciences in California. NAF academies make an effort to outreach to those students who are having a difficult time in middle and high school. They emphasize project-based learning, relevant instruction, teacher teams, and student engagement. A big part of the academy experience is working with role models and mentors, people in the community who come into the classroom or provide internships to the academy students.

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation has just completed a 12-year longitudinal study of students who completed an Academy program in the NAF network. Findings discussed in the study suggest several potentially important implications for education policy and practice.

MDRC Study Key Findings

- The findings provide convincing evidence that increased investments in career-related experiences during high school can improve students' postsecondary labor market prospects.
- The Career Academies in this study demonstrate the feasibility of accomplishing the goals of school-to-career and career-technical education without compromising academic goals.
- The findings suggest that Career Academies can make special efforts to serve students who are at risk of dropping out of high school without compromising their capacity to provide college access opportunities, as well as labor market impacts, for all students.

[Click here](#) to download the study.

The National Academy Foundation provides curriculum to their programs and assistance in engaging the community in working with youth throughout their high school experience, seeking to involve everyone in the community that can provide resources to support student success. The NAF model is built on the following three Pillars:

- Curriculum development
- Integrated Project-Based instruction
- Advisory Boards that include members of the community representing the academy's career theme

NAF academies offers a rigorous curriculum, one on one support by teachers, mentors from outside the school environment, preparation for the workforce beginning in the sophomore year, and an emphasis on work readiness training.

Typically between the junior and senior year, students are placed in paid internships as a way to gain some real life experience.

NAF does not track foster youth participation in their programs and typically do not know how many foster youth are enrolled in an academy at any given time. They do rely on a variety of ways to recruit students. Counselors within the schools are expected to inform students about academy opportunities. They also recruit at middle schools for those Academies that begin in the 9th grade.

Workability (WA)

Workability is a career development program designed for special education students in California. In order to be eligible for the Workability Program, students must have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Individual case managers work with these students with the goal of preparing students for the workplace and for independent living. The State Department of Education requires that WA programs in California provide an array of school and work-based services and activities to the students they serve.

School based elements of WA include career assessments, integration of work readiness skills, and some vocational classes (especially

those that fall within the industry sectors addressed through Career Technical Education). There are also connecting activities which include preparation for the workplace, parent participation, and partnerships with the community. Work-based activities include placement of some students in paid workplace experiences of up to 25 to 30 hours per week. For many students it is their first taste of what it is like to work in the real world.

Transitional Partnership Program (TPP)

The Transition Partnership Program is funded through the California Department of Rehabilitation. Students in their last two years of high school with physical, emotional, or mental disabilities are eligible. The main goal of the program is for students to be competitive for the job market upon their transition from high school. TPP provides one on one support with a vocational case manager who provides services in two areas, including vocational assessment and employment services. Paid employment and job coaching are provided for those students who demonstrate that they are ready for work.

Students are considered for enrollment in the Transition Partnership Program typically as a result of a referral from a teacher or counselor. TPP Specialists look at such things as motivation, availability, and personal barriers when assessing student appropriateness for the program.

“Most importantly, if you have students who meet the criteria, TPP and WA are two programs that can link students to the world of work and pay them while they gain experience.”

Art Cardoza

Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROCP)

There are 74 Regional Occupational Centers and Programs throughout the state, funded through the California Department of Education. ROCP

has been a strong and integral part of California's educational system for over 35 years, providing high school students, 16 years of age and older, with valuable career and technical education with the goal of assisting students in the following ways:

- Entering the workforce with the skills and competencies to be successful
- Pursuing advanced training in postsecondary educational institutions
- Upgrading existing skills and knowledge

Approximately 460,000 students enroll in ROCPs each year. ROCP is an evolution of traditional vocational education. While it used to be that vocational education was only for the non-college bound, that is not the case any longer. ROCP courses provide rigorous and high quality programs which contribute to students' academic and career achievement.

ROCP is articulated with community colleges, universities and technical schools, and have advisory committees for their courses which are aligned with Career Technical Education standards. Many ROCPs work in partnership with a variety of California labor organizations to provide apprenticeship-related and supplemental instruction to the more than 25,000 apprentices in California's trades .

