



FOSTER CARE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Summary Report of Year Two Site Visits

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Submitted to:

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Summary Report of Year Two Site Visits¹

- Executive Summary -

Project Overview

In the United States, over 20,000 youth ages 16 and older transition from the foster care system each year.² About half of these youth have spent more than one year in care, 19 percent had been there for three or more years, with disproportionate numbers of young people of color, especially males, remaining in foster care for longer periods of time.³ There are many success stories emerging about the value of foster care. However, the research shows that former foster youth are more likely than those in the general population to not finish high school, be unemployed, and be dependent on public assistance. Other negative outcomes associated with these young adults include higher than average mental health problems, drug usage, and involvement with the criminal justice system.⁴

In September 2004, the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) awarded grants to five states—California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Texas—to design and implement programs to improve outcomes for youth exiting from foster care. ETA's solicitation required states to target the city or county with the largest number of foster care youth. These areas are Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, New York City, and Houston.

These grants were initially funded for one year with the possibility of funding for up to three years. The foster youth demonstration grants each received \$400,000 in Department of Labor (DOL) funding with a requirement for 100 percent matched funding by the state. Overall, the sites have provided the matching funds mostly from state resources, but also from local sources. All sites received no-cost grant extensions through June 30, 2006, and prior to that time, DOL added another year of funding, with the same matching requirement. Thus, all of the sites have been funded through June 30, 2007. All States were able to meet the matching requirement. Thus, over the two

¹ Prepared by the Institute for Educational Leadership and the Johns Hopkins Institute for Public Studies for Casey Family Programs, February 2007.

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years, each state has dedicated \$1.6 million to these projects, most of which has gone to the local project sites.

According to the ETA the purpose of these grants is “to develop a set of comprehensive programs to help youth aging out of foster care become employed and self-sufficient. The goal is to then use this set of programs as models for the rest of the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) system for serving youth in foster care.” In May 2005, ETA entered into an agreement with Casey Family Programs to collaborate in an evaluation of the five foster care youth employment projects. In September 2005, Casey Family Programs selected the Institute for Educational Leadership along with its partners, Johns Hopkins University and two foster care experts, to conduct the evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the five demonstration sites in implementing comprehensive services for youth in foster care and, by doing so, improving education, employment, and independent living outcomes for these youth. The evaluation is also designed to identify and capture practices that can be disseminated to policy-makers and practitioners throughout the workforce development and child welfare systems.

Results to Date

This report summarizes the progress being made by the five sites based on the second site visit, the Department of Labor program data, and a recent site meeting devoted to planning for sustainability. Although we believe the sites have attempted to provide complete and accurate data, we have observed some errors in the reported data. The outcome data will be confirmed using additional child-based analyses and will be included in the second year outcomes report that will be available later this fall. As a result, in this report we include actual figures only for enrollment data and provide more general observations on trends for outcome data.

As can be expected in a demonstration project, changes have occurred across the sites. The extensiveness and significance of these changes varied across sites. In general, these changes have been made because the sites have been thoughtful and deliberate in looking at their programs to determine what is working and what could be working better. Some of the changes have been made as a result of the programs maturing – additional partners have been added; new programming has been added to address the needs of the youth participants; and all sites have provided staff training and development activities. Some partners and activities have been eliminated because they were not effective, while other activities have been refined to improve their effectiveness on participants. Two of the sites, Detroit and New York, have made the most extensive changes.

The sites have demonstrated that they can produce positive outcomes – whether it is job and post-secondary placements or high school diplomas and GEDs. Sites are working toward and in many areas meeting the performance goals originally set by DOL. For the entire two-year period of the project, all sites exceeded their enrollment rate goals, with nearly 830 youth served. Houston had the highest enrollment rate, with 164 percent of its target, and New York had the lowest enrollment rate, with 109 percent of its goal.

Program Activities and completion: All the sites have had success in helping youth attain high school diplomas. All of the sites have made changes in their work readiness preparation activities. Los Angeles added flexibility to its structured and sequenced activities to address individual needs better, and Detroit was, at the time of the second site visit, considering moving in the same direction. In contrast, both Houston and Chicago were adding program structure. Houston continued to develop and refine its Blue Print program for work readiness. Chicago found that they had provided the local schools too much flexibility in designing work readiness activities, and they provided each with a core curriculum to follow. Several of the sites found it necessary to add providers and activities addressing life skill preparation areas, such as money management, conflict resolution, and mental health.

Internships and employment: All sites have had success at placing youth in jobs. Internships, paid work experience, and part-time employment are techniques that all the sites use, some more than others, to provide youth with work experience and income while preparing them to hold down a permanent job. New York and Los Angeles, in particular, have formed partnerships with public agencies to provide youth with these opportunities. In Detroit, a partnership with a local hospital to provide youth with project-funded paid work experience has led to at least two of the youth being placed in full time jobs.

Training Programs: In addition to other job readiness services, all sites offered some participants the opportunity to pursue a certificate in a training program or to enter long-term occupational training. Chicago and Detroit were the two sites that used long-term occupational training the most.

Data Trends: As would be expected, the sites reported significantly more individual program outcomes for the period ending September 30, 2006, than for the prior year. The programs have matured, and there has been enough time for many youth to complete preparatory activities leading to a high school completion, post-secondary and employment placements. The number of job placements, high school completions, and the number who obtained a GED all increased. The sites varied as to the percentage of the youth who had completed high school or were placed in unsubsidized employment, reflecting the difference in program focus and the difference in when the programs started.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

One key problem has been the management and reporting of individual youth data in two sites, which now appears to be improving. Youth with criminal records and youth unable to pass drug screenings provide major challenges for all sites in job placements. Relationships between the workforce system and the child welfare agency were stronger in some sites than others. Detroit, in particular, faced difficulties in working with the local child welfare agency to secure the services and funds available through the Chafee Act to youth transitioning from foster care. The extensive delays in contracting in New York also resulted in a strained relationship between the service provider, Arbor, and the city

child welfare agency, although these relationships appear to be improving.

All the sites have found it difficult to form partnerships with organizations that provide mentoring to youth. While sites have used other approaches to provide youth with mentoring-like experiences, they have been largely unsuccessful in securing mentoring on any scale from other community organizations.

At the time of the visits, few sites were far along in formal planning for sustainability, although sites were definitely looking to the future and thinking about the legacy of their projects. Houston was probably the most advanced in this regard. Although they had not developed a formal plan, they had produced a video and other material to use for public outreach and had hired a consultant to help plan a major fund-raising effort. A November meeting of the sites focusing on sustainability did help some sites further develop plans for sustaining their projects.

It is clear that, regardless of the extent to which the existing projects are sustained, there will be a legacy from the demonstrations. In Detroit and Los Angeles, for example, local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs will incorporate the lessons learned from these projects. At the state level, new relationships between the workforce agencies and the child welfare agencies are forming, and state workforce agency leaders are showing increased interest in this population of youth.

Without exception, sites expressed that their greatest lesson learned was around the complexity of meeting the multiple needs of youth in foster care. Several factors are often cited. First, these youth often have no home and family to provide stability for them as they navigate the often rocky waters of passage from childhood to adulthood. The multiple moves and traumas they have experienced create an inherent lack of trust, as well as very specific and concrete gaps in their learning and life experiences. The consensus across all sites is that this population of youth need a much more intensive level of case management and individualized services to achieve successful outcomes. They do not fit easily or well into standardized or cohort approaches to services. Given their multiple needs, no single system can by itself meet these needs, whether it be the child welfare agency or the workforce development system.

