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WHAT DOES INDEPENDENCE MEAN?

Those in the field of child and youth care, with its developmental competencies, teach young people to care for themselves and to what extent youth can trust others in healthy relationships as they move towards independence. What does independence mean? Moving towards a mature completion of the developmental challenges of latency age has become far more complicated and tenuous in such complex times.

In *Childhood and Society*, Erik Erikson contended that youth form their identity in reaction to the historical moment, seek a "moratorium" in which they gain perspective by dropping out, and then emerge as fully formed adults ready to take responsibility. This was certainly true of the "great generation" that went off to war, saw the world, and then came home to build what seemed to be an ever expanding modern industrial base for the country.

However, Arnett and others have noticed that "to be young" today has extended into a whole new developmental stage lasting into the late twenties or even thirties. This stage is replete with exploration of many kinds of careers, avocations, and volunteer experiences. Young adults make temporary commitments to purpose in life—and are often back and forth, between living on their own and cohabitating with their parents. The current economic bifurcation, into rich or poor families, may be responsible for this trend. Unable to find fully paid productive work, young people are likelier to stay with their parents if the family has means, or are forced to stay together if basic resources are scant.

Even college, which was once a ticket to commanding economic independence, can be difficult to access as affirmative action programs have ended. Higher education is also extremely expensive and hard to pay for as the tuition, a kind of entry to sustained middle class, has significantly escalated. Matriculation at a for-profit vocational college also does not guarantee employment in the downturn economy.

For a very limited number of high risk youth, success is guaranteed in higher education. At Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone in NYC, comprehensive social supports are added to good schooling for the poorest of the generational poor. The definitive outcome for this intervention can be seen in the large number of children who do eventually go to college and graduate. While admirable, but in short supply, the same can be said for other programs such as the Hershey School, which uses the chocolate fortune to give lifelong economic support to higher education and vocational training. These programs are isolated by the unique circumstances of their extreme cost and are few and far between. However, it does show that when the highest risk youth get what they need, they can succeed.

Teaching Life Skills and Permanency Planning: Two Traditions of Independent Living

What then for the foster youth who age out of the public welfare system at age eighteen, and the large number of children and youth who grow up in and out of

residential treatment centers, group homes, and shelter care? The preparation for independent living has two traditions. The first focuses on teaching the everyday life skills necessary for survival. The second emphasizes permanency planning and the development of a network of long term relationships that connect the youth to adults who can continue to support healthy growth throughout their lives. Both are needed more now than ever before.

Skill development in independent living programs is often organized around a curriculum of increasingly complex skills. Such independent living programs focus on maintaining self-care, managing peer relationships, and preparing for work in units that cover time management; preparing a resume and job applications, then seeking and keeping first employment; cooking, cleaning, and doing household routines; budgeting and learning financial literacy; and engaging in clean and sober leisure activities. Perhaps it was always a kind of myth, but in better economic times the gold standard for our youth in independent living was to be able to set an alarm clock to get to work on time, keep a fast food or sales job, finish a GED, and accumulate a closet full of household goods to be ready for moving day. If we are honest, how many of the youth in our care were ever mature and healthy enough to meet those goals? And at 18 years of age, would our own children be ready to live on their own with a one-shot transition from the family home?

Looking to the Future

As we look to the future, these skills and others are necessary to negotiate life in our current economic downturn. Less hypothetical preparation in which youth role play these skills and more "real work" may be necessary. How can we redesign our independent living programs to be more entrepreneurial and to provide specific apprenticeships and paid vocational experiences? Perhaps the system should be changed—and some jurisdictions have extended care until 21 years of age—so that a youth are not released until they are already working on the job.

It is also true for all youth that the jobs they find may not have existed in their parents' time. Not only will youth need to be prepared to train and retrain into new industries and services, but as young entrepreneurs they will need to know how to access and utilize advancing new technologies and invent and market new products. While this is a far vista from where we stand today, our youth have by and large been failed by their schooling and have grown up in the margins. Entrepreneurism and the new generation of computer-configured businesses are not bound by the same kinds of learning and social structures that have pushed our kids out and away from traditional schooling.

I (Andy) recently watched a homeless street youth, who desperately needed to come into the shelter, instead set the challenge of powerfully and positively panhandling every pedestrian passing until he successfully reached the goal of putting five dollars in his pocket. He said with a wry smile, "never go hungry," and that he would be able to count on having a meal he could purchase himself in the morning.

With this much determination, guts, and salesmanship, I only hoped that my youth work could find the purpose in this teen to turn such resilience into positive progress towards independent living.

Without a much more entrepreneurial, innovative, and sustained approach, our independent living youth are most vulnerable to becoming a part of the rapidly growing population of adult mentally ill who are living on the streets in structural poverty. We need to rethink the ways in which our youth are strong and the ways in which they will always be challenged—and work together with the youth and society to formulate new programs and organizations to provide far more flexible and adaptable independent living situations.

It's typical today to find that independent living means a practice apartment on campus, a group home satellite to a larger residential program, or a set of classes to be completed after-school. While these formats are not bad and need to be a part of the continuum of care, we see the day when independent living may mean being a part of a lifelong community in which some supports are structured and other needs are met independently. Living communities which revolve around community service and vocational apprenticeships, extended networks of support built into faith-based organizations, service clubs, and unions. Co-housing and other blended experiences in which different periods of life youth might always return "home" to the agency which is their independent living base.

Andrew J. Schneider-Muñoz, *EdD, CYC-P*
Editor

TAKING UP THE INDEPENDENT LIVING CHALLENGES OF OUR TIMES

Volume 23 of the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work* takes up the challenges of independent living. This special issue is a collaborative venture between the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) and the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA), affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association. The NSDTA and the ACYCP are kindred spirits in our commitment to use practice-based research and competencies to break new ground for the field and to ensure that training transfers to high quality practice.

Looking back and looking forward are thought pieces from past editors Varda Mann-Feder and Mark Krueger. Mann-Feder recently conducted extensive practice research on the developmental needs of the large number of youth who are aging out of care. Krueger, at the Youth Work Learning Center, has long been on the forefront of independent living and permanency planning, with innovative practice strategies generated by the workers together with the youth. The Youth Work Learning Center is a high power unit of a university, but for many years it directly operated its own independent living home for the purposes of learning. From The University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Services, we bring an article from Dorothy Ansell, who continues to pioneer the field of independent living and permanency through the seminal work of the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment and Life Skills Guide*, which has become an essential text and tool for our field.

To demonstrate the latest work in independent living skill training, we have arranged to share with you nine articles reprinted in cooperation with *Training and Development in Human Services*, the journal of the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA). Among these articles are a range of program proposals submitted for actual implementation that give the reader an opportunity to explore opportunities and techniques available for the training of independent living curriculum. Professional work done in ten states assesses preparation and planning for independent living, explores how to plan effectively and achieve training outcomes, and designs successful techniques for evidence-based supervision and team based-training. Dale Curry and Andrew Schneider-Muñoz add to the lessons learned from each of the independent living curriculum by providing us with an examination of strategies to maximize the transfer-of-learning specifically for independent living training initiatives.

Rounding out this volume we move from curriculum to practice. John Korsmo provides us with his exploration of youth worker acquisition of professional knowledge and skill while Ken Harland and Tony Morgan, from the University of Ulster, take an in depth look at youth work and its contribution to life learning. Finally, with an eye to the future, editor Andy Schneider-Muñoz teams with Matthew Fasano, in identifying current trends in youth work identified by leaders in the field of youth development.

On behalf of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, the editors of the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work* (Andrew J. Schneider-Muñoz, Dale Curry, and Jean Carpenter-Williams), and the publisher, The University of Oklahoma OUTREACH National Resource Center for Youth Services, we would like to recognize the hard work and expertise of Anita Barbee and Becky Antle (guest editors of the Training and Development in Human Services issue) from the University of Louisville, personnel from the Center for Human Services, University of California, Davis who provided the copy editing, and personnel from Children and Family Training, Office of Children, Youth, and Families, Colorado who assisted with printing and distribution of the publication. We are grateful to the authors who were willing to share their findings and lessons learned from each of the independent living training grants and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau who provided funding. We hope this joint publication initiative is the first of many future collaborative activities shared by these two important professional associations that are comprised of highly dedicated individuals who promote the well-being of individuals and families in a variety of practice settings.

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INTERVENING WITH YOUTH IN THE TRANSITION FROM CARE TO INDEPENDENT LIVING

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Abstract: This article outlines recommendations for intervention with youth transitioning to independent living based on the results of the author's own program of qualitative research, literature on the theory of Emerging Adulthood, and recent findings in relation to the experiences of youth leaving home to live on their own. The emphasis is on designing services that can more closely approximate the normative transition to adulthood.

Keywords: Youth in Care, Independent Living, Home Leaving

The author wishes to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Emma Sobel and Allison Eades to her program of research

Youth leaving care for independent living face enormous challenges. They often experience a period of crisis that begins prior to discharge and may extend well beyond their departure from care (Mann-Feder & White, 2004), potentially threatening their post discharge adjustment for years to come. The child and youth care workers who intervene with young people in this complex and difficult transition have a particularly demanding mandate. This article overviews findings from the authors' own program of qualitative research and outlines implications for working with youth aging out of care. The earliest studies documented the experiences of youth leaving care for independent living (Mann-Feder & White, 2004) as well as the perceptions of staff in relation to organizational factors that facilitated youth transitions (Mann-Feder & Guerard, 2008).

The results of prior studies have been summarized elsewhere and are available on line at *http://www/childrenwebmag.com/c/articles/fice-helsinki-congress-2008.* The most recent study, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Reseach Council of Canada, is still in progress. It builds on first person accounts of the home leaving experiences of youth in the community to identify protective factors that can promote adjustment in the transition to adulthood (Mann-Feder, Eades, &Sobel, 2010).

A significant proportion of youth in care never return home and have no choice but to move out on their own when placement ends because of their age. Estimates from 2001 suggest that there are over 60,000 young people in care every year in Canada, 6,000 of whom leave to live on their own (Flynn, 2003). In the United States, out of the approximately 542,000 youth in care, 20,000 young adults will exit for independent living annually (Osgood, Foster, Flanagan, & Ruth, 2005). These youth, many

of whom were neglected or abused, separated from their families, and brought up in a system of care, are then expected to adjust to the withdrawal of services and the necessity of transitioning to adulthood with minimal supports. Findings of numerous outcome studies to date are remarkably consistent: Youth leaving care for independent living do not fare well as adults (Tweddle, 2007). They are overrepresented among the homeless, in prisons, and in adult psychiatric wards. Many do not finish high school and struggle chronically with unemployment and underemployment. Few can rely on either emotional or financial support from family (Stein, 2006).