To find out about which ROCP courses are offered in your county, review course catalogs for high schools, and develop a relationship with the local ROCP director, often housed at the County Office of Education. For more information about Regional Occupational Centers and Programs, go to the California Department of Education's website at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/rp/>

Small Learning Communities (SLCs)

SLCs are basically small groupings of students and teachers within a comprehensive high school. They are usually centered around a content area or theme that is important to that particular community. Studies show that students do much better in small learning environments where instruction is personalized,

teachers and students get to know one another, and a sense of community is developed. Many SLC's provide work-based opportunities, mentoring, advisory programs, and increased opportunities for adult interaction.

Check with your local district about enrollment options for small learning communities.

California Partnership Academy (CPA)

The goal of the CPA model is to prepare students for successful transition to college and/or career. Currently there are 335 funded programs in California. Typically a three-year program for grades 10-12, partnership academies provide a school-within-a-school structure that creates a close family-like atmosphere for students and staff. Academies integrate academic and career technical education, with a strong emphasis on student achievement and positive post secondary outcomes.

Common elements of a CPA include:

- One half of each new class must meet specified at-risk criteria
- The program is voluntary. Students must apply, be interviewed and be selected based on need and interest
- About 60-70 students are selected for entry in each academy each year
- Students are matched with mentors in their junior year and placed in internships in the summer before or during their senior year.

Next Steps

There is a wealth of career-related instructional opportunities available at the high school level, offered to all students and some for special populations. The keys to connecting Foster Youth to career development opportunities in our schools are to begin exploration of interest and options early and to reach out through school districts and County Offices of Education to find out what programs are offered in your area, who coordinates them, and how foster youth can gain access to them.

Supporting Success: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care

A framework for program enhancement

College is a means for young people to secure good jobs, advance in their careers, achieve economic independence, grow intellectually, and build important social networks. For youth from foster care, college can mean freedom from their past - a future rich with possibilities. It may be their most important pathway to career and personal success.

Access to higher education for youth from foster care remains far too limited. Few students from foster care ever gain access to higher education programs, let alone graduate from college. Only about 10 percent of students from foster care enroll in higher education – with less than 2 percent obtaining bachelor’s degrees.

Youth in foster care often report that few people in their lives ever expected them to attend and succeed in college. These students seldom receive the kind of guidance and stable supports needed to prepare for and succeed in higher education. Too often, unemployment, underemployment, and homelessness face young adults after they age out of foster care.

Colleges and universities can help their youth from foster care succeed!

An increasing number of colleges, states, policymakers, and advocates have begun to address this issue with calls for policy advances, practice innovations, and influential advocacy.

Casey Family Programs’ (www.casey.org) new framework—***Supporting Success: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care***, provides program development information and tools for college student

support services, administrators, advisors, financial aid counselors and advocates. Background information, recommendations, strategies and model program examples are

provided to assist colleges in improving their support for students coming from foster care.

Supporting Success: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care, is available in PDF or bound formats *free* from Casey Family Programs at:

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

For additional information, contact:

John Emerson

Postsecondary Education Advisor

Casey Family Programs

(206) 270-4921

Jemerson@casey.org

First Convening of the California Independent Living Program (ILP) Transformation Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)

The CA ILP Transformation Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) Framework highlights a comprehensive set of changes that when packaged together will result in a system that achieves dramatically improved outcomes for foster youth in the areas of permanency, education, and employment. Participating teams convened in Sacramento for the first time January 7 & 8, 2009 at Learning Session 1. There will be four learning sessions during the course of the 18-month project. This project kick-off introduced teams to the project network and oriented them to the methodology. The teams also be developed action plans to test practice changes. The CA ILP Transformation BSC is a project of the California Child Welfare Co-investment Partnership and is being moved forward by partners, Child & Family Policy Institute of CA and New Ways to Work.