While the sites have demonstrated that they can produce positive outcomes for these youth, there is much more work to be done. All of the sites struggle, to varying degrees, with working across systems. Whether these projects produce long-term positive outcomes for youth is currently unknown. Sustainability is tenuous at best and this is due to the lack of an automatic funding source. However, based on their success so far, we believe these projects will provide the systems involved with this unique population of young people with practical insights on how best to serve them as they struggle to make the transition from the child welfare system to responsible adulthood.

Next Steps

The information contained in these interim reports is intended to provide a basis for the final reports. The final report will be completed in late 2007. It will include data through

June 30, 2007. While there will be no additional in-person site visits, key site personnel will be contacted to update the information gathered from the last visit to identify significant changes, to identify additional promising practices and successes, and to learn where the sites are in their planning for sustaining their projects.

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According to ETA, the purpose of these grants is “to develop a set of comprehensive programs to help youth aging out of foster care become employed and self-sufficient. The goal is to then use this set of programs as models for the rest of the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) system for serving youth in foster care.” In May 2005, ETA entered into an agreement with Casey Family Programs to collaborate in an evaluation of the five foster care youth employment projects. In September 2005, Casey Family Programs selected the Institute for Educational Leadership along with its partners, Johns Hopkins University and two foster care experts, to conduct the evaluation.

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In the fall of 2005, the evaluation team made initial site visits to each of the five projects. The focus of these visits was to gain an understanding of the projects and to document their challenges and successes in implementing their programs. These initial visits were intended to provide baseline information. The report on these visits was issued in March 2006 and may be found at <http://www.iel.org/programs/casey.html>. This report was based on data through September 30, 2005 that the sites had reported to DOL.

Casey Family programs also funded the Institute for Educational Leadership to bring the sites together for a meeting between the sites, the evaluation team, Casey family

programs staff and Department of Labor representatives. The first meeting, held in November 2005, focused on implementation challenges. The second meeting, held in November of 2006, in Houston, Texas, focused on sustainability.

This report that follows provides an update on the sites based on the second round of interviews, data submitted to ETA by the sites, and discussions held at an all-site meeting in November 2006. It includes selected program data through September 30, 2006 that the sites reported to DOL.

II. Report Overview

About the Site Reports

From August through September 2006, the evaluation team made three-day site visits to each of the five foster care youth employment demonstration sites. The evaluation team was essentially the same as the first year, with the one exception being New York City.

The sites and team composition are outlined below:

- California (Los Angeles) Sue Badeau & Burt Barnow
- Illinois (Chicago) Paul DiLorenzo & Irene Lynn
- Michigan (Detroit) Sue Badeau & Irene Lynn
- Texas (Houston) Paul DiLorenzo & Irene Lynn
- New York (New York City) Sue Badeau & Amy Buck

The first year site visits, conducted during a similar time period, focused on a range of questions relating to implementation, program operations, and outcomes. These first visits were intended to provide baseline information about the sites. In contrast, the second year visits focused on three questions:

- What has changed since the last visit, and why?
- What are the program outcomes?
- What is the legacy from this project and what are the prospects for sustaining promising practices?

Each site report discusses the three questions, with some introductory information on the site, people interviewed, and basic grant information. The discussion of the first question is organized around eight topical areas:

- Program Context
- Project Budgets and Costs
- Outreach, Recruitment, and Intake of Participants
- Program Services and Activities
- Program Exit
- Project Staff and Staff Development
- Collaborations and Partnerships
- Employer Outreach and Engagement

Each of the sites (both state and project level contacts) were provided drafts of the narrative report of the visit to their site, and follow up was made with all the sites to encourage their review and input. Comments were received from all sites, except California. The site visit reports were subsequently revised to reflect these comments. Highlights and key observations have been drawn from the site visit reports. The individual reports are available by request from the Institute of Educational Leadership (Dora Shick, shickd@iel.org). In addition to the narrative observations, selected program data that were reported to DOL are included in the program outcome section of each report, along with narrative analysis of the data trends.

III. Individual Site Highlights

This section provides a site update that draws upon the most recent site visits and a grantee meeting held in November 2006 devoted to sustainability. Background information from the first year site visit is also included as context for the reader.

California: Los Angeles

This project is unique among the DOL Foster Youth Demonstration grantees. The decision by the state Employment Development Department (EDD) to serve two specific areas in Los Angeles County required the project to operate in two distinct locations. The first location, managed by the Foothills Workforce Investment Board (WIB), is the Jackie Robinson Center in Pasadena, California. This location is in a quiet residential area of Pasadena and is relatively accessible by public transportation. The second

location is Community Build, Inc. located in the heart of South Central Los Angeles. Across the street from a high school and on a main thoroughfare of the community, this location is also reasonably accessible to the youth it serves. Both sites are referred to by the common name of the Youth Self Sufficiency Program.

The biggest strength of the Pasadena/Los Angeles Youth Self Sufficiency Program has been its stability. There have been virtually no changes in funding, locations, staffing, laws, policies, or the local communities being served. Both locations have fine-tuned the delivery of services to the youth. These changes were made in response to observations related to the needs, maturity level, capabilities, goals, and desires of the youth themselves and their readiness (or lack thereof) for work opportunities.

While Community Build has consistently enrolled additional youth, Foothills reached its capacity early on and enrollments have slowed. Thus, the youth served at Foothills have remained fairly stable. This has afforded them the opportunity to really get to know the youth in much more depth and serve them with a greater menu of services. Twelve of the Foothills youth graduated from high school, and the site held a special graduation event for them.

The budget has also been quite stable. The major program costs are for staff, facilities, and paid work experience. The match still comes from a combination of Wagner-Peyser (employment service) funds and state Chafee dollars, each providing approximately 20 percent of the total budget. In addition, the recently signed memorandum of agreement (MOU) with Casey Family Programs in Pasadena has resulted in \$62,000 in funding. Casey at times has supplemented this for specific events, such as providing \$500 to cover the cost of a DJ for the graduation party. The Foothills WIB has provided complimentary "in-kind" matching by way of vocational training and support services. Similarly, the youth served by the Community Build program have access to the full range of services provided at that location, not only those that are funded under this grant. Community Build has an active development program and is continually seeking and obtaining grants and other funding sources for ongoing programs as well as special activities.

Both Foothills and Community Build have continued to enroll additional youth. However, at Foothills, enrollments have slowed. Most of the outreach has been through “word-of-mouth” from current participants who refer their friends, roommates, and other residents in their group homes, and in some cases, siblings. There have been no changes to intake and enrollment procedures or forms at either location. However, there are now a few differences in the assessment process. At Foothills, the two basic skills tests, the TABE and the ABCD/IBC, are now completed online. The Ansell Casey assessment is completed at the Casey Family Programs center. A new contract has just been signed with the Foster Youth Assessment Service, a comprehensive assessment service that will provide a one-day assessment to help staff and youth understand where each youth is at entry in terms of career goals, basic skills, and other areas.

The characteristics of the youth served have not changed dramatically at either location. Foothills has established a new relationship with the Rosemary Cottage all girls group home, which has led to an increase in female participants. Also, as previously noted, the stable core group of youth participants is now a year older, more mature, and at higher levels of educational achievement. Both locations noted that the youth have more deficiencies in basic skills – reading and math – and more complex, multi-system needs than they had initially anticipated. At Community Build, they have moved to a more intensive case management model of service delivery to respond to this greater level of need.