Most child welfare practice in North America focuses on family reinsertion as the best possible outcome when children are placed (Child Welfare Gateway, 2006). When resources allow, intensive intervention efforts are directed at improving family functioning so that young people can grow up at home. Those youth who do leave to live on their own usually do so as a default option, because efforts at family reunification have failed (Mann-Feder & Guerard, 2008). A plan for independent living develops as a response to a youth-in-care's advancing age and the inability of family and extended family to receive them. Thus, every such discharge plan is infused with loss and represents a failure for both a young person and their professional caregivers (Mann-Feder & White, 2004). Youth who age out of care and transition to independent living are also among the most compromised youth in the care system to begin with, because they have had the least family support throughout their stay in placement. Extended years in care may have magnified the deficits they entered with when first placed. These youth are forced to live independently at a much younger age than other young people, almost ten years earlier given current statistics on home leaving (Rutman, Barlow, Alusik, Hubberstay, & Brown, 2003). Despite their age, and irrespective of their level of readiness, they face the need to adapt to an adult lifestyle prematurely while adjusting to the termination of care.

Moving out on one's own for the first time and leaving care are experiences fraught with ambivalence (Mann-Feder & Garfat, 2006). Independent living, for every young person, demands the relinquishment of the dependencies of childhood, which are both an accomplishment and a loss. Leaving care restimulates unresolved issues related to the original placement, forcing the individual to relive early separations (Gordy-Levine, 1990). This can stimulate regression and increased acting out by a young person, precisely at a time when expectations for mature behavior may be greatest. Given the scope of these difficulties, there as been increased recognition in North America of the importance of specialized support for youth leaving care. However, there are huge variations in what is provided in different states and provinces because the nature of this transition is poorly understood.

Over the last decade, it has been observed that the normative transition to adulthood is longer than ever. The milestones that have traditionally signaled the attainment of adult status (leaving home, achieving financial independence, getting married, and becoming a parent) seem to be established relatively late in the industrialized world when compared with previous generations (Furstenberg, Rumbaut,

& Settersen, 2006). Individuals in their 20s commonly live with their parents, and those who leave often return more than once before permanently launching themselves in their late 20s or their early 30s (Mulder, 2009).

These developments have been observed so consistently that Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, an American developmental psychologist, proposed that a new life stage be added (Arnett, 1998). He coined the term "Emerging Adulthood" for this period, which lasts from the late teens until at least the mid-twenties (approximately 18 to 26). Arnett explained that there are concerns and experiences that are unique to the transition to adulthood and that Emerging Adults are engaged in processes that set them apart from adolescents and young adults. Also characteristic of Emerging Adulthood is residential instability, as these young people experiment with different living situations punctuated by periodic returns home (Arnett, 2007). While some aspects of this stage were previously subsumed in theories of adolescence, adolescent experimentation gives way to more focused exploration in Emerging Adulthood, which in turn results in the establishment of a stable, identity-based lifestyle (Arnett, 2007).

Arnett's research has indicated that most twenty-somethings in the community have mixed feelings about reaching adulthood. The achievement of adult responsibilities is a gradual process, which optimally involves protracted periods of practicing at independence with family standing by to provide a safety net. If all goes well, individuals can achieve an increasing sense of well-being through the emerging adult years, while launching themselves with confidence into adult life. At the same time, long term study suggests that emerging adults whose transition is compromised by a lack of internal and external resources exhibit persistant difficulties which in turn have a negative impact on adult adjustment (Osgood et al., 2005). Youth aging out of care constitute a significant proportion of these failed emerging adults, whose difficulties navigating this critical transition can have a lifelong impact.

Based on these shifts in thinking about transitions to adulthood, this author undertook to learn more about how home leaving in Emerging Adulthood could inform intervention with youth aging out of care (Mann-Feder et al., 2010). The first phase of the research, in which 30 university students were interviewed about home leaving, resulted in the identification of important themes in the normative transition to independent living (Mann-Feder et al., 2010). It should be noted that all of the young people in this study attended a large urban university and none of them lived in residence. The following are findings from the first wave of data analysis, which used consensual qualitative research (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1995) methodology.

It appears that moving out is a disorganizing experience for all young people. One assumption driving the research was that when young people leave home because they wish to do so, the transition is less daunting than when youth are forced to move as they age out of care. Our home leavers described the transition to independent living as a crisis which could not be anticipated or prepared for. It catapaulted them into a period marked by fear and anxiety, despite the fact that they had chosen to move out in seach of privacy and independence. Partipants

reported that being on their own presented them with unexpected challenges and that worries about money and new responsibilities were compounded by loneliness, roomate problems, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Most stated that they learned the instrumental skills needed (cooking, cleaning, etc.) once they moved and that no amount of preparation would have helped them deal with the intial dramatic impact of leaving. Many reported an initial experience of "going crazy" or losing control (partying too much, staying out late, etc.) when they first moved out. The research team was surprised at the degree to which these reports of the normative transition to independent living resembled the experiences of youth leaving care documented in earlier research (Mann-Feder & White, 2004).

At the same time, there were important stabilizers in the lives of youth leaving home that made a difference in the degree to which they experienced the intial difficulties in the transition and how well they adapted over time. Internal assets that made a difference were the ability to plan, feelings of excitement about being independent, and the confidence that came from overcoming challenges as they arose. Participants, who had been on their own for short periods prior to moving, even if it was only for a short trip, seemed to weather the initial crisis more easily. Important external assetts came in the form of parental support and encouragement. The awareness that family would step in if things really deteriorated was generally cited as the most significant stabilizer. This lends strong support to Arnett's concept of the parental safety net and its critical role in Emerging Adulthood (Arnett, 2007). Of note is that most participants stated clearly that they did not wish to resort to turning to their parents for back up. They relied instead on peers as mentors when they needed advice and emotional support. This is an important finding because it has been documented that youth leaving care are often isolated from their peers and do not enjoy the same supportive friendship networks as young people in the community (Mann-Feder & White, 2004).

These preliminary results, considered in light of the theory of Emerging Adulthood, have important implications for intervening with youth in care in the transition to independent living.

1. Our programs must change to reflect the complexity, volatility, and protracted nature of transitions to adulthood, especially for this disadvantaged group. Many agencies currently focus on providing programs of preparation for independent living. It may be that using available resources to provide support during the transition might be more critical.
2. Prior research suggests that most substitute care resources are not currently designed to be flexible enough to allow for a gradual transition, which in turn exacerbates the challenges of transitioning to adulthood (Mann-Feder & Guérard, 2008). We offer few opportunities for experimentation with autonomy, and even short leaves from care could allow a young person to experience being on their own as part of a transition to independent living.

3. We do little to assist young people in addressing the difficult emotions associated with the transition from care to adulthood. Youth leaving care can be volatile and acting out. We need to adopt a nonpunitive approach and normalize the expression of feelings.
4. Agency policies and procedures that would allow for brief returns to care after discharge would go a long way in providing the perception of a safety net. Even if respite stays in care are not feasible, building in opportunities for visits or meals in their old units would provide youth leaving care with an experience of continuity and back up.
5. An emphasis on building strong peer connections among cohorts of youth leaving care is essential. Not only can it compensate for the lack of family support, it utilizes a natural resource without necessitating additional funding or major changes in programs.
6. Expectations for youth leaving care must be reevaluated. Front line workers, managers, and the youth themselves need to understand that the transition to independent living is a normative crisis, which, like other developmental turning points, will disrupt the individual's current level of functioning (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Adaptation to living on one's own takes time and support, but with support, the initial instability can evolve into a period of increased adaptation.

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NEXUS

Mark Krueger

Nexus: A connection, link. A connected group or series. A spaghetti bowl of themes in the literature about youth work praxis. Also the name of a fictitious agency for youth.

Six teenage boys and girls and two youth workers in the Nexus transitional living group home are getting ready for dinner. They are wrapping up their activities (reading magazines, playing with their technology gadgets, conversing, listening to tunes, etc). Before this time, they were in school and then walked, took a bus, got a ride from a friend, or rode a bike to the group home. Now they are going to dinner where they will be nourished with food made by a youth and worker who are on the schedule to make dinner tonight: tacos. Two youths with jobs after school will arrive a little later. The food will be kept warm for them.

The smells of dinner, sounds of youth's voices, their music, their pictures, posters and paintings on the walls, the colors selected for the rooms, all suggest this is their home, a place where they can connect, discover, and become empowered as they live and work together during this very significant period of their lives.

They are a diverse group of workers and youth and the menu of food and activities reflects this. They will sit down together and have a conversation about school while they eat, and perhaps foreshadow the evening activities: homework, swimming, shopping. Their connections with one another will be strengthened in moments of empathy, humor, and listening as they practice their social skills around the dinner table.

The belief at Nexus is that youth need an opportunity to have a fulfilling adolescence as they make the transition to independence. Skills and attitudes are learned and acquired in a relational atmosphere where connections and discoveries are made in the process of daily transitions and activities. These moments become part of the youth's stories that will help them form new connections, solve problems, and care for others in the future.

If the youth who live there can experience their youth with caring adults, they are more likely to become responsible, independent, caring adults themselves. They are also more likely to form the new, healthy connections that are so crucial to their sustained success. The focus is on being *in* youth *with* youth.

Like the staff of most independent or transitional living programs, the workers at Nexus have identified specific outcomes for the youth. Unlike some programs, however, the emphasis at Nexus is on the process of achieving these outcomes. Youth, you could say, are the ends rather than the means to success. You have to be in it before you can carry it with you into the next phase of development.

They sit down together at the dinner table. A youth and worker bring in the "makings" for tacos. Bowls are passed from one hungry youth to another. In an environment of human warmth and presence, the conversation about the day at school and the evening to follow begins…

PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED IN THE LAST 25 YEARS?

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In 1986, those in the field of child welfare were just beginning to recognize its responsibility for the youth who had, in essence, grown-up as wards of the state. In that year, Public Law 99-272 provided the first federal funding to states for the purpose of preparing 16, 17, and 18 year olds for the day when they would no longer be able to remain in foster care. The funding was modest, limited in scope, and authorized for only two years. Many professionals, at the time, never expected it to continue beyond the two year period.

Largely due to the advocacy efforts of both youth and adults, the funding not only continued, but new laws were enacted to expand services to youth transitioning from care. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 extended services to the 18-21 year old emancipated youth and allowed states to use up to 30% of their funds to assist with housing for this same group. In 2001, the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) was created, providing up to $5,000 of financial support for current and former foster youth to attend post-secondary education. Students in good standing can continue their education until the age of 23. The most recent legislation, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, offers federal financial support to states that extend foster care until age 21.

The focus of the last 25 years has been on building an infrastructure and creating an array of services to assist young people in making successful transitions to adulthood. Less headway has been made in evaluating the short-term impact of services or long-term youth outcomes. Mark Courtney's Midwest Study is a notable exception, but even this study looks at outcomes for a limited number of youth in a three-state area. In spite of the lack of empirical evidence about what works with older youth, there is still significant anecdotal information and practical knowledge. This article presents the author's key learnings from the last 25 years of working with transition age youth.