For more information about the CA ILP Transformation BSC please contact: **Karen Lofts-Jarboe, Project Director**, Karen.loftsjarboe@cfpic.org

Community Connections for Youth Connected Communities-Effective Partnerships

A Policy Framework for America’s Youth

In September, 2008 the Intermediary Network (INet), a national association of leading education, workforce, and youth development organizations working in local communities to ensure youth success, released its first comprehensive policy framework, titled Community Connections for Youth.

The Intermediary Network (INet) brings a unique perspective to the disconnected and disconnecting youth discussion, which provides real solutions for the nation’s most vulnerable youth. With the release of Community Connections for Youth, INet puts forth a comprehensive framework of the quality practices and strategies needed to ensure success for all youth.

It is time for a concerted effort to address the critical issues facing our nation’s youth, and time to come together at the national, state, and local levels to improve the lives of our youth, the health of our communities, and our strength as a nation.

Community Connections for Youth calls on policy makers, philanthropy, and leaders in the field to make investments at the local level in organizations that focus on connecting services, supports, and opportunities for young people.

We will build broad support for Community Connections for Youth through the energy and transitions resulting from the 2008 elections.

By connecting youth to opportunities, more young people will graduate from high school and enter college or a career, and be less likely to fall through the cracks within and between the systems that serve them. Young people will be better prepared to enter the workforce, which is a key requirement of a healthy economy.

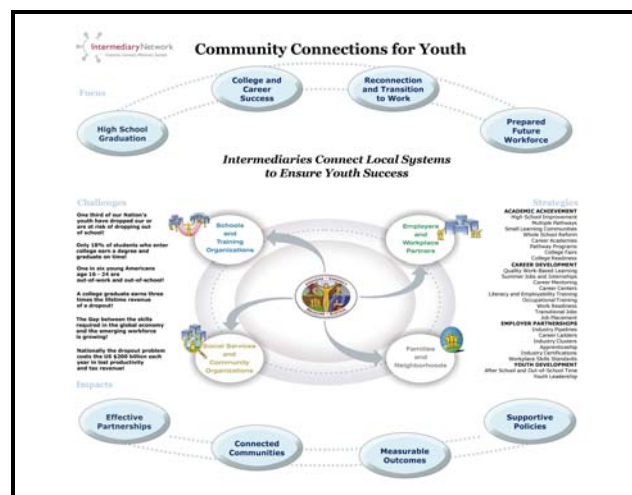
The Intermediary Network began in 1998 with federal grant support and is now a self-governed and self-funded Network. Network members

connect schools, communities, government agencies, workplace partners, and youth organizations to improve outcomes for youth and help build a future workforce. National Affiliate members support local organizations in their efforts to improve the lives of our nation’s youth. Members also convene local, regional, and state-wide organizations doing similar work to maximize resources and effort.

In 2007, members served 175,000 youth with over \$70,000,000 in generated and leveraged resources (an average of \$401 per youth served). Fifty-seven percent of the members serve out-of-school youth and eighty-two percent target their efforts to serve at-risk youth. Members engaged 1,078 educational partners, 5,854 workplace partners, and 1,129 community based organizations and government agencies to align services, supports, and opportunities for young people in their communities.

**To sign on please visit:
www.intermediarynetwork.org**

For more information about Community Connections for Youth or the Intermediary Network contact Kellie Noe at 415-995-9860 or visit www.intermediarynetwork.org



Legislative Updates

Fostering Connections Act Update

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) Update on Foster Care to 21

CWLA has updated a table that describes states that extend foster care to age 21. In the table, you can learn how states implement their foster care programs for youth ages 18-21 in seven areas: age limits, court or legal arrangements, reentry after leaving care, types of living arrangements, financial assistance, educational assistance, and other supports. [Read the chart.](#)

State Policy

Changes on the Horizon: The Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care

On December 10th, 2008, a forum was held in San Francisco, "Changes on the Horizon: The Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care (BRC) & the Impacts of New Federal Legislation."