The program design is called “The California Model” and originally consisted of five modules (a sixth, on financial literacy was added later), stemming from the theory that self-sufficiency requires more than just a job, and that a youth development approach to developing the assets and human capital of the youth must be implemented. Each module included several components and strategies. The five original modules are: (1) Intake/Eligibility; (2) Employment; (3) Academic/Educational; (4) Training; and (5) Retention.

The most important change in service delivery and its relationship to activities for youth is that an MOU was finalized and signed with Casey Family Programs. This strengthened the relationship between the two organizations and allowed youth to be dually enrolled in both programs while reducing duplication of services. A Foothills WIB

staff person is now co-located at the Casey office. Foothills and Casey staff meet monthly specifically to discuss the progress and needs of the co-enrolled youth, so that adjustments or enhancements can be made to their respective programs and approaches.

Like Foothills, Community Build also saw a need to reduce the structured nature of the modularized approach to services, and move to a more fluid, individualized approach. The modules are now seen as “checkpoints” that help them to make sure they are “covering all the bases” with each youth, rather than as a linear program that youth have to pass through. As part of this more individualized approach, the staff itself has become “less compartmentalized” and functions more as a team, with each staff member sharing in the responsibilities for engaging, motivating, and retaining youth in the program. Nearly all of the youth served at Community Build have their sights set on college, and many are currently enrolled. Staff has tried to co-enroll the youth in a number of programs concurrently to maximize their access to services and financial resources.

In terms of linkages to other services, Community Build has many other services in the building, and staff from other programs that come to the building on a regular basis to provide support to the youth. This includes the child welfare agencies’ Independent Living program specialists, a psychologist who is on site two days a week, and a teen health clinic just up the street. Most of the youth retain their Medicaid eligibility, and most also have reasonably safe housing.

Foothills is quite clear that the WIB cannot sustain or support this program as a discreet stand-alone program without an infusion of new money. In their view, the primary sustainability plan, which they have begun to develop, involves infusing the lessons learned from this project in all of their work and programs at the WIB. Community Build also feels that many of the lessons learned from this program will be sustained within the context of their larger program. They expect to keep a DCFS transition specialist on site, as well as the Casey Kinship program.

DCFS believes this project has demonstrated that partnerships between the child welfare agency and the workforce system can benefit transition-age youth. As a result,

they are committed to replicating this project, or a version of it, in all the regions within the county. In their view, this project has fundamentally changed the way the two systems work together on behalf of this population of youth. This observation about the effectiveness of the relationship is substantiated by the feedback provided by the youth in both locations. Youth expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to engage with needed services in a setting and with a program not typically perceived as part of “the system.”

Illinois: Chicago

Project New Futures (PNF) helps older foster care youth (ages 16-21) transition to adulthood by strengthening and supporting general transition skills, such as life skills and job skills. PNF’s focus, however, is on making a college education a reality. The project collaborates with thirteen community-based alternative high schools, members of the alternative schools network (ASN), using a mentor-based model, to promote college planning, preparation, and matriculation. The project also offers post-graduation services to participating youth to promote college retention and success as well as support services for those youth who opt to engage in employment or vocational training.

This project is an enhancement to the Youth Skills Development and Training Program (YSDTP). The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services funds 15 community-based alternative high schools to serve older foster youth (16-21) who are mostly out of school and who do not have a high school diploma or GED. These alternative schools enroll youth who are among the city’s most vulnerable, including those in the foster care system. The YSDTP is a comprehensive program that includes an individualized, self-paced computer learning system called the EXTRA Learning Program, and a full-time, paid mentor who works closely with students to support employment and college readiness, personal discipline, and academic achievement. The program provides educational, social service, and work-related services that help youth build the necessary social and educational skills needed to earn a high school diploma and transition to employment, college, or further skill training (vocational training).

Project New Futures had three main goals when launched:

1. College planning and employment readiness;
2. Transition support; and
3. Social Network/Resource facilitation.

As of the 2006 site visit, the goals and objectives of the Alternative Schools Network (ASN) and PNF remain the same, with only minor changes, including two staffing changes. The essential program approach remains intact since the last site visit.

A hallmark of this program has continued to be the intensive staff support provided to the youth. This aspect of the program is unchanged and is reflected in the youth comments about their program participation. When asked what had been the most helpful aspect of their involvement with the PNF project, the youth interviewed in the focus group unanimously highlighted the staff, particularly the mentors, as the keys to their positive endorsement of the program. One youth said her mentor has helped her with everything, including getting into school, staying in school, and finding a job.

Originally, the schools participating in this project had considerable flexibility in the activities that they provided the youth to meet the goals of the project. Upon reflection and with the input of all the participating school staff, the project leadership decided that the program needed more structure, particularly around the workforce preparation activities. Accordingly, they developed a core curriculum that focuses on workforce preparation activities for all of the participating schools to follow. In addition, the project leadership has put considerable emphasis on staff development, bringing together staff on at least a monthly basis for training and exchange of information and ideas. At the time of the visit, ASN was planning to add two additional staff. A new hire to maintain and manage the data was pending. In addition, ASN hoped to hire another ASN mentor to support the increasing number of youth who had graduated from one of the alternative schools. These plans were on hold pending a decision from DOL on a third year funding.

One of the most pervasive challenges ASN staff continues to face is that many of the youth are not at the schools for an extended period of time. This makes it more difficult to provide a sequence of activities for all ASN youth. Another ongoing challenge is determining who should provide “life skills” training to ASN youth—ASN or their partner,

DCFS. In response, ASN staff completed the Casey Life Skills training curriculum and was certified. Staff then, in turn, provided training to PNF mentors. ASN indicates that the central life skill they are building is the critical responsibility of coming to school daily to build a day-to-day attendance record and to learn socialization skills.

Collaborations and partnerships also present a real challenge. It remains unclear whether ASN has a strategic plan in place relating to choosing and cultivating partners. Currently, ASN's strongest relationship is with the state Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), the agency that administers WIA. Their relationship with the state child welfare agency, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), is not nearly as robust, despite the fact that DCFS provides over \$4 million per year in funding for the YSTD program. Interestingly, both DCFS and DCEO indicate that they have developed a closer working relationship because of the ASN project and plan to advance the model in other parts of the state. Certainly, one of the biggest challenges will be ensuring sufficient collaboration to meet the needs of youth as they transition to adult programs.

At the time of the visit, Chicago had not articulated a specific planning timeline for developing their sustainability plan. However, ASN project leadership is committed to this model, and based upon its past record of success in fund raising, believes that ASN will find the needed resources to continue this program once the demonstration funding ends. The grantee meeting provided the State and project representatives an opportunity to work with their DOL-provided technical advisor and to exchange ideas with other sites. More recently they began work on developing their sustainability plan, using parts of the tool provided to the sites at the Houston meeting.

The program managers are considering changing some aspects of how they prepare youth. The thought is that a more intensive approach will enhance the chances of school and job success for youth. PNF is also exploring the possibility of expanding its mentoring efforts for youth. One staff person noted that they need to focus more on interpersonal skills so that youth will be prepared not only to "get a job" but to keep one. Finally, PNF is hoping to develop a commitment to working with youth beyond emancipation by continuing to provide a layer of services and supports to youth as they leave the child welfare system.

Michigan: Detroit

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) is the state grant recipient for this project. Michigan DLEG chose to locate the project in Wayne County, which includes Detroit city and the outlying areas such as Highland Park. This region has the largest foster care population in the state. DLEG enlisted two Michigan Works! (federally-funded Workforce Investment Act agencies), the Detroit Workforce Development Department (DWDD), and the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) to develop the proposal. They left the program design up to the local agencies. Upon receipt of the grant, Employment and Training Designs, Inc. (ETDI) was selected as the service provider to operate the program and has operated the program from its inception to the present. Project staff, together with a focus group of youth, named the project "Creating Independence and Outcomes: CIAO."

There have been several changes to this project since the November 2005 visit. The three most significant involve personnel changes, a location change, and a shift in the general philosophy and approach to services. In December 2005, several factors served as the catalyst for the changes.

First, the project's Facilitator left the project, as did the first Peer Group Facilitator (a former foster youth). The new Project Facilitator initiated a process to achieve clearer and stronger outcomes for the youth. Second, a decision was also made to shift from the largely "social work" approach initiated by the first Project Facilitator to a more "employment" focused program. While holistic assessments and case plans are still utilized, the mission of the program was refocused on helping youth set and achieve educational goals including college, and obtain meaningful employment. The youth interviewed reflected this shift. More so than last year, when asked to describe the mission or purpose of CIAO, the youth said, "to help us get a job."

During this same period of time, it became apparent that the original project location did not meet the needs of the program. After exploring multiple options, the decision was made to locate at 1300 Rosa Parks in the building formerly occupied by a U.S. Department of Labor-funded discretionary grant program called Youth Opportunity (YO!) program. This location is also part of the DWDD facilities as a satellite Michigan Works!

Center and it offers larger space and more private offices that are conducive to private conversations between staff and youth. The One-Stop Center has provided CIAO with a schedule of workshops for next two months that youth can attend. They also offer job fairs about once a quarter. Additionally, they announce when employers are coming to the building to conduct interviews and provide job leads such as contact information for a new Target store opening. Other tenants in the building, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, are also available to help eligible youth.

In addition to these internal changes, a few external changes have had an impact on the CIAO project. Youth transitioning out of foster care in Michigan are served by the Youth in Transition (YIT) office of the Department of Human Services. YIT had several internal problems in the past year resulting in at least temporary changes to the referral process that had been in place. Accordingly, CIAO found it difficult to enroll their youth in YIT programs, which provide access to the transition services and funds. While this situation has not been entirely resolved, there has been recent movement and constructive conversations.

The other significant external change is the impact of the “Big Three” (Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors) automotive closures on the local economy and employment outlook. Detroit’s economic picture was bleak at the time of the November 2005 visit; it has only worsened since then, and Detroit currently has the nation’s highest unemployment rate outside of New Orleans. This makes it even more difficult to find employment opportunities for youth with all the incumbent needs and challenges facing youth transitioning out of foster care.

Providing appropriate mental health services has been another challenge. CIAO had initiated an arrangement with a local provider agency, Clean House, and had initially received approval to have these services paid for through YIT funding. However, YIT later rescinded this approval. This resource is no longer available to the youth being served.

In addition, at the initial, Highland Park location, a GED teacher was available on-site. When CIAO moved, he was no longer available, and this created a void for the project.

The site was continuing to seek to fill this gap in-house and at the time of the site visit, a new GED teacher was to begin that week, coming in three days per week.

Another area of difficulty was developing mentoring opportunities for the youth. At the last site visit, several mentoring programs were being explored, and mentoring organizations had come to the table to participate with the CIAO program. However, most of these programs failed to get off the ground as mentors for the youth have not been forthcoming. In response, “task oriented mentoring” is being provided. These are short-term commitments by adults who agree to help a youth accomplish a particular goal or task, such as finding housing or applying to college and obtaining financial aid.

During the development of the proposal for this project, the focus was on jobs in high growth, demand driven fields and developing readiness, training, and placement activities in these areas. Project leaders have since learned that this approach is not feasible for these youth due to the lack of job readiness and preparation they have experienced in their early life experiences and education. Therefore, they have begun to look more at entry level and unskilled jobs that will at least provide opportunities to learn *how to be an employee*. In this light, the restaurant and hotel fields, and manual labor are being explored more intensively. Sinai Grace Hospital has hired two of the participants who have become certified nursing assistants, and Michigan’s Department of Human Services has also hired two of the participants.

CIAO has initiated and sustained a range of activities designed to showcase this program among the media, public officials, and potential funders. The CIAO project and/or its youth and staff have been featured multiple times in the *Detroit Free Press*, and CIAO staff have been asked to serve on other important state youth initiatives, including Justice Maura Corrigan’s Children’s Commission and the National Governors Association Policy Academy. Michigan was selected as one of six states to participate in the National Governors Association Policy Academy on Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care.

As a result of the lessons learned in this project, DLEG is now working with youth providers around the state to build programming similar to the CIAO project into WIA youth programs in other counties. SEMCA also plans to continue to serve this population

of youth after the grant ends. They have noted that these youth in some ways fit easily into the regular WIA model but at the same time have a higher or “more intensive” level of needs. SEMCA is struggling with how to integrate the lessons learned from this and other demonstration projects they have managed into their ongoing work.

While there is agreement that the project opened doors and created a greater degree of communication between the two systems, there is also concern that when the grant funding ends, the agencies may see one another as competitors for funding and other resources, and it is unclear if the fragile partnership that has emerged will be strong enough to remain once the grant funding ends.

New York: New York City

The state grantee, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Office of Youth Development, selected its largest social service delivery district, New York City, as the site for the project. New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) Office of Youth Development serves as the administrator of the grant and first developed the proposal for the Passport to Success (P2S) program. ACS has contracted with a for-profit company that operates employment programs in many states, Arbor Employment and Training, to serve as the “managing partner.” Arbor, in turn, has sub-contracted with the Door, a nonprofit youth-service organization in New York City. The Door operates a youth center that provides a range of comprehensive programs and services to over 7,000 youth per year, approximately 25 percent of whom have a foster care background. Sixty-five percent of the match is supplied by state funds (through Chafee dollars), and thirty-five percent is local ACS funding.

The program has changed considerably in the last year for several reasons. First, most of the team of people at ACS who developed the proposal for the Passport to Success project and had the vision, history, and passion for the project left ACS or were redeployed to other assignments within the agency. Some of those interviewed felt that this staff turnover caused the project to lose momentum. Another catalyst for change was that the slow New York City procurement process finally finished, allowing the project to officially move to its intended location at the Door.

The transition and move to the Door resulted in more than just location and staffing changes. The culture and philosophy related to serving youth is different at the Door than it was at ACS. The Door offers youth a climate of confidentiality that does not include sharing information with their ACS caseworkers. They believe that this is most conducive to the positive youth development approach they take to their full array of services, whereas ACS believes it has contributed to a breakdown in the opportunity for partnership between the two organizations.

Comments made by youth in the focus group interview reinforce the above observation. One young lady who returned to the focus group from last year said when the life coaches were not located at the Door, she was “in and out” of the program, rarely coming in for specific workshops or activities. Once the life coaches were located at the Door, she began coming almost every day. All of the youth noted that they feel more comfortable discussing personal concerns and future goals with their life coaches than they ever did with their caseworkers.

The original budget for the P2S project has essentially remained the same. The project’s late start should ensure that the existing funds will be available for the New York site to continue operations after the other demonstration sites’ funding is depleted. Beyond personnel costs, the major ongoing costs for the project include incentive payments to participants for completion of particular work-related activities, public transportation costs, and program related operation supplies.

Early in the project, outreach was limited to direct referrals received through ACS and the Door, with a little “mass marketing” through the use of brochures developed by ACS. Many of the youth being referred, particularly through ACS were too young to fully benefit from the program. Staff realized that they had to do active, targeted recruiting and, in particular, to look at the population of 19 year olds in foster care. Around the time that the project officially moved to the Door, the youth that were in the P2S program began to make word-of-mouth referrals to their peers, which also helped to increase the numbers. Early enrollments were very low, but at this point, the project has reached and exceeded the target number of youth served.

Some of the programs and services the youth receive are standard activities required of all Door members, while other services are specific and unique to the P2S project. All Door members, including the P2S youth, must participate in a “job package” which is a set of activities and workshops on topics such as resume writing and interview skills. Similarly, they must also participate in a “life skills package” which includes topics such as hygiene, nutrition, and time management. Alongside these required activities, which are provided in both individual and group settings, each youth creates a personal “membership development plan” (MDP) with their life coach. This plan details their current capabilities, goals, and activities needed to accomplish the goals. Youth receive financial incentives for completing certain workshops and activities. The incentives are also used to support retention efforts, and youth know that if they stay with the program over time they will be eligible for more financial rewards.

According to P2S staff, the biggest challenge they face is that they do not know what any given youth will need until they walk through the door and complete their assessment and MDP process. The youth present significant differences in both ability and interests. Initially, the P2S staff did not realize how many of the youth enrolling in the program would need GEDs. The staff also quickly learned that youth with a foster care background presented different GED needs than other youth coming to the Door. P2S staff responded by integrating the GED program with the career services and requiring youth to participate in both concurrently.

Regarding partnerships, in the late winter/early spring of 2006, the state began to take a more active role and helped smooth the transition of the project from ACS offices to the Door. In recent months, OCFS has continued to play a limited role, but has provided technical assistance and some training opportunities, particularly for the life coaches. Currently, OCFS appears to engage infrequently, but directly with the staff at the Door and Arbor, bypassing ACS. ACS staff express concerns that they have been “out of the loop” in recent months and hope that this site visit, together with a recent DOL site visit, in which all of the partners came together, will spur a deeper and more integrated approach to their partnerships. All parties interviewed during the site visit wondered aloud if perhaps there were not too many organizations involved in this demonstration. While recognizing the particular strengths of each organization, they felt that collaboration has been a challenge. In terms of other partnerships, many that were

engaged in the planning meetings prior to the implementation of the project have drifted away and are not currently involved.

The legacy of this project is unclear. Because the program had a rocky start with procurement and other partnership issues, outreach was initially limited and little thought was given to publicizing the project beyond recruitment. However, the project director and the other P2S staff discussed producing a video about the project to draw attention to the program's efforts and hopefully help other organizations develop similar programs to help youth making the difficult transition from foster care to adult life. At a grantee meeting in Houston, project leadership along with state and local government agency representatives began to think about the longer-term legacy of this project. As a result, the project leadership developed a business plan outline with short-term and long-term goals.

In spite of the many challenges described, there is considerable agreement among all the parties that this project was a catalyst for changing the way that the child welfare and workforce systems do business together on behalf of youth in New York City. Passport staff interviewed feels that their biggest strength has been their ability to be resourceful, get to know the youth, and figure out what will work with and for them. The most important promising practice cited by nearly everyone we talked to is the one-stop approach. Youth can expect to receive multiple services and fill multiple needs in one location. They do not have to travel to one end of the city to another, nor develop trust with multiple organizations. For youth coming from foster care in particular, this has been a huge benefit.

Texas: Houston

The Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults is the local site provider for this project. For this project, the local provider opened a center for foster care youth, called the Houston Alumni and Youth Center (HAY). Staff from the county was relocated to the HAY Center to provide transition services to foster care youth. Several additional staff members were hired to provide education and work force preparation services.

The 2005 site visit report highlighted an impressive array of community collaborations and partnerships at the HAY Center. Now, after a year of service, these partnerships

continue to be an impressive strength of the program, solidified by a number of memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreements. The MOU between the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and the local workforce boards has increased the visibility of the HAY program throughout the region and state. In addition, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board is considering placing foster care youth transition case workers in workforce centers in the Houston area so that even greater connections can be made with workforce services.

Regional DFPS offices throughout the state of Texas along with local workforce development boards and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the state workforce development agency, are finalizing agreements on how they will work collaboratively as required by Texas Senate Bill 6 (SB6). This includes plans for sharing staff and resources, prioritizing workforce services, and meeting the objectives of the Preparation for the Adult Living Program, the program that provides transition services to youth exiting from the foster care system. The SB 6 legislation has provided an excellent opportunity to codify and solidify strategies for collaboration. As an example, the TWC added foster care youth as a distinct priority population in updating their rules. Together with veterans, these are the two priority populations for all workforce services in Texas. The work to implement SB 6 has served not only to bring regional DFPS offices and local workforce boards together, but also the two state agencies, paving the way for more coordinated opportunities for foster youth seeking employment, education, and training.

While there have been few changes to Houston's overall program context, the impact of Hurricane Katrina evacuees has had a noticeable effect on the HAY program and its participants. HAY staff noted an increase in youth coming out of care with a higher level of multi-system and complex needs than previous participants—most often with significant substance abuse and mental health challenges. As a result, it takes an average of 6-9 months working with a young person for the youth to be ready for job placement and success; thus the project has had to adjust accordingly. In addition, the center has experienced some thefts and violent altercations between participants, necessitating the addition of security staff to the project, an unforeseen circumstance and added expense. Although these issues have presented tremendous challenges to

the staff, project managers have provided additional specialized training to help staff develop the competencies and capacity to work with this population.

HAY now has an MOU with Juvenile Probation, in which probation officers meet youth on site and have access to office space in the building. Other partners include Catholic Charities, Children's Legal Services of Houston, and Houston Area Young Lawyers. The Better Business Bureau conducts financial management training, and the National Council of Jewish Women funded a life skills conference for younger youth. The Harris County Health Clinic, located very close to the HAY Center, is another partner serving the participating youth. New partners that are in the process of coming to the table include the MOM's Society, a faith-based organization for mentoring and providing a food pantry; and an existing partnership with the DePelchin (a private child welfare agency), which provides a hybrid mentoring/support group using graduate school interns to come to the center and work with the youth individually and in groups.

At the time of the visit, the biggest challenge in sustaining the project was how to support the ongoing costs of the physical locale for the project. Costs for the building and the basic building services are around \$30,000 a month. Project leadership had produced brochures and a video about the HAY Center that could be used for public outreach. They had also recently hired a consultant to help with a fund-raising campaign. The grantee meeting provided them with an opportunity to work with their DOL provided technical advisor and with other sites. As a result, Houston was well along in developing a plan for sustainability using the tool provided to the sites.

As the Texas child welfare agency (DFPS) seeks to improve its services to transitioning foster youth throughout the state, there is a sense that Houston is ahead of the curve, and to some degree can serve as the model for other counties. TWC sees this as a positive opportunity, as the HAY Center has deliberately embraced a workforce-guided approach to serving this population.

IV. Cross-site Analysis

Summary Observations Across the Sites

As can be expected in a demonstration project, changes have occurred across the sites. The extensiveness and significance of these changes varied across sites. In general, these changes have been made because the sites have been thoughtful and deliberate in looking at their programs to determine what is working and what could be working better. Some of the changes have been made as a result of the programs maturing – additional partners have been added; new programming has been added to address the needs of the youth participants; and all sites have afforded training and development activities to their staff. Some partners and activities have been eliminated because they were not effective, while other activities have been refined to improve impact on participants. Here are some key cross-site observations:

Program Context – The basic approach to serving youth has been fairly constant – no major changes have been made to the program models. Probably the biggest changes occurred in New York City, but that was due to the transfer of day-to-day project responsibilities from the city welfare agency to Arbor and the implementation of the program at the Door, a local social services provider. It was not until after last year's site visit that this fully materialized. Detroit also made a significant positive change when they moved their location from the cramped Highland Park One-Stop Career Center to the more spacious Rosa Parks Center, which also houses a City of Detroit satellite, youth-focused, One-Stop center for employment services.

Project Financing – The source of matching funds and the allocation of costs across program activities and staffing remained fairly constant across the sites. One change was that in Texas, the state child welfare agency did not contribute to the match; accordingly, the entire match came from the Texas Workforce Commission's TANF funds. Of course, for New York, allocation of costs was different as the grant funds were utilized much more substantively this year. (Last year, activities provided to the first 30 youth enrolled in the program by the city welfare agency were not funded from the grant).

Outreach, Recruitment, and Intake -- All of the sites exceeded their enrollment goals, but have continued to accept new enrollments; with some sites adding participants on a limited basis. There has been some fine-tuning of the intake, assessment, and planning processes. Of note is Houston, which was making a number of changes to their intake process, adding additional orientation activities to help insure that youth were committed to the program before fully enrolling. With respect to the participants, all the sites noted how difficult the population is to serve. Many of these youth have multiple needs and challenges, including issues around mental health, substance abuse, anger management, life skill preparation, low literacy levels, and lack of “soft” skills needed for the workplace. Several sites, notably Houston, indicated that the more recent enrollees were much more difficult to serve than those youth that had been enrolled early in the program. They are not sure why this has occurred. They did note that youth enrolled in the program had begun to bring more youth with them, including youth who were not from the foster care system.

Program Services and Activities -- Because this area is really the “core” of the program, most of the major changes that were made occurred around the services and activities. As noted above, New York City fully implemented their service strategy that provides a full range of comprehensive education, work force preparedness, and support services to youth – a contrast to the limited services that the city welfare agency staff were able to provide. This has been done using both grant funds and leveraging the extensive services and resources that are available at the Door. All of the sites have made changes in their work readiness preparation activities. Los Angeles added flexibility to its structured and sequenced activities to address individual needs better, and Detroit was, at the time of the second site visit, considering moving in the same direction. In contrast, both Houston and Chicago were adding program structure. Houston continued to develop and refine its *Blueprint* program for work readiness. Chicago found that they had provided the local school sites too much flexibility in designing work readiness activities, and they provided each with a core curriculum to follow. Several of the sites found it necessary to add providers and activities addressing life skill preparation areas, such as money management, conflict resolution, and mental health.

Project Staff and Management – Across three of the sites, Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles, project staffing remained relatively stable. While there have been a few staff changes in these sites, there were more extensive changes in the other two sites. With the transfer of the project to Arbor and the Door, New York City recruited new staff, and although the plan was for at least several of the staff from the city welfare agency to locate at The Door, this did not fully materialize. Detroit experienced significant project staff changes with the departure of its original project manager and several others. The project staffing change was part of a reexamination of the vision and purpose of the project that occurred when the project moved to the Rosa Parks Center. All the sites have provided staff with opportunities to build their skills in working with the youth, whether it be through staff meetings and retreats, or through more formal training, provided specifically to the site staff and by other city or county agencies.

Collaborations and Partnerships – Sites continued to form new partnerships and to leverage resources from a variety of sources. Sites such as New York City and Chicago were able to tap into the resources that were available to the larger parent organizations. This is a clear advantage to building the model off of an existing organization that provides services to youth. But, that does not mean that other sites have not had success in recruiting partners and leveraging resources. One notable addition is in Pasadena (Los Angeles), where the project signed an MOU with the local Casey Family Programs site, resulting in the provision of a range of additional services for youth in the project. In contrast, Houston found it necessary to terminate two of their original partners. They have recruited new partners to provide financial literacy training to youth and to provide health services.

Detroit's move to the Rosa Parks Center opened the door to a new partnership with the One-Stop center and the job finding and job preparation resources available at the center. At the same time, Detroit struggled with its relationship with the Michigan agency responsible for providing transition services to foster care youth. A process that they had used to refer foster youth to services was temporarily discontinued because of problems within the child welfare agency. At the time of the visit these problems had not been fully resolved, although progress was being made.

All of the sites have found it difficult to form partnerships with organizations that provide mentoring to youth. While sites have used other approaches to provide youth with mentoring-like experiences, they have largely been unsuccessful in securing mentoring on any scale from other community organizations. This is an area that will be looked at more closely in the final report.

Employer Outreach and Recruitment– Across the sites, Detroit has faced the most challenges in placing participants in unsubsidized employment. This is because Detroit’s economy is poor; unemployment is high, and there does not seem to be immediate improvement on the horizon. Youth with criminal records and youth unable to pass drug screenings provide major challenges for all sites in placing youth in jobs. Yet, all the sites have had success at placing youth in jobs. At least three of the sites, Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago, are able to tap into their existing organizational resources for job placements. In Houston, the partnership with the local One-Stop Career Center had been very helpful in finding youth jobs, and the Center’s employment specialist works closely with the employer following the placement to insure its success. In addition, across the sites, individual staff assists youth with finding jobs and conducting outreach to employers.

Internships, paid work experience, and part-time employment are techniques that all the sites use, some more than others, to provide youth with work experience and some income while preparing them to hold down a permanent job. New York City and Los Angeles, in particular, have formed partnerships with public agencies to provide youth with these opportunities. In Detroit, a partnership with a local hospital to provide youth with project-funded paid work experience has led to at least two of the youth being placed in full time jobs.

Sustainability and Systems-Building – At the time of the visits, few sites were very far along in formal planning for sustainability, although sites were definitely looking to the future and thinking about the legacy of their projects. Houston was probably the most advanced in this regard. Although they had not developed a formal plan, they produced a video and other material to use for public outreach and had hired a consultant to help plan a major fund-raising effort.

The grantees were brought together in November for a cross-site meeting that focused on sustainability and provided an opportunity for all sites to visit the Houston HAY Center. The Houston meeting spurred the sites to think and plan more deeply for sustainability, and the prospect of another year of funding provides additional time for planning. This will be an important area to follow up on with the sites prior to issuing the final report.

These projects have had an impact on the workforce development and child welfare systems that they represent and on their communities. It is clear that, regardless of the extent to which the existing projects are sustained, there will be a powerful legacy from the work. In Detroit and Los Angeles, for example, local WIA youth programs will certainly incorporate the lessons learned from these projects and these projects will likely lead to serving more foster care youth under WIA. Houston's HAY Center has already begun to serve as a model for other locations in Texas that are being encouraged through state legislation to establish One-Stop centers for foster care youth.

At the state level, new relationships between the workforce agencies and the child welfare agencies are forming, and state workforce agency leaders are showing increased interest in this population of youth. Michigan and Illinois are two examples of states whose workforce agencies have been more engaged in issues around serving foster care youth as a direct result of this project. These two states are among a group of six states that have been participating in a National Governors Association policy initiative on transitioning youth from the foster care system. It appears that the demonstration projects are informing the states' participation in the policy academy and have facilitated bringing together the principals from the state level workforce and child welfare agencies that are involved with both the local projects and the policy academy. However, in a third state, which is also participating in the policy academy, there seems to be little, if any, connection between the demonstration project and the state's policy initiatives. In Texas, the Houston project has deepened the relationship between the state workforce agency and the child welfare agency that came about through the passage of state legislation (SB6) around foster care youth.

There is clearly still work to be done in building connections across the workforce and child welfare systems. In at least two of the sites, relationships between the local

demonstration site and the child welfare agency are strained. In another state, the local workforce development agency has not been supportive of the project, probably because it was bypassed by the state in implementing the project. It is safe to say that in most of these states and in most of the local demonstration sites there was no existing relationship between the child welfare and workforce development agencies upon which to build. Thus, it is not surprising that it is taking time for these relationships to gel.

Program Outcomes and Performance Measurements – The performance measures have had an impact on the sites. They are clearly focused on meeting the performance goals established between the sites and DOL, even though there are no consequences attached to meeting these goals. While there is some disagreement with the specific measures across the sites, the sites have accepted the concept of performance measures. They recognize that one key to sustainability is the ability to show results. Capturing data, particularly around activities, and reporting definitions continued to be somewhat problematic for the sites, although far less so than last year. And, the sites have demonstrated that they can produce positive outcomes – whether it is job and post-secondary placements or high school diplomas and GEDs. Sites are working towards and in many areas meeting the performance measures.

Program Data and Analysis

The enrollment data for all the sites through September 30, 2006 have been aggregated and are presented in the table below, along with a brief narrative analysis of trends in outcome data. Because of concerns about the accuracy of some of the outcome data, we have elected to make observations about the trends we see from those data rather than including the specific outcome data and a detailed analysis. The outcome data will be confirmed using additional child-based analyses and will be included in the second year outcomes report that will be available later this fall.

Table 1 shows the enrollment numbers and the percentage of participants with particular characteristics in each of the five sites and all for all sites combined. The status of the youth are collected and reported at enrollment. Changes in status are not generally collected by the sites nor are they reported.

Table 1 Cross Site Comparison of Enrollment Data through September 30, 2006

Enrollment Data	California (Los Angeles)	Illinois (Chicago)	Michigan (Detroit)	New York (New York)	Texas (Houston)	Total
Enrolled (Total Number)	135	189	150	109	246	829
Age						
17 & Under	38.5%	7.4%	22.0%	37.6%	24.0%	24.0%
18 & Over	61.5%	92.6%	78.0%	62.4%	76.0%	76.0%
Gender						
Male	48.1%	33.3%	36.0%	38.5%	51.2%	42.2%
Female	51.9%	66.7%	64.0%	61.5%	48.8%	57.8%
Race & Ethnicity⁸						
White	4.4%	0.5%	7.3%	0.0%	24.0%	9.3%
Black	73.3%	87.8%	88.7%	79.8%	52.0%	73.9%
Hispanic	17.8%	7.9%	0.0%	19.3%	15.4%	11.8%
Native American	2.2%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.6%
Asian and Pacific Islander	1.5%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Multiracial	0.0%	3.2%	3.3%	0.0%	6.5%	3.3%
Other	0.7%	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%	1.2%	0.8%
School Status at Entry						
In School	50.4%	85.7%	18.0%	16.5%	28.0%	41.5%
Out of School/HS Dropout	17.0%	0.5%	48.0%	70.6%	25.2%	28.3%
Out of School/Grad or GED	32.6%	13.8%	34.0%	12.8%	46.7%	30.2%
Housing Status at Entry						
Stable Housing Arrangements	68.1%	66.1%	65.3%	78.9%	24.8%	55.7%
Independent Living	17.0%	26.5%	8.0%	9.2%	50.4%	26.4%
Temporary Housing/Homeless	14.8%	7.4%	26.7%	11.9%	24.8%	17.9%
Foster Care Status at Entry						
In Foster Care System	75.6%	94.2%	54.7%	82.6%	26.4%	62.4%
Out of Foster Care System	24.4%	5.8%	45.3%	17.4%	73.6%	37.6%
Criminal Justice Status at Entry						
Currently or Previously Adjudicated/Incarcerated	20.7%	16.4%	21.3%	20.2%	23.2%	20.5%
Never Adjudicated/Incarcerated	79.3%	83.6%	78.7%	79.8%	76.8%	79.5%
Parenting Status at Entry						
All Parents	14.1 %	39.1%	29.4%	18.4%	24.8%	26.3%
Custodial parent only	3.0%	31.7%	22.7%	3.7%	7.3%	14.5%
Non-custodial parent only	11.1%	7.4%	6.7%	14.7%	17.5%	11.8%
Other Data at Entry						
Receives health insurance	61.5%	98.4%	81.3%	**	76.8%	71.9%
Receives Income Supports*	49.6%	40.2%	73.3%	5.5%	11.8%	34.7%
With disability(s)	3.7%	2.1%	14.0%	0.0%	22.0%	10.1%

Source: Roll-up quarterly report dated September 30, 2006.

* Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Security Income, other.

** Data Not Available

⁸ Participant race and ethnicity was assigned based on primary ethnicity, with few youth identified as multiracial. This may be more a function of the data collection system as most studies have found a higher proportion of multi-racial youth.

For the entire two-year period, the sites enrolled a total of 829 participants. Houston enrolled the most participants, 246, and New York City enrolled the fewest, 109. We note that New York City became operational later than the other sites and they did meet their enrollment goal.

Across the sites, a high percentage of the youth enrolled in these programs were 18 and over at the time of enrollment. In Chicago, over 90 percent of the youth were aged 18 and over, while Los Angeles and New York City reported enrolling more youth 17 and under, with percentages of youth under 17 at close to 40 percent. The percentages of male and female participants varied somewhat across the sites. Los Angeles and Houston reported almost an equal percent of males and females, while in Chicago, Detroit, and New York City, female enrollments exceeded 60 percent of the total enrollments.

Across the sites, the racial composition, with the exception of Houston, was overwhelmingly black, with the percentage exceeding 70 percent. In Houston, about half of the participants reported they were black, with about one-quarter white and around 15 percent Hispanic. Detroit did not report enrolling any Hispanic youth, while the other sites reported enrollments of between just under 10 percent and almost 20 percent of the population as Hispanic.

School status varied considerably across the sites, reflecting, for the most part, the way the programs were designed. For example, over 85 percent of the youth were in school in Chicago at the time of enrollment, reflecting the fact that the Chicago program works with youth enrolled in a 13 different alternative schools. In contrast, Detroit, New York City, and Houston reported that less than 30 percent of their youth were in school at the time of enrollment, while in Los Angeles the percentage of in-school youth was approximately 50 percent. For those youth not in school at enrollment, the percentage who are high school dropouts varied considerably across the sites, with New York City reporting the highest percentage at just over 70 percent. This high percentage reflects the program's focus on high school dropouts.

Another interesting data item is foster care status at intake. Again, this varied considerably across the sites. Houston reported the highest percentage of youth out of

the foster care system, at over 70 percent. In contrast, the other sites reported over 50 percent of their youth still in the foster care system, with the highest percentage in Chicago at over 90 percent.

Other characteristics also varied considerably across the sites. For example, the percentage of youth reported in stable housing at enrollment ranges from a low of about 25 percent in Houston to a high of almost 80 percent in New York City. Parenting status also differed across the sites, with Los Angeles reporting the lowest percentage, at around 14 percent, and Chicago the highest, at almost 40 percent. Parenting status is an important characteristic, and the high percentages are a major concern. For custodial parents particularly, parenting places an added burden on these young adults as they are trying to complete high school, hold down a full-time job, or undertake post-secondary education and training.

The variations in characteristics and status across the sites are particularly significant for the final report that we will prepare at the end of 2007. For that report, we will have access to individual-level data, and we will be in a better decision to decide which data items are reliable enough to report.

Characteristics of the Program Population

The data show that across all-sites the participant population consists largely of individuals who could be considered hard to serve for a number of reasons. For example, considering all-sites for the entire two-year period, 26 percent of participants are parents, 18 percent were temporarily homeless at the time of enrollment, 20.5 percent had been adjudicated or convicted at enrollment or were being adjudicated, 28 percent had dropped out of high school, 91 percent were minorities, and 10 percent had disabilities. The literature on the foster care population in general would suggest that a higher percentage of participants have disabilities than was reported, and that some sites are not identifying all participants who have disabilities. At this time, it is not possible to determine how the participants at each site compare to other youth under the age of 18 or to other foster care participants in their area. We have not been able to identify appropriate data against which to compare the data we have on program participants.

Using the aggregate data, we cannot describe how particular life experiences captured in the data, such as being a custodial parent, a high school dropout, or having been previously convicted might translate into a participant's chances of obtaining positive outcomes, such as obtaining and retaining employment. However, common sense would indicate that having to balance work and child care or living in a homeless shelter might present challenges to maintaining employment or attaining a high school diploma or post-secondary school degree. When we analyze the participant level data, we will use regression analysis to try to quantify the effect of particular demographic characteristics, such as race or parenting status, on outcomes holding all else constant. Even the participant level data, however, will only capture a fraction of the challenges facing the participant population. For example, data on parenting status are available only for intake, and housing status is available at enrollment and at completion but not during the period of participation. Therefore, if a participant became pregnant and gave birth to a child while in the program, this information would not be captured by the data. Similarly, if a participant lived in stable housing at enrollment but became temporarily homeless the very next month, this change, and significant challenge, would not be reflected in the data.

General Trends in Outcome Data for the Entire Two-Year Period

In the first reporting period through September 30, 2005, the numbers of program outcomes reported were quite modest. This was to be expected since the programs were in various stages of implementation, and all the sites had been in operation for less than nine months. We would not expect many of the youth to have completed the preparatory activities that lead to program outcomes such as high school completion or job placements at that time.

In contrast, the data through September 30, 2006, reflects mature programming across the sites. All the sites have been in operation for at least one year and in some sites closer to two years. Accordingly, we would expect to see the sites reporting significantly more program outcomes for their youth. In fact, this is the case. The number of youth who entered unsubsidized employment, entered full-time post secondary school, obtained a job, completed high school, or obtained a GED all increased. The sites varied as to the percentage of the youth who had completed high school or were placed in unsubsidized employment, reflecting the difference in program focus and the

difference in when the programs started. The number of youth who entered long-term occupational training in the second year increased compared to the first year. Finally, while in the first year few participants had obtained a certificate in a training program, many participants achieved this outcome in the second year.

What the Data Tell Us

In many ways, the data support what we have learned about the sites from their visits. They substantiate the many positive practices that the sites have implemented and support the individual success stories that we heard from all the sites. The sites have demonstrated that they can produce positive outcomes – whether it is job and post-secondary placements or high school diplomas and GEDs. Sites are working toward, and in many areas meeting, the performance goals originally set by DOL.

One significant milestone is that all the sites have exceeded their enrollment goals, with nearly 830 youth served, demonstrating that they can successfully attract youth to their programs. Another is that all the sites have had some success in helping youth attain high school diplomas. All the sites also have had some success at placing youth in jobs. All sites have also used internships, paid work experience, and part-time employment to provide youth with work experience and some income while preparing them to hold down a permanent job.

In addition to other job readiness services, the data show that all sites offered some participants the opportunity to pursue a certificate in a training program or to enter long-term occupational training. Only Detroit made this a significant component of their program. Chicago and Detroit were the two sites that used long-term occupational training the most.

Most youth had health insurance at the time they enrolled in the program. The site with the highest percentage was Chicago, with 98 percent of youth receiving health insurance at enrollment.

Only about one-third of the youth were receiving income supports at enrollment. The overall average was 34.7 percent for the entire two-year period. The site with the

highest percentage for the two-year period was Detroit, 73.3 percent, and the site with the lowest percentage for the two-year period was New York City, 5.5 percent.

Across all sites, about one-half the youth, or 56 percent, were in a stable housing situation at enrollment. About one-quarter were in independent living, while over 15 percent were either in temporary housing or homeless. Houston had the lowest percentage of stable housing arrangements at enrollment, 25 percents, and New York City had the highest percentage of youth in stable housing arrangements at enrollment, 79 percent.

Lessons Learned

Without exception, sites expressed that their greatest lesson learned was around the complexity of serving and the multiple needs of the population of foster care youth. Several of the local site providers are long-time youth employment program operators with experience in serving a population of youth considered to be “at-risk” and hard-to-serve. Yet, these providers also found that this population faced more challenges than the population of youth they typically served. Several factors are often cited. First, these youth often have no home and family to provide stability for them as they navigate the often-rocky waters of passage from childhood to adulthood. The multiple moves and traumas they have experienced create an inherent lack of trust, as well as very specific and concrete gaps in their learning and life experiences. The system that has cared for them has not typically provided them with the opportunities that most youth have to try and fail at various activities within a safety net of home and family support.

The consensus across all sites is that this population of youth need a much more intensive level of case management and individualized services in order to achieve successful outcomes. They do not fit easily or well into modularized or cohort approaches to services. Given their multiple needs, no single system can by itself meet these needs, whether it be the child welfare agency or the workforce development system. The importance of intensive case management is well supported by the statements of the youth involved in the project. In focus group interviews across the sites, when asked what they valued most about the project, youth talked about their demonstration project case manager. In most of the sites, few of the youth had anything positive to say about their experiences with the many child welfare agency case workers

assigned to them during their years in the foster care system. Yet, in contrast, without exception the youth spoke positively of their demonstration project case manager—the assistance in solving problems and in planning for the future. But perhaps most importantly, the youth talked about having a supportive adult they could rely upon, a missing component in many of their lives.

V. Next Steps and Conclusion

The information contained in these interim reports is intended to provide a basis for the final reports. The final report will be completed in late fall of 2007. It will include enrollment, service and outcome data through June 30, 2007.

We believe that analysis of individual participant data in the final report will help provide practical insights not possible with program-wide data. The site reports do not include analyses based on the individual participant data; these analyses will be included in the final report. All sites have submitted at least some data. The format for submitting the data and the completeness of the data has varied across the sites. The sites were allowed to develop their own methods for collecting and organizing these data, and most sites collected their participant level data in Excel or Access databases. We are continuing to work with the sites in order to obtain complete individual participant data to be used in our final report. While there will be no additional in person site visits, key site personnel will be contacted to update the information gathered from the last visit to identify significant changes, identify additional promising practices and successes, and to learn where the sites are in their planning for sustaining their projects.

While the sites have demonstrated that they can produce positive outcomes for these youth, none of the sites are without challenges. All of them struggle, to varying degrees, with working across systems. Whether these projects will produce long-term positive outcomes for youth is unknown. Sustainability is tenuous at this point for all the sites. However, based on their success so far, there is every reason to believe that these projects will provide all the systems involved with this unique population of young people with insights on how best to serve them as they struggle to make the transition from the child welfare system to responsible adulthood.