Lessons Learned

Preparation for Adulthood Requires Both Life Skill Development and Permanent Connections

Over the last 25 years, professionals have debated the primary focus for working with older youth in foster care. Should the goal be preparation for independent living? Or, should the goal be placement with a permanent family?

We have learned that goal selection should not be an "either/or" situation. Old-

er youth need to focus on both goals simultaneously. They need to acquire the skills to prepare for adulthood, and at the same time, they need the permanency provided by family and friends.

Does permanency for older youth look the same as it does for younger children? If you ask youth, you will find that it does not. The young people with whom we work see permanency less as a place to live and more as a relationship. Youth have defined permanency as having the key to the house, knowing your side of the church will be filled when you get married, having someone to come home to when you have fulfilled your military service, having grandparents for your children, and even knowing where you will be buried. Permanency for older youth means having life-long connections.

And for some young people, permanency does mean adoption. Having a legal relationship with a family is so important to some young people that they will pursue it even after leaving care. Although not allowed in every state, adult adoptions are being sought by many young people who did not consider it an option while in foster care or for whom difficulties with the termination of parental rights make it impossible.

For older youth, permanency also means maintaining contact and strengthening relationships with their siblings. Young people have taught us that siblings really count. They want to be placed with them. If that is not possible, they want to know where they are, that they are okay. They want to talk to them and see them on a regular basis. They want to participate in the planning sessions where decisions are made about their brothers and sisters. Sibling connections are so important that the Youth Leadership Advocacy Team in Maine has successfully advocated for sibling legislative and policy change.

Youth Must be Fully Engaged, Not Only at the Individual Case Level but Also at the Program Level

Probably one of the most important lessons learned is that youth can be their own best advocates and our greatest partners in case planning and program improvement. For the adults, myself included, the lessons around youth engagement are sometimes painfully enlightening.

I (Dorothy) can remember my first weekend youth retreat. We were so concerned about how little time we had and how much information needed to be covered that we packed the agenda with non-stop life skills instruction. By about 2:00 on Saturday afternoon, the youth were in rebellion. They were done. They wanted to spend the rest of their time together doing something fun. On the spot, we negotiated a new agenda that blended fun with learning. Everyone went home feeling empowered. I can assure you the next retreat was very different.

When this work began, life skills training and preparation for adulthood activities were designed by adults based on what adults thought youth needed to know to be ready by 18. There are several flaws with this concept, the first of which is that

very few youth are really ready by 18. Secondly, when adults plan for youth instead of with youth, youth have little ownership or commitment to the plan. In this situation, it is not surprising that youth take little interest in the plans or the services we have created for them.

When we reach out to work with youth, we find that at least some young people are very interested in working with us. In recent years, the phrase "nothing about us, without us" has become the mantra for many youth leaders, and it has also made its way into at least one child welfare practice framework. For the practitioner, this means that assessments should not be completed without youth involvement, and case plans should not be developed without youth present and fully engaged. At the program design level, it is a good reminder that we should never attempt to design programs and services for youth but rather with youth.

Youth offer a unique perspective of the child welfare system and are natural partners in evaluative activities such as the Child and Family Service Review. Youth have vested interests in improving services. They are concerned not just for themselves but for their younger siblings who may also be in out-of-home care.

Youth Need to be Prepared to Participate Fully

We have also learned that just "inviting youth to the table" is not enough. They need knowledge, information, and sometimes, training to be able to fully contribute and participate in meetings. They need to learn the "rules of the game." They need to learn the concept of "strategic sharing" so that their foster care experience can be safely put to work for a meaningful purpose.

With preparation and support, youth have demonstrated that they can conduct their own case planning sessions, find solutions to systemic problems, design policy, and train staff. The Youth Circles in Hawaii and the Dream Team Project in Iowa are two excellent examples of youth driven planning processes. The Kansas Youth Advisory Board has proven that they can partner with the state child welfare agency to solve concerns related to home visitation.

Learning Life Skills Takes Place Over Time, Occurs in Many Ways, Often on a Need-to-Know Basis

Preparing youth for meaningful participation in the events and activities that affect their lives is one aspect of life skill instruction. There are many others including job skills, money management, interpersonal relationship skills, and problem solving.

In spite of the initial Federal legislation limiting the age at which we began working with youth, we know that life skills learning does not begin at age 16 nor does it end at age 18. We start learning life skills the minute we are born and continue to do so throughout our lifetime.

We have learned that life skills are developed by observing, listening, questioning, and practicing in both formal and informal settings. Therefore we must look at

all the opportunities for our youth to learn important life skills in the foster home or group home, in school, through participation in extracurricular activities and community groups, and through special programs created by the social service agencies. And, we must ask ourselves,"What are our youth observing and hearing? Are there really opportunities to ask questions and to practice?" If we don't like the answers to those questions, then we must take a hard look at how we are facilitating our youth's life skills development.

We have learned that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to life skills instruction. Rather than working from a standardized curriculum, it is far better to be guided by an agreed upon range of life skills competencies. It is also better to involve the youth in determining what gets taught when.

We have also learned that it is more important to focus on what youth are learning rather than what we are teaching. Programs usually keep records about what is being taught in life skills sessions. Rarely do they note what youth can actually do as a result of instruction. Only when you know what young people are learning can you effectively change your approach to teaching.

The evaluation of life skills instruction does not have to be arduous. It can be imbedded in experiential activities and take place in ongoing regular discussions with the youth. When young people have the opportunity to reflect on an experience, they are more likely to have an appreciation of what they have accomplished.

Culture and context is an important component of the work. Young people need to have the opportunity to learn life skills from someone who understands their culture and knows their hopes and dreams for the future. It is hard to know how to keep someone safe, if you never see or understand the potential danger. Life skills instruction also needs to be culturally relevant to the youth. The skills that youth need to live and work in rural Oklahoma are very different from what youth need in Washington, DC.

We have learned that group experiences can be powerful and provide opportunities for youth to learn from each other. Somehow over the last 25 years, life skills groups have morphed into life skills classes. The concept of a life skill class should be reexamined. Classes generally do not provide experiential learning opportunities, are viewed by youth as an extension of school, and do not engage the primary caregiver in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, groups in which youth are contributing to the learning experience produce a higher level of youth commitment. Service learning projects and youth advisory boards are excellent examples of group experiences that encourage youth to learn and to practice important life skills. At the same time, they work towards the achievement of group goals of which they can be proud.

Neither you nor your youth are finished with life skills learning after a single set of group sessions. It may take many learning experiences before a skill is mastered. Think of how long it took you to learn how to use your cell phone.

Preparing Young People for Adulthood is a Responsibility of the Entire Community

Over the last 25 years, we have learned just how complicated it is to transition to adulthood. It involves the negotiation of many systems, each with its own requirements, procedures, and language. Finding housing, enrolling in school, locating employment, managing health care needs, and arranging transportation are challenges that all youth face. The challenge is greater when a youth lacks the social, emotional, financial support of families, or caring adults; when a youth is recovering from trauma and managing the setbacks created by abuse and neglect; and when a young person is parenting their children alone. These youth deserve the collaborative efforts of caring professionals in multiple systems to make successful transitions to adulthood.

No individual or organization has either the capacity or the total responsibility for helping youth transition to adulthood. It takes the entire community--the schools, the employers, the landlords, the health care providers, the courts, the human service agencies, the faith-based organizations, the service organizations, and many others. Everyone in the community has a stake in how successful youth are in life.

We have also learned that collaboration is not easy. It involves a shared vision for youth, a commitment to open communication, a readiness to coordinate resources, and a willingness to struggle through turf issues. It means working with diverse people from different organizations with the diverse funding streams and diverse organizational missions of those who care about youth. Collaboration is challenging but it is the challenge that policy makers and community leaders must accept if outcomes for youth are to improve.

What Will be Different in 25 Years?

Most of what we know now about what works in preparing youth for adulthood has come from anecdotal information. Twenty years from now, we will have national data. The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) launched in October of 2010 will provide data on preparation for adulthood services and the outcomes for youth who age out of foster care. With NYTD data we will know for first time how our young people are faring at ages 17, 19, and 21. The current focus on evidenced-based practice will require programs to do a better job of collecting, analyzing, and using data to inform their work. Technology will enable states to link data across systems.

Best of all, 25 years from now, the young people that we are partnering with today will be running our organizations and systems. They will bring their personal experiences, their academic achievements, and their commitment to improve outcomes for all young people.

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MATRIX OF THE KEY COMPONENTS IN EACH OF THE ORIGINAL INDEPENDENT LIVING GRANTEE CURRICULA

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It is vital when developing a curriculum to embark on a systematic review of several types of information. Generally, in the Children's Bureau training demonstration grants, the curriculum developers 1) develop an advisory board of members who work with the project team in conducting background research, create an outline of subjects to be covered, write modules, offer exercises, and critique the evaluation tools and final product. These advisory board members usually have expertise that can help the team do a better job than they would alone such as practice experience, knowledge of the literature, knowledge of the training process, how to write curricula, and how to manage the workforce that will be implementing the suggested practices included in the curricula. In addition curriculum developers 2) conduct a review of the literatures that relate to the topic of the training. In this case the relevant literatures included such topics as positive youth development, collaboration with and on behalf of youth, building relationships with youth, and working in a culturally competent way with youth. They 3) collect and review other curricula on the topic and often curricula on a particular topic already exist. These curricula may or may not

be geared towards the new audience, but could have a wealth of good information in them to help in deciding what to include or exclude in a new curriculum. These curricula also can serve as a source of valuable information for the creation of refresher courses, on-line courses, and think pieces to give to workers; 4) study the various ways of laying out a curriculum. There are numerous models of how to write learning objectives, chose or create exercises, incorporate different adult learning styles into the curriculum and write a lesson plan that any trainer could pick up and follow. Once that study has occurred the project team can choose an approach such as 5) conducting focus groups with key constituencies who will be affected by the curriculum including case supervisors, front line workers whom the supervisors oversee, managers who are responsible for the work of the supervisor's teams, and most importantly, the youth that will be served after supervisors and staff are training. Finally, 6) actually synthesizing all of the information from the advisory board, focus groups, research literature, training manuals and curriculum building theories into writing the curriculum manual for both the trainer and the trainees.

Curricula Matrices

The focus of this paper is on the review of other curricula on a topic. Our grant cluster was at an advantage in that 12 grantees before us had created curricula on serving youth aging out of care aimed at front line workers. So, while the audience was different, much of the content would be relevant for our supervisory audiences. Thus, in order to get a handle on the content of these previous curricula ourselves, in a systematic way, and to help our fellow grantees with a product that could aid them in sorting through a massive amount of materials, staff from the University of Iowa and the University of Louisville created a set of matrices that summarized the contents of 10 of the previous 12 curricula into categories that were of interest to the current group of grantees. Two of the curricula (Eastern Michigan and South Carolina) were unavailable. The matrices follow. What is important to know in reading the matrices is that the top row describes the overarching area of interest. We covered four areas based on the RFP including Cultural Competence, Permanent Connection, Collaboration, and Youth Development. The left most column describes the institution that created a curriculum with some notations as to whether or not PowerPoint slides and/or extensive notes are included in the curriculum. The subsequent columns describe the sub-categories of information that were covered (or not) in that institution's curriculum. Comments are added to further explain what the institution did on this topic and key areas of interest. All curricula were and still can be accessed on the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development website at *http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/resources/publications.html.*

Curricula S.W.O.T. Analyses

While the matrices are helpful in getting a quick look at the 10 viable curricula, the review team also wrote extensive notes on each curriculum. The approach used was to conduct a modified S(trengths) W(eaknesses) O(pportunities for ideas) T(raining techniques) S.W.O.T. Analysis for each one. The curricula are critiqued in the order they appear on the matrices above.

Boston University

Strengths: The training is broken down into ten nicely organized modules with clearly defined objectives and time lines. Modules 5 and 6 look at transitioning to independence and offers ideas to encourage youth engagement (i.e. Decide, Obtain, Maintain, Grow—DOMG in Module 6, p.6, DOMG is the concept that Boston College uses in its framework for information gathering and transition planning education). This training hits nicely on all four core principles and sprinkles in conversation boxes of "Youth's Views" on varying topics (usually found in each training Module) while stressing the Positive Youth Development theory (focused on in Module 1, but found throughout regarding how all topics can be applied to PYD).

Weaknesses: Collaborations with community groups and services is not clearly defined, yet provides more of a focus on collaborations between the youth and their worker (Module 5, p.10). Permanent connections are addressed regarding positive social connections and less with creating long-term relationships with helping adults, with minimal attention to maintaining ties to foster and biological families. This training also does not stress the "hard skills" needed for successful transitions. And although youth voices are included, this training is facilitated by professionals.

Opportunities for ideas: This training brings back the ever-useful Eco-Map (Module 7, p.9) to help youth look at current supports and where support may be lacking. The use of case vignettes (Module 6, pp.8-11 and Module 3) are helpful to practice training objectives in the moment, while using the Fish Bowl exercise (Module 7, pp.13-14) allows the opportunity to hear a variety of participant voices in a controlled manner.

Training techniques: Many positive training techniques are used here to reinforce the Boston model including those mentioned above, as well as large and small discussion groups in nearly all Modules, role plays (Module 2, p.4), handouts, flipcharts and small group or individual activities, like the one in Module 2 (p.3) in helping participants recognize the multiple cultural memberships we possess to help us to better understand ourselves and assist our youth in their transition journey.

Table 1: Cultural Competence

Institution	Race	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	SES	Ability	LGBT	Spirit/Relig	Comments
Boston U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Focus placed on many areas of culture, including youth struggling with issues of sexuality and ways to be sensitive to their experiences as well as ethnicity, race, age, etc.
U of Denver	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	"We to Me" is a module on cultural competence identifying major cultures and several subcultures. "Cultural Mix" module teaches participants about the ways culture influences transitioning youth.
Fordham U	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Cultural competence focuses on the use of "isms" in society and to raise consciousness and sensitivity to the "isms".
U Kansas - ***N**	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Culture is not discussed. Age is mentioned as point in time when things should occur.
U of Southern Maine - **N**	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Culture is only mentioned in terms of youth identity.
U of North Carolina - **N**	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Culture is not discussed in these terms. Curriculum looks at culture as a societal force not the make-up of the youth.
U of Oklahoma, NRCYS - *N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Cultural competence focuses on Native Americans with a special emphasis on embracing tribal traditions. Discusses elder-youth mentoring, but no age-specific issues.
San Diego State U - ***N**	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Cultural component in this training addresses all major issues from a youth point of view (p. 47-58) in a Mezzo context.
San Francisco State U	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Includes competency training for LGBT populations. Module on challenging values on p. 85-89. Categorizes people into groups of "privilege" and "underprivileged" (p. 96-97).
SUNY - *	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	No discussions of cultural competence in this training–brief look at sexuality and discovery.

Race/Ethnicity *- addresses bias related to race/ethnicity and/or how to work with youth of different backgrounds*
SES *- addresses differences in socio-economic issues*
Age *- addresses bias related to age*
Gender *- addresses bias related to gender*
SES *- trains on information regarding socio-economic status and biases in SES*
Ability *- addresses working with youth of varying ability/disability*
LGBT *- addresses issues youth are dealing with regarding sexuality*
Spirit/Relig *- addresses issues related to spirituality and religion*
** = PowerPoint electronically available* ***N*** *= Detailed notes are available*

Table 2: Permanent Connection

Institution	Current Support	Reconnect to Family	Connect to Foster Family	New Connections	Comments
Boston U	Y	N	N	Y	These issues are briefly touched on, but more focus on positive social supports with less focus on long term permanent connection.
U of Denver	Y	Y	Y	Y	Trains on minimizing negative connections while maximizing the positives and how to assess the quality of connections.
Fordham U	Y	N	N	N	Very little is added in this training about creating and maintaining permanent connections.
U of Kansas - *	Y	Y	Y	Y	Builds upon relationship with worker and foster parents strongly but does discuss how to reconnect with biological family.
U of Southern-Maine - N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Describes the importance of connectedness in maintaining sense of identity.
U of North Carolina - N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Session 7 deals with connections as positive youth development. Also Handout 2b discusses positive support relationships.
U of Oklahoma, NRCYS - *N	Y	Y	Y	Y	These are discussed in Section 5, "Four Core Principles," and integrated throughout other sections, but not a specific training module.
San Diego State U - *N	Y	Y	Y	Y	On a Micro level, looks at supports on the personal, community and societal levels.
San Francisco State U	Y	Y	Y	N	Doesn't address permanency specifically. Connections are talked about and discussed, but no emphasis placed on how to use them or how to make connections.
SUNY - *	Y	Y	Y	Y	Dedication of most of Module 3 to recruiting and sustaining support systems including pulling together LifePaks.

Current Support: *addresses the issue of what supports are currently in place to assist in youth transition*
Reconnect to Family: *addresses youth desire/plan to reconnect with biological family while transitioning to IL*
Connect to Foster Family: *addresses how youth can maintain connections with foster family while transitioning to IL*
New Connections: *addresses how to recruit and sustain new supports before/during/after transitioning to IL*
***** *= PowerPoint electronically available* ***N*** *= Detailed notes are available*

Table 3: Collaboration

Institution	Agency	Use of Other Youth	Community Involveent	Life Information	Safety Net	Policy	Comments
Boston U	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Looks at collaborations between worker and youth to help with the engagement and empowerment process.
U of Denver	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	"Between Teens" is a module that identifies teens with special needs and uses case studies to engage participants in thinking about formal and informal resources and partnerships. Community involvement is limited to a directory of resources available to youth and their workers.
Fordham U	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	These issues are sprinkled throughout, but no set focus on collaborations with others.
U of Kansas - *	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Curriculum provides areas of collaboration, though this is not one of the stronger areas.
U of Southern-Maine - N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Curriculum provides workers with ways to collaborate with youth and vice versa.
U of North Carolina - N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Session 7 builds on the importance of community partners and resources.
U of Oklahoma, NRCYS - *N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	"Assessing Community and Tribal Resources" (p. 137-139): Explores formal (agency) and informal resources. Discusses ICWA policy at length.
San Diego State U - *N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Collaborative efforts are outlined mainly in p. 32-38 and video clips of youth's views show how this training makes collaboration work well.
San Francisco State U	Y	Y	N	N	N	?	Content was developed cooperatively with foster youth and intended to be delivered by youth. Policy advocacy is addressed, but no specific policies are included in the content. Includes handouts that describe the services and eligibility criteria of local programs, such as WIC, Head Start, TANF, etc. (p. 109-114).
SUNY - *	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Use of Eco-Maps and positive examples of using youth as partners in the Youth Development approach in Modules 2 and 3.

Agency: *addresses ways youth can collaborate within agency and with other agencies in the community*
Life Information: *addresses how to obtain pieces of information youth will need during and after a transition*
Use of Other Youth: *addresses ways youth can look to other youth for support and guidance for support*
Safety Net: *addresses ways youth can create a contingency plan among resources and important people in their lives for support*
Community Involvement: *addresses ways youth can become involved in their communities to help meet their needs during/after a transition*
Policy: *addresses ways state/federal government has changed due to advocacy and/or ways youth can promote policy change*
***** *= PowerPoint electronically available* ***N*** *= Detailed notes are available*

Table 4: Youth Development

Institution	Life Skills (i.e. budgeting, shopping)	Social Skills (i.e. relationship building)	Role Plays	Advocacy	Attitude	Substance Abuse	Special Program Modules	Transition Planning	Engagement Strategies	Comments
Boston U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Uses Decide, Obtain, Maintain, Grow – (DOMG) framework to provide steps to guide thinking, planning and action toward a successful transition.
U of Denver	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Social skills are taught in the Emotional Intelligence curriculum. Heavy focus on decision-making and managing risks.
Fordham U	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	These functions are looked at in a general overview throughout, a very good Module on Adolescent Sexual Development.
U of Kansas - *	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Does not mention substance abuse. Mentions advocacy but does not provide skills.
U of Southern Maine - N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	In terms of skills, focus was on communication skills of both youth and workers.
U of North Carolina - N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Matrix is provided showing what youth need and strategies to achieve.
U of Oklahoma, NRCYS - *N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Uses "tangible" for Life Skills and "intangible" for Social Skills.
San Diego State U - *N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Although lacking a focus on substance abuse issues, youth development issues are discussed throughout the training at all levels – Macro, Mezzo and Micro.
San Francisco State U	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Utilizes role-plays throughout the curriculum. Each module demonstrates unique engagement strategies, emphasizing "teachable moments".
SUNY - *	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Emphasis here is on Assessment of Needs (module 1), and using a strengths-based approach in working with high-risk youth.

Life Skills: *addresses the hard or "tangible" skills youth should possess prior to emancipation (ex. budgeting, how to interview, how to buy healthy food, etc)*

Social Skills: *addresses soft or "intangible" skills youth need to possess prior to emancipation (ex. problem-solving skills, social skills, anger management, etc)*

Role Plays: *are role-plays offered to assist youth in understanding "real life" and/or are role-plays offered to help workers understand what transitions are like for youth*

Advocacy: *addresses if the training promotes self-advocacy or advocacy for foster youth in a broader text*

Attitude: *discusses how to work with youth who are difficult to work with*

Substance Abuse: *the training addresses substance use/abuse issues*

Transition Planning: *describes a transition plan or how to create one*

Special Program Modules: *other issues that may be given special attention*

Engagement Strategies: *discusses how to encourage youth involvement in their own lives*

***** *= PowerPoint electronically available* ***N*** *= Detailed notes are available*

University of Denver

Strengths: This curriculum identifies and utilizes existing resources from other organizations. They include ordering or bibliographical information to make it easier to obtain the same resources (i.e., videotapes). Each module contains handouts, PowerPoints, and detailed trainer's notes. Unique to this curriculum is a module specifically for training professionals about youth who are differently-abled, but do not meet the disability criteria. Each module contains helpful role-plays, scenarios, and group activities.

Weaknesses: The curriculum does not include ideas for engaging youth in their transition planning, nor does it address attitudes and advocacy issues. Nearly all of the curriculum is focused on what social workers do, or behavior of social workers, in relation to how their actions may influence the youth they work with.

Opportunities for ideas: "We to Me" is designed to get participants to think about how culture influences youth learning independent skills. Knowledge tests accompany each module. The "*Cultural Mix*" module has several case scenarios and role-play skits. Section III of "*Planning in Advance*" module refers to using a video developed by Eastern Michigan University under the same grant (Section III, p.2). Section IV of "*Planning in Advance*" module refers to a video about youth speaking on the loneliness of being emancipated without permanency and the importance of youth to have connections. The film was developed by the Casey Foundation and the state of Colorado (Section IV, p.2). A detailed description of how youth with special needs respond to help can be found on pp.9-13 of "*Between Teens*" module. "*In Our Own Voices: Foster Youth Tell of Life in Care*" video referred to in "*Problems Solvers*" module on p.6. The video has 10 digital stories developed by foster youth, of which two are integrated into the curriculum. "What do we know about youth mental health and substance use" quiz about research findings is found on p.3 of that module.

Training techniques: Handout I-is a group activity to be used as an ice-breaker for introducing cultural competence. Handout I-e can be read as a skit for a large group activity to explore spirituality and religion as part of cultural competence. Handout I-g describes the stages of Cultural Sensitivity. Handout II-a trains on ethnographic interviewing in child welfare. "*Planning in Advance*" module trains on emotional intelligence (section II). Section IV of this module trains on connections. Substance abuse and mental health training is synthesized and included in the "*Youth as Problem Solvers*" module.

Fordham University

Strengths: Although this training is facilitated by professionals, it notes having had collaborative youth involvement to help create this training to represent the youth voice. In Box 1, #11 Fordham provides a great chart looking at adolescent development of physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and moral as well as the tasks, attitudes and behaviors associated with that as well as the impact of foster care on this development. Also provided is an exercise to help us see that looks can be

deceiving (Box 3, #3). Fordham offers a module on adolescent sexuality and sexual development which can be found in Box 2. In Box 4 we find some nice assessment tools and #6 outlines the S.M.A.R.T. goals for creating challenging but attainable personal goals for youth.

Weaknesses: Greater attention to organizing this training could have been useful as well as bringing a clearer focus to the cultural competency piece. Although cultural competence is mentioned and tended to, there is not a good deal of information there. Another struggle is with the lack of planning for permanent connections for greater support and well-being.

Opportunities for training: The "Choosing Partners" exercise in Box 3, #3 is a great exercise to help you see where your own biases may lie and an activity entitled "Myth or Fact" in Box 2, #4 is a great exercise for youth to discover that some of what they have been told about sexual development and sexuality may not be as valid as they thought.

Training techniques: The above mentioned activities are both challenging and interesting to add to any training. Many of the other techniques used in this training are handouts and blank worksheets (Box 4 #4) that help to reinforce the material as well as giving the participant tangible resources to take with them and use with youth as appropriate. Another positive training technique used is by turning a common game show into an exercise in reinforcement; Independent Living Jeopardy (Box 1 #15) is a great example of this.

Note: This curriculum is divided up into boxes and then numbered, so you will see notation to reference specific elements in Boxes 1, 2, 3 or 4 and then the number it is designated within that box. For example Box 1, #1 discusses worker competencies.

University of Kansas

Strengths: Curriculum tends to be heavily focused on policy affecting IL youth. Competencies for the training were developed by Kansas youth.

Weaknesses: Training presents many ideas but not enough strategies to achieve goals. Skills are discussed in the last sessions of the curriculum but without procedure. Collaboration is a strong area in this training but needs more detail.

Opportunities for ideas: Ideas would be to mention more of the skills to achieve the goals and competencies presented.

Training techniques: Techniques include lecture and video segments.

University of North Carolina

Strengths: Positive youth development is a strong theme throughout training. Session 7 deals directly with youth development. A matrix is included outlining skills, health, employment support needs for youth, and strategies to achieve.

Weaknesses: Training seems to be too interactive at times without enough information being given to participants. This training needs to be more specific on culture as defining the person not the societal actions.

Opportunities for ideas: More discussion would be helpful. Curriculum presents great ideas but it is unclear that everything is conveyed through the activities.

Training techniques: Video is created by youth, and discussion and activities accompany each session.

The University of Oklahoma, NRCYS

Strengths: Section 12, "Culturally Competent Teaching Strategies" (pp.86-91) focuses largely on how to engage youth in the training of life skills. The curriculum is laid out well and is very organized with a detailed trainer's manual and a second, complimentary participants' manual, which has several worksheets to engage trainees in active learning processes. They used very clear objectives in most sections and tied most sections to a defined competency.

Weaknesses: Advocacy is not clearly linked to training materials, nor is it linked to any of the competencies identified in the content. Its presence, though, can be found in pages 111-115. Permanent Connections are addressed on a global "resources" aspect, rather than establishing a permanent home post emancipation. Independence is emphasized as an investment in the community rather than establishing connections with individuals or creating a support network for future safety nets. They do, however, discuss the influences of past connections. Life information is very subtle and hidden in assessments and goal planning. Safety nets are mentioned, but not specifically trained.

Opportunities for ideas: A "tear-jerker" letter from a child in custody is found in the participant manual's appendix, pages 76-77. The letter is useful in demonstrating what it might be like to transition out of care after a long period of foster care drift. The Module, "*Four Phases of Life Path*" (pp.80-85) are great training ideas when having participants explore culturally-related concepts in the life course of adolescents. The module, "*Naturalistic Inquiry*," (pp.133-136) is a solid beginning step to help youth start thinking about setting goals. Entire sections are devoted to "Indian Child Welfare Act" and "Historic Distrust" (pp.56-66). This information can be useful to integrate into other curricula for inclusion of the Native American race in the development of cultural competence training.

Training techniques: "Minefield" (pp.108-111) is a learning activity that uses role-plays and physical movement to simulate youth navigating the child welfare system. This would be a great activity to bring out barriers to local community services, language and cultural barriers, and other challenges associated with transitioning. Another similar group role-play is found on page 97. Several times throughout the training, the facilitator asks the participants to practice using tools (worksheets) in the manual during the training.

San Diego State University

Strengths: The training is structured by breaking down the issues into three major levels—Macro, Mezzo, and Micro levels. This plays well for coordinating all

areas of need for youth in transition, looking at policy all the way down through making permanent connections for personal support. A wide array of need is covered, yet one does not feel overwhelmed by the broad spectrum due to positive organization. Two binders accompany this main training, one for the participant and one for the trainer. The trainer version has greater details on instructions for activities and also includes "Trainer Tips" for additional information or to help keep moving a discussion along if stuck, while the participant binder has all the needed resources to share with the youth with whom they work. A third binder helps guide participants through a simulation called "Teen Time" which helps workers "walk a day in the life" in another role. Although youth are not the main facilitators of this training, a youth panel is an optional activity and via video clips, a strong youth voice is present throughout the training.

Weaknesses: More attention could be given to the special issues such as substance abuse, mental health and obtaining more of the supports needed to obtain or maintain health in those areas.

Opportunities for training: The use of the simulation "Teen Time" is a great way for workers to put themselves in different roles to help acknowledge how many different players the youth is juggling. The use of the video clips (present throughout the training) is a positive way to infuse a youth voice on varying issues. Another positive use of a case study is introduced to us (initially on page 64 of the trainer binder) and used throughout the training as a tool to look at adolescent development and assessment (p.106 trainer binder) for examples.

Training techniques: If possible to gather a youth panel and prepare them as San Diego did, this can prove to be a great strength for sending a strong message (p.19 participant, p.24 trainer), and again the video clips tell a story in youth's own words as well. Revisiting one case study throughout the training helps to bring familiarity to the case as well as using different skills as one would with their own clients. This training keeps the participants involved by asking for volunteers for group discussions, role-plays (i.e. Teen Time) and reflections on their own work—helps to keep the group tuned in and eager to hear more. Finally, this training ends with a powerful exercise called, "Web of Support" (p.113, trainer) where participants are in a circle and while stating what they commit to do for youth in care they pass around a ball of string or yarn, making a "web of support".

San Francisco State University

Strengths: Chapter 3 describes the 10-step curriculum development process. A 4-step development process is illustrated on page 31 with a helpful debriefing/evaluative worksheet. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on attitudes and values reconstruction. Each unit uses active learning strategies to engage participants in the training and helps participants identify with the youth they serve and the discrimination issues the youth face.

Weaknesses: While the depth of the cultural competence is a strength, the

curriculum is lacking in breadth. There is very little content about teaching policy issues, life skills, and establishing permanency. There is a heavy emphasis on getting participants to identify with what the youth have been though in the past, but little focus on how to help them plan for the future. Most content is past and present focused, and extremely limited in forethought and transitional planning. There is "overkill" on creative teaching and the teaching moments theme. This curriculum is lacking in substantive content on the issues youth face. For example, "Buying Time" skit (p.50-54) seems to be an example of how social workers shut out their clients, but it's not very useful for training supervisors unless you modify the skit to be an interaction between supervisor and supervisee—and then it's not clear what the purpose of doing it is for.

Opportunities for ideas: Includes information on foster youth rights and a glossary of terms at the end of the manual. Samples of youth testimonials are found throughout the curriculum. "*Foster Youth Testimonials*" module (pp.55-62) addresses the effects of labeling youth. A module about story-telling is found on pages 63-67, which engages youth by using life experiences to create teachable moments. The entire curriculum seems to be based on a symbolic-interactionist approach. For example, "*People Hunt*" (pp.90-95) is a module created to develop awareness about the labeling and diagnostic process and its effects on youth.

Training techniques: The communication skills module (pp.68-73) uses a learning activity called "Life™ Cereal Rebate Offer". A module on attitudes impacting social work with youth uses a Treasure Hunt training technique (pp.115-118). "*Super Social Worker*" module (pp.119-121) involves a learning activity where workers diagram their qualities as social workers on a self-portrait. "Recognizing Resources" includes a tool that makes learning about community resources a game (pp.106-107). "Milestones" is a survey tool identifying the transitioning youths' milestones combining a visual and narrative technique (p. 77-78). "What Comes to Mind" is a learning activity asking participants to reflect on stereotypes through word and thought association (pp.140-142). "*Taboo*" is a module that exposes social workers to the challenges of gay foster youth (pp.131-139). Digital storytelling is taught using "mind maps" while viewing video clips (pp.43-47).

University of Southern Maine

Strengths: Advocacy session that described the need and provided strategies. The coaching session was also useful as another way to look at the supports youth need. This training offers many handouts at the end of each session that are useful for participants to take home and use with youth.

Weaknesses: Skill-building was a weaker area. In the coaching session, the importance was placed upon communication skills. This left out many crucial skills needed by youth.

Opportunities for ideas: Improving the weaker areas of training such as culture and skill-building would make this an important knowledge base for positive

youth development among workers.

Training techniques: Techniques include discussion, activities, video, and books.

SUNY

Strengths: This training is broken down into 3 well-organized Modules of PowerPoint slides with explicit steps for introducing the material and has all of the handouts and worksheets available as attachments. A strong focus is on the needs of high-risk youth, using Strengths-Based (Module 1, slide 25) and Youth Development (Module 1, slide 45) approaches for effectively working with youth. Module 2 looks at Substance Abuse and Prochaska's Stages of Change (Module 2, slide 18, plus handouts) which is a great assessment tool when looking at a youth's readiness to change certain behaviors. Module 3 focuses on recruiting and sustaining supports for high risk youth and possible reasons why youth may be resistant and how to work with them in overcoming a fear of connections (Module 3, slides 7-12), while creating contingency plans and safety nets (Module 3, slides 23-31).

Weaknesses: This training lacks any focus on cultural competence and does not provide any of the hard/life skills needed for a positive transition into independent living—unless one decides to use the LifePak in this regard, but specifics are not given here. This training appears to be lacking in teaching "real life" skills youth will need to have to transition to life on their own. The overall focus on this training is how to best support youth while still in care; little attention is given to the actual time of transition and transition readiness.

Opportunities for training: One activity seemed to stand above the rest. In Module 3, slide 32 participants completed a resource activity; dividing up the group into 4 and putting paper around the room with different needs (ex. mental health, substance abuse, sexuality, violence—or other pertinent needs) and the participants create a resource list that can later be helpful to youth as well as their workers—a collaborative effort in discovering resources in the area. Another great idea to help participants know what it feels like to move from different foster families and even from foster care into independent living is an activity called "Independent Living Human Machine" (Module 1, slide 17).

Training techniques: SUNY offers a pre- and post-test as a way for both participants and trainers to assess the effectiveness of the training in terms of gaining knowledge, but this is an optional inclusion. Many worksheets and handouts can be found in the attachment for each module as well as activities like those mentioned above. A "Reframing" activity (Module 1, slide 30) looks at taking statements or phrases we might use and, with a partner, make those statements more neutral or positive. They use a case example and have the trainers perform a skit with a review (Module 2, slide 19). Use of Eco-Maps (Module 3, slide 5, 6), safety net, and a "Minefield" exercise (Module 3, slide 29) where one participate acts as a youth trying to make their way to self-sufficiency while dealing with obstacles along the way.

Finally, use of the LifePaks that youth take the lead in creating and have something tangible to take with them upon aging out.

Note: This training is divided into Modules according to the PowerPoint, so rather than referencing page numbers, this will refer to the module and the PowerPoint slide where you can find additional information.

Value of Analyses

The matrices and SWOT analyses were used by our project teams to help in the creation of our supervisory training. It would have been ideal to add to this matrix the findings from the grantee training evaluations to show if there was any evidence that the content and delivery methods utilized were a) helpful in creating positive trainee reactions, particularly in the form of seeing the training as useful (c.f., Antle et al., in press), b) helpful in increasing learning from before to after the training (c.f., Sullivan, Antle, & Barbee, 2009), especially as compared to a control group, c) helpful in facilitating learning transfer from the classroom to the field (c.f., Antle, Barbee, & van Zyl, 2008, Antle, Christensen, Barbee, & Martin, 2008) and d) helpful in making a difference in the lives of the clients of the workers who participated in the training as opposed to those who were served by workers who did not participate in the training (c.f., Antle et al., in press). The next article in this special issue will address the efficacy of these trainings, but unfortunately, the data were not available at the time our teams were gathering information in order to write our own curricula. One implication of this is that the Children's Bureau should encourage firms like James Bell Associates who have the contract to oversee a set of discretionary grants to create, at the conclusion of the granting period, a document that focuses on this type of critique of the curricula and include a section on evaluation results for each curricula in the SWOT analysis. That way, other states that are trying to discern which curriculum is best to adopt in their states can have the information necessary to choose wisely.

This information was particularly important for the curricula development in Kentucky because the goal was to train supervisors with their teams so that these supervisors could assess the strengths and concerns for their workers and serve as both trainees and mentors during the actual training (Antle, Barbee, & van Zyl, 2008). That way our project was able to train supervisors and front line workers as well as other partners (foster parents, private child care providers serving youth aging out of care, and community partners).

We hope in publishing this critique that it will serve as a tool for a) critiquing other curricula for the benefit of creating a new one, b) critiquing one's own curricula, c) external training evaluators to use as a part of the overall evaluation process (Antle, Barbee, & van Zyl, 2008) and d) summarizing curricula content as a part of Children's Bureau marketing efforts.

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ASSESSING TRAINING OUTCOMES: FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF CHILD WELFARE TRAINING GRANTS

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Introduction

Training of child welfare workers is a core technology aimed at improving services for children and families, and therefore, their outcomes. Despite the extensive federal, state and local resources devoted to child welfare training, this field has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. The fields of child welfare practice and training delivery have both become highly aware of the need for better evaluations to demonstrate outcomes as well as to improve practice. Yet, numerous challenges remain.

Reports of training evaluations in the literature are typically about specific training interventions (Freeman & Morris, 1999; Saunders & Anderson, 2000) and generally have small sample sizes, although a few larger evaluations (with sample sizes greater than 100) are reported (Leung & Cheung, 1998; Jones, Packard, & Nahrstedt, 2002; Mills & Yoshihama, 2002). Challenges in the measurement of skill development and transfer of skills to the work setting are frequently noted difficulties in the training evaluation literature. Common findings from studies suggest that transfer of training is enhanced when trainees are given the opportunity to practice the skill and receive feedback about their performance within the work setting (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). Thus, good supervision is central to performing learned skills in the work setting. The findings of these reviews are applicable to child welfare training; the few studies that have specifically addressed the transfer of training within child welfare systems have generated similar results (Curry, Caplan, & Knuppel, 1994; Gregoire, Propp, & Poertner, 1998; Antle & Barbee, 2003).

In 2003, the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funded Boston University School of Social Work to conduct the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. This national training evaluation project was the first known attempt to evaluate child welfare training beyond individual projects. It focused on a cluster of nine projects with the same basic focus—training workers to help youth with the transition from care—but that occurred in different contexts and with different training methodologies.

Other articles from the National Evaluation project have reported on the context of the training within child welfare service delivery (Collins, Amodeo, & Clay, 2007a), the conceptualization of training (Collins, Amodeo, & Clay, 2008), training delivery (Amodeo, Collins, & Clay, 2008), and youth involvement in training projects (Clay, Amodeo, & Collins, 2008). The focus of this paper is on the evaluations conducted by these training projects and the outcome results reported.

Method

Because training projects were completed or near completion at the time the National Evaluation was funded, a retrospective design was utilized to assess the training projects. The evaluation utilized a multiple case study design; a multiple case study is defined as "empirical inquiry that uses more than a single case in investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984)." After conducting a pilot study at one site in the Summer of 2004, the field period for data collection was from August 2004—December 2004. Table 1 provides information on the data collection activities at each site. These activities included interviews, observations, and review of curricula, videos, reports, and other project products. Sites are denoted in this table and the text by letters (A, B, C, etc.) rather than by the grantee name or location. Additional details of the evaluation methodology can be found in Collins, Amodeo, and Clay (2007b).

Findings

Process of Conducting Evaluation

Although an evaluation was required by the original Request for Proposals, no parameters for the evaluation design or procedures for conducting the evaluation were specified. Consequently, there was substantial variation in projects' processes of evaluation. In three projects, the evaluation was conducted by an evaluation unit within the same organization as the grantee; in four projects, an outside evaluation consultant was hired for at least part of the project. In two cases, the evaluation was conducted by project staff. This was the Principal Investigator (F) in one case and a combination of staff in the other (A).

The level of integration of the evaluation into the overall project design and implementation was variable; in some cases it was well-integrated, in others partially integrated, and in others it appeared quite separate. At Site C, the integration seemed to be particularly strong. Multiple respondents reported an extensive process of collaboration between the curriculum development/training team and the evaluation unit. This process was reportedly helpful in clarifying the curriculum/training design and ensuring the evaluation matched the project's goals. Conversely, other sites specifically noted that the evaluation was separated from the design of the training project (B, D) and this was believed to be detrimental to useful evaluation.

Table 1: Data Collection Activities/Products Reviewed

	Interviews	Training Observation	Product Reviewed (N)
A	Project director (1), Trainer (1), Representative, grantee org. (1)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (12), Media (1)
B	Project director (1), Trainer (2), Curriculum developer (2), State collaborator (1), Evaluator (1)	7 hrs.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim Reports (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)
C	Project director (3), Trainer (1), Curriculum Developer (2), State Collaborator (2), Evaluator (2), Youth (3), Representative, grantee org. (5)	3 hrs.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (3), Media (3)
D	Project director (1), Trainer (1), Evaluator (1), Youth (2), Representative, grantee org. (3)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)
E	Projector director (1), Trainer (3), State collaborator (2), Evaluator (1), Representative, private child welfare agency (1)	6 hrs.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)
F	Project director (2), State collaborator (3), Representative, child welfare agency (2)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Curriculum (1), Media (5)
G	Project director (1), Trainer (2), Curriculum developer (2), State collaborator (2), Evaluator (1) Representative, grantee org. (1)	50 min.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (6), Media (4)
H	Project director (1), Trainer (1), State collaborator (1), Youth (1), Representative, grantee org. (2)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (3), Media (4)
I	Project director (1), Trainer (2), State collaborator (2), Youth (2), Representative, grantee org. (2)	5.5	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)

There was a wide range of approaches to conducting the evaluation and in some sites there was a more concerted attempt at evaluation than in others. Across all projects, the evaluation that was implemented was different, sometimes highly so, from that which was planned as described in the proposal. Two sites (C, E) seemed to have improved their evaluation strategy over the course of the project. For example, at Site E the evaluation that was conducted initially consisted of a pre-test/post-test developed by project staff that was primarily focused on satisfaction. There were, however, several problems with the original instrument designed by

project staff without evaluator input: it was too long and had too many questions, the language of the questions was problematic, and project staff was unsure what to do with the data. It became clear to the project staff that the instrument did not work, so they eventually hired an outside evaluator to conduct the evaluation. This was considered to be far more successful.

Four sites (D, G, H, I) explicitly stated in their proposal a plan to utilize Kirkpatrick's (1994) four level evaluation model (participant satisfaction, participant knowledge, participant skill, and impact on worker effectiveness and/or client progress). It is well known that evaluation at the higher levels is most challenging to conduct. Sites were ambitious to plan comprehensive evaluations, but all had difficulty implementing evaluation at the higher levels. Each of these four sites attempted to collect follow-up data in an effort to measure worker effectiveness and/or client progress but there were several challenges to follow-up assessments. These included dependency on the public agency to contact trainees at follow-up, to secure a control group, and to collect data regarding performance or impact. Other reasons given for scaling back the scope of the original evaluation plan included: technology problems, project staff transitions, curriculum design changes (i.e., as the curriculum/training were developed this led to changes in the evaluation), and time/budget constraints.

In part because these were all demonstration projects, substantial evaluation activity was devoted to formative evaluation in order to gather feedback needed to improve and finalize the curriculum and training development. In general, less effort was given to outcome evaluation. The efforts that projects gave to outcome evaluation and the methods used were widely disparate. Even within projects, different methods were used at different phases of the project and for different training modules or audiences.

Most projects relied on a standard pre-test/post-test design to evaluate knowledge, attitude, or perceived impact on skill. There was substantial variation on measures. Examples of some of the measures used are described below.

- Two sites utilized retrospective measures (C, E). These types of measures collect data after the training but ask the respondent to reflect on what they knew before they participated in the training (i.e.,"now that you know [specific information], think back to what you did not know before training…").
- Site F developed a competency measure that was used at pre-test and post-test and focused on skill development. Consistent with the content of the training the measure was designed to assess four areas of competency: partnering, strengths-based responding, building youth autonomy, and support building. Three measures were used, each containing case vignettes to assess application of knowledge and attitude.
- At Site I, participants rated five statements on a 5-point scale: I am satisfied with the training; I will incorporate some of what I learned into my work; I

will do a better job because of this training; My agency will support me in using knowledge/skills from this training; Adolescents and their families will benefit from my taking this course. Measurement occurred at post-test and three months follow-up.

The most comprehensive evaluation conducted was at Site C, described in detail below:

Case Highlight: Site C

Part of the explanation for the evaluation sophistication at Site C was because the grantee organization was a Center which had an existing evaluation unit as part of the Center infrastructure. An initial step to the evaluation was the development of an evaluation logic model. This was a combined process (over six months) of involving the evaluation team with the training project team. Following this the evaluators conducted a process evaluation for eight months that involved the completion of reaction forms by training participants and the observation of training by the evaluators. To evaluate outcomes the evaluation utilized a retrospective pre-test/post-test and a three-month follow-up.

The evaluation team produced a detailed evaluation report that was separate from the project final report. The report provided information on three levels of outcomes: reactions; changes in knowledge, skill, attitudes, and intentions; and change in practices. The evaluation report included an overview of the evaluation, the logic model, the instruments, and results. In addition to a reaction questionnaire (used to guide curriculum/training development), two outcome questionnaires were designed. One was administered immediately after the training and one was administered three months after the training. The questionnaires were designed to measure: 1) immediate changes in participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and intentions; and 2) intermediate-term outcomes that involved changes in practices or immediate gains. Because the project developed three different curricula for different audiences, with its own distinct outcomes, three unique sets of outcome instruments were created. Each set contained a retrospective pre-test questionnaire and a follow-up questionnaire. This project also made a concerted effort to conduct a three-month follow up. Still, however, the response rate was disappointing. Details about the outcome evidence are provided in the next section.

The evaluation was not without challenges; the evaluation team identified the following as key challenges to conducting the evaluation: amount of time spent developing the logic model, limited effort to monitor training fidelity, the state budget crisis led to decreased participation in training, and high turnover among training participants which affected follow-up.

Outcomes Evidence

This section provides a summary of outcome data (quantitative information on knowledge, attitude, or skill) provided by the projects. The final reports of the projects were highly variable in the amount of outcome data provided. Two projects

(B, I) provided virtually no outcome data. At the other end of the continuum, Site C had a full separate evaluation report in addition to the project final report.

The Site C project evaluation report provides information on three levels of outcomes: 1) reactions (trainees' reactions to training content, quality of instruction, amount of support they believe they have to implement what is presented in the training, and their overall satisfaction with the training experience); 2) changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and intentions; 3) changes in practices. Evaluation data were collected for all three targets of training (supervisor, caseworker, and youth professionals). Small sample sizes, particularly at follow-up, were problematic for the supervisor and youth professional training. The sample for caseworkers was sufficiently large (n=110) but only 36 percent returned the follow-up survey. For these reasons, evaluation data should be cautiously interpreted.

The evaluators summarized the outcome results as follows. First, the training produced immediate gains in knowledge, skills, and intentions across all three levels of training (e.g., caseworkers, supervisors, youth workers). Second, most immediate gains were maintained, and there was evidence to indicate that caseworkers changed their work-related practices (e.g., in terms of practice, all trainees who responded at follow-up reported using the tools and techniques they learned in the training). Efficacy scores regarding the use of independent living tools and understanding of issues of trauma and loss significantly increased from pre-test to post-test and were maintained at follow-up.

Two other sites (F, H) provided fairly detailed outcome information. These data are summarized below:

- At Site F, the focus of the evaluation was on a series of skills: partnering, strengths-based responding, building youth autonomy, and support building. The final report provides detailed data on these domains for 26 participants. The data suggested that the training was able to produce changes in participants. The strongest area of change was youth-worker partnership and the interpersonal relationship. Uneven gains appear in the area of youth empowerment. There was also some improvement in how the participants worked with support systems.
- At Site H, the final report provided pre-test/post-test and six month follow-up evaluation data. Data were provided on pre-test/post-test (knowledge test and competency assessment) for four cohorts of trainees and for a group of supervisors/managers and one Training of Trainers. Significant gains were recorded for most scores. Data on six month follow-up was provided for 25 participants and indicated positive results.

Evaluation data were provided by four other projects, but the reports were briefer.

- Site E used a retrospective pre-test with trainees. Data were provided for 195 social workers completing the retrospective pre-test. The evaluation tool contained 16 outcome-related questions ranging from a measure of social workers' increasing understanding of "the impact that demonstrated caring, concern, and attention for social workers has on transition age foster youth development" to "the resources available to parenting foster youth." The final report lists the quantitative measure on each of these objectives that suggests change from pre-test to post-test. The conclusion of the evaluation report cautions, however, that there is no evidence that the project changed practices for participating trainees.
- At Site G, the final report provided data on post-test (trainee satisfaction, perceptions of the training's relevance to their work, perceptions of their own learning for each competency area) for ten cohorts of trainees on the core module, two cohorts of trainees on the culture module, and three cohorts of trainees on the mental health and substance abuse module. The evaluation found that many trainees gained substantial knowledge and skills to effectively work with adolescent populations. For example, in the mental health and substance abuse module, 70 percent of trainees got at least 70 percent of items correct in the first two sessions. The grantee conducted a follow-up phone interview for one of the modules—the culture module—to measure trainee's levels of transfer of training. Among 21 trainees who completed the follow-up interview, 53 percent reported that they had not used the learned ethnographic interviewing and 32 percent stated that they had not used the concepts of youth culture subtypes in their work. In contrast, 15 percent reported that they used learned information on cultural groups.
- At Site D, data from a follow-up survey (24% response rate) showed a positive response to the training including a high percentage of respondents reporting (a) use of the skills and tools learned in the training in their work with youth; (b) agreeing that the advocacy material helped them in their work, (c) agreeing that the networking material helped them in their work, and (d) strongly agreeing that the "adolescent development" material helped them in their work.
- At Site A, very limited evaluation data was provided in the final report. For example, evaluation data comparing the pre-test and post-tests demonstrated an overall 65 percent increase in "knowing how to complete a culturally competent life skills assessment" and an overall 72 percent increase in "knowing how to create a culturally congruent plan of transition."

Two sites (B, I) reported no data in their final reports. Efforts at Site I, to collect 3 month follow-up data were unsuccessful. The intent was for trainees to complete

mailed postcards asking follow-up questions. However, project staff did not follow up with the trainers to see whether these instruments were administered. At Site B, measurement of attitudes and knowledge were attempted. But project staff reported that due to the late point at which the evaluators were involved, the technical difficulties involved in the embedded evaluation, and the fact that the curriculum was delivered by some trainers inexperienced with the technology, no usable evaluation data was produced.

Outcomes: Perceptions

Although projects provided limited documented evidence about impact, project personnel and collaborators perceived the projects to be successful in many ways, most prominently in achieving attitude change regarding adolescents. This feedback was reported at all sites. Below is a sampling of the data collected from interviews with project staff and collaborators describing their perceptions of the impact:

- Workers felt a greater sense of self-efficacy in working with high risk youth, a greater appreciation for youth strengths, a greater awareness of the issue of readiness for change, a greater understanding of concepts presented, and a greater sense of how to approach these youth.
- Workers had increased awareness of resources available through the Chafee Independent Living program.
- Trainees stated that they tried something learned in the training and it worked, or that through the training they started thinking of a new direction to try in their work with youth.
- Trainees' comments on the training included statements like "powerful"; "hit home"; "received a blessing"; "I learned something new"; "I made a connection."
- There was a lot of testimony at the training sessions about the impact of the work—this was described as an "emotional shaking up"; "you reminded me that my job is about human beings."
- The training format created shifts in attitudes as the youth development philosophy was implemented; trainees' observations of youth and adults partnering to provide training was an effective way of creating attitudinal change.
- There was a philosophical shift in worker views of youth; involvement in the project was an "extremely positive experience" and the project was "absolutely fascinating."
- Feedback sheets included comments like the "best training ever attended"; training gave fresh ideas and perspectives.

- A respondent from a large private agency commented that although she can't identify the impact on youth with evidence, she "can't imagine how it hasn't helped the youth" as there is "such a direct correlation between a worker's perspective on youth work and youth outcome."
- The training increased youth credibility due to youth involvement in the training and curriculum development; there was a positive response from trainees for including the voices of youth.
- Many workers and community providers took away a more positive view of youth and will be more likely to treat them as resources.

System Effects

Some projects (B, C, E, I) suggested that there was an impact on the systems, primarily child welfare, which will result in better outcomes for youth in the long run. It was primarily suggested that during the time the training was being delivered there were other youth-focused and Independent Living—related efforts in the states and/or counties. It was the combination of activities that may have had an impact on systems that raise attention to the needs of adolescents in child welfare. Illustrative of this perspective was a comment at Site E that in combination with Chafee grants and Independent Living money, the curriculum "continued the ball rolling" to serve youth better. Also, collegial relationships that developed in the course of the project continued. The assumption is all this activity is bound to have an effect on youth in the long term.

Discussion

Reviewing the data regarding the process of conducting evaluation and the outcome evidence reported leads to a number of conclusions and recommendations regarding training evaluation in federally-funded child welfare projects.

All sites were required to conduct an evaluation of their training projects but there was wide variation in how projects attempted this and most conducted more limited evaluation than originally planned. Sites recognized the importance of evaluation but also the substantial difficulties in designing and implementing evaluations, and in the analysis of evaluation data. Review of the processes of conducted evaluations identified the importance of a designated evaluator. When the role is simply one part of that of the Principal Investigator or Project Director it tends to get less attention. The most successfully conducted evaluation was that of Site C in which a full evaluation unit was engaged. Also important was the integration of evaluation with curriculum design and training delivery functions at an early stage in the process. This led to better evaluation.

Projects appeared overly ambitious regarding evaluation design at the proposal stage. The reason for this is uncertain. State agency involvement in evaluation is needed regarding control groups, follow-up, and potential collection of some types

of outcome data (job performance, supervisor evaluation, client outcome). Perhaps projects assumed assistance from the state agency with these tasks only to find reluctance when they attempted to carry them out. Consequently, securing cooperation for the evaluation design should be negotiated at the proposal phase.

The quantitative evaluative data reported by projects was limited. In part, projects appeared to invest more effort in formative evaluation, so that they might improve the training project, rather than outcome evaluation. Given that these were a series of demonstration projects, this seems like a reasonable use of limited evaluation resources. Yet, what lessons can be learned from these projects' efforts to conduct outcome evaluation? Three issues seem paramount.

First, there are the measurement challenges. Few standardized measures exist in child welfare training evaluation and measures typically need to be specific to the type of training being offered. Projects, therefore, tend to design their own. The field needs to invest more effort in developing measurement tools that can be utilized by training evaluators, and to make them available for use. In this way, training evaluations can build on each other and develop a field of knowledge.

Second, the cooperation of state agencies is needed for any type of sophisticated evaluation design, particularly those involving access to control groups, ability to contact workers after training, and to gather certain types of measurement data (e.g., job performance, or observation of skill in the work setting). Projects often planned for such methodological sophistication, but needed to conduct more limited evaluation when difficulties securing agency cooperation arose.

Third, even for these fairly small, intense, and federally-funded projects the evaluation challenges were significant. This suggests even further difficulties are in store for the evaluation of larger-scale efforts, for example, core training, that are so central to child welfare practice. Even the most well-designed evaluation study with full cooperation will have additional challenges when aimed at training a broader workforce. This is especially true for the measurement of skills and competencies which often require in-depth observation rather than paper-and-pencil self-report. Engaging supervisors in the training enterprise, therefore, is essential. Supervisors in the workplace offer the best potential for assessing skills of the trained workforce over the long term.

There was some evidence that the cluster achieved some outcomes over and above those achieved by individual projects. The cluster helped bring more attention to the issues of youth transitioning from foster care and their special needs. Undoubtedly, this led to further efforts such as the supervisory training projects reported in this volume.

Training interventions often serve multiple purposes. Federally-funded projects such as participating in the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants may potentially have substantial, unmeasured, long term benefits in addition to an impact on individual trainees' knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Some of the long term benefits suggested by respondents included: enhanced collaborations that influence program and practice development; institutionalization of training in the

agency setting; or advancements in knowledge development for the field regarding better approaches to training. Although these types of benefits are generally not included in the evaluation of individual training projects they are critically important and need further attention.

Conclusion

Training evaluation efforts for individual projects are typically small in scale. The National Evaluation project, although methodologically limited by its retrospective design, was able to provide a larger scale evaluation than is usually possible. Consequently, findings can provide a richer spotlight to training evaluation efforts. Elevation of attention to training evaluation in child welfare is needed, given that training is a core component of child welfare interventions and it receives significant resources. The data reported here and their discussion aim to foster increased scholarly dialogue about training evaluation.

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SUPERVISORY TRAINING TO ENHANCE PERMANENCY SOLUTIONS: THE MASSACHUSETTS EXPERIENCE

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Project Conceptualization

The Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) was awarded a discretionary grant by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to provide a series of trainings for DSS supervisors to support and promote adolescent permanency. In partnership with the Center for Adoption Research, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, the training series—Supervisory Training to Enhance Permanency Solutions (STEPS)—was developed to enhance supervisory practice in supporting and guiding the efforts of social workers to help youth in foster care achieve permanency and life long connections. Drawing upon lessons learned during a 2000-2003 social worker training partnership between DSS and Boston University School of Social Work (also supported as a demonstration project by ACF), key fundamentals for the STEPS program were identified. The process evaluation from that partnership suggested the need to stress the philosophy and principles of Positive Youth Development (PYD) more than specific skill acquisition. Furthermore, the evaluation revealed that even in a state like Massachusetts which has an Adolescent Outreach Program that is advanced in its adoption of PYD theory and practice, many constituencies (e.g., service providers) who were trained knew little about PYD and how to apply it. The evaluation also highlighted that DSS supervisors stand at a pivotal point in the system; they can be the connection between the individual case worker and the new policy directions and systems change coming from executive management. Therefore, their knowledge of this practice is crucial. Thus, the goal of the STEPS project was to enhance supervisory support in this essential area of service.

In Massachusetts this award was particularly timely; providing youth-focused services based on a sound understanding of PYD was an integral element in numerous initiatives DSS was undertaking as this training program was being implemented. For example, beginning in October 2005, Massachusetts initiated a Breakthrough Series Collaborative focused on Adolescent Permanency (BSCAP). The goal of the Breakthrough Series was to bridge gaps in knowledge and practices

related to permanency and to create immediate positive changes. As a scaffold to the Breakthrough Series, DSS also hosted two one-day forums on issues in adolescent permanency. The first, in collaboration with the Center for Adoption Research at the University of Massachusetts, *"No Place Like A Home"* was designed to be a call to action for solution-focused strategies to work with adolescents and adolescent permanency planning. The day was reflective, interactive, and provided an opportunity for sharing strategies, techniques, and perspectives on adolescent permanency. The second forum focused on 'family finding' and included Kevin Campbell as a guest speaker. The goal of STEPS, in combination with these other efforts initiated by DSS, is to build strength-based practices inclusive of the departmental core values. The six core values are child-centered, family-focused, strength-based, community-based, culturally competent, and committed to continuous learning. As presented to supervisors, this program offers them a strength-based approach to working with their staff and with youth and families to respond to critical needs in service planning. It builds on knowledge and skills that participants already possess and strives to deepen their understanding of the impact of informed strength-based and culturally-sensitive management practice.

Development of Curriculum and Content

A curriculum framework focusing on youth development and adolescent permanency was designed. The overall program goal of STEPS is for supervisors to develop techniques to lead, support, and positively engage social workers in facilitating youths' successful transition to adulthood. Development of the curriculum included conducting a needs assessment, creating an advisory board, designing a curriculum framework, planning the curriculum content, developing complementary material for each curriculum module, and compiling a resource guide that lists providers of strength-based youth services throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Curriculum development was initiated through a needs assessment during which focus groups were held to gather input from DSS managers and staff, DSS-contracted service providers, foster parents, youth currently in foster care, and youth who had recently exited the foster care system. Focus groups were designed to provide information that would inform content development and result in processes that would most effectively implement the proposed training modules and actualize the outlined projected outcomes. Facilitated by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and its partner, the Center for Adoption Research, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, the goal of the focus groups was to identify perceptions, beliefs, and practical realities that influence permanency for adolescents in foster care. The information yielded a broad scope of experiences and perspectives and was indispensable during the design of the modules and in the development of practices that would offer maximum effectiveness for supervisory professional development.

To further enhance the needs assessment results, and to provide ongoing input throughout the life of the project, a STEPS Advisory Board was established to oversee and coach all activities of the project. In addition to key DSS staff and project leaders from the Center for Adoption Research, the Advisory Board consisted of a total of 20 members, representing a diverse constituency of stakeholders: youth currently in foster care, youth formerly in foster care, academic and medical partners, experts who work with youth and families, professionals from the legal community, and community partners such as employment preparation programs.

Based on the input from the focus groups and the advisory board, goals and objectives were outlined for each curriculum module. To maximize supervisors' ability to access this training opportunity, each of the six modules were delivered at five locations across the Commonwealth. Using an emergent design and relying heavily on adult learning theories to plan and develop the curriculum, supervisors' input, resources, and ideas were incorporated into each module. An emergent curriculum design allowed curriculum developers to identify best practices that supervisors are currently using, and promising practices worthy of replication. After each training session, materials produced during the training were compiled for distribution at the next session, making it possible to share participant generated best practices across regions of the state.

Training Content

Content focusing on positive youth development and adolescent permanency was developed based on the fundamental principles and practical implications of PYD. Specific overall training objectives were identified:

- Supervisors will have a holistic perspective about the various needs of youth in care
- Supervisors will learn specific supervisory techniques to engage and support social workers in the management of adolescents in care and their preparation for young adulthood
- Supervisors will have opportunities for ongoing self reflection regarding older youth and their potential for permanent relationships

The six modules of the STEPS training program provide a holistic and comprehensive perspective on adolescents' strengths and needs. Each module addresses a different area critical to adolescent development, life in care, and the implications of permanent relationships. Expert presenters were identified for each module with the final selection of a presenter being based on their ability to speak to strength-based practical management strategies in their area of expertise. In addition to the topic presenters, four of the six modules included a "youth voice" on the topic. Various mediums were used to present the youth voice including a

youth panel, digital stories, and a digital testimonial on one youth's experience in the education system.

Each module consists of a full day (6-hour) session, and is designed to enhance the DSS supervisory practice with respect to specific strategies to engage and support social workers in the management of adolescent care, promotion of permanency, and preparation of adolescents for young adulthood. All modules include a topical presentation, activities to use with staff members, and facilitated discussions. Cultural competency and heightening cultural sensitivity is interwoven into the content of all sessions as opposed to being a stand-alone content component. This strategy encourages participants to think about a youth's multi-faceted identity and the implications for practice in all areas of development presented. The six modules include the following areas of development:

1. Positive Youth Development
2. Building Community Ties and Permanent Connections
3. Collaborating with Education and Workforce Partners
4. Physical and Mental Health Needs of Youth in Care
5. Public Safety and Juvenile Justice
6. Impact on Practice

Expert presenters were engaged for each module to facilitate in-depth discussion of