The forum was hosted by State Assemblymember Jim Beall, Jr. and was attended by several other State Assemblymembers, community leaders and foster care advocates who spoke about the final recommendations of the BRC. Newly elected Assemblymember (and former SF Supervisor) Tom Ammiano reconfirmed his dedication to foster children, and postured that the budget situation will continue to negatively affect the foster care system, so that foster care advocates need to be prepared for difficult times ahead. All the speakers expressed their commitment to improving the foster care system, and their approval of the final recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission. To see the final recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission visit www.courtinfo.ca.gov

The forum included a presentation by Justice Carlos Moreno of the California Supreme Court, who also serves as Chair of the BRC. Judge Moreno praised the 50 of 58 CA counties who have agreed to create collaborative local action planning teams – a recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Commission. Following the presentations, each county team met to begin conversations about creating individualized county action plans to follow the BRC recommendations. Judge Moreno also noted that the recommendations were made regardless of fiscal concerns in order to truly define how to improve foster care and emancipation practices. He invited the county action teams to respond creatively to the budget situation.

The panel also introduced California Bill AB 12, which would ensure California opts into 2 federal funding opportunities available through HR 6893 (The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act) including 1) re-enacting the existing Kin-Gap program to align with federal requirements and 2) providing foster care support to youth until age 21. If California chooses to opt into HR 6893, California will begin to receive federal payments for foster care services that previously were shouldered entirely by the state. For a more detailed description of HR 6893, go to www.cacollegepathways.org and download a summary of the law.

The CA bill (AB 12) still needs to pass through several committees before being formally presented to the Assembly floor, but to see the current form of the bill, visit www.acfya.org.

Article written by Dana Mandolesi of Honoring Emancipated Youth.

Resources

2008 Monthly Q & A Factsheets from the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education

Throughout 2008, the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education has developed and disseminated monthly "Question & Answer Factsheets" addressing critical issues related to the education needs of children in out-of-home care. [Click here](#) to access the following factsheets from the past year:

1. Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care
2. Credit Transfer and School Completion
3. Head Start and Early Head Start
4. Surrogate Parent Programs
5. "Awaiting Foster Care Placement" and McKinney-Vento
6. Mobility and Special Education
7. Child and Family Service Reviews and the Well Being Education Outcome
8. No Child Left Behind and Children in Out-of-Home Care
9. Data Collection
10. Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (H.R. 6893) - Education Provisions
11. Tuition Waivers for Post-Secondary Education
12. Information Sharing

To access additional publications and resources from the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, visit their website at: www.abanet.org/child/education

HUD Invites Communities Nationwide to Apply for \$20 Million in Section 8 Vouchers for Child Welfare Families and Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has \$20 million in new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers for the Family Unification Program (FUP). FUP provides homeless and poorly housed families involved with the child welfare system with decent and affordable housing and supportive services in order to safely reunite them with their children. FUP vouchers are also available to prevent homelessness among former foster youth. Public housing authorities are required to work in partnership with local child welfare organizations to find eligible families, reunite them, and provide ongoing services. **The deadline is Jan. 28, 2009.** To learn more, visit the [National Center for Housing & Child Welfare](#) web site.



About the Youth Transition Action Team Initiative

The Transition Action Teams initiative works with existing efforts to create a comprehensive, integrated, and sequenced set of services and supports to improve the likelihood that youth touched by the child welfare system will be prepared and ready to achieve success as adults.

The Youth Transition Action Team initiative supports community teams (Transition Action Teams) of leaders from child welfare, education, workforce development, philanthropy, and other systems, in their efforts to leverage local resources and programs to provide an integrated continuum of services and opportunities for foster and kinship youth that will ensure their successful transitions to adulthood.

The network has grown from 12 teams in 2004 to 18 teams statewide. To see a list of all the current YTAT teams, see the [YTAT Highlights](#). For more information about the YTAT initiative, contact Lisa Elliott at (707) 824-4000 or lelliott@newwaystowork.org.

Help Us To Share Your Work With Others:

Tell Us About Your Promising Practice! We want to share your wisdom and lessons learned with other counties. Please help us by nominating an innovative program or practice that you think should be featured in our newsletter and/or on our website. [Click here](#) for an on-line submission form or contact Lisa Elliott at lelliott@newwaystowork.org or (707) 824-4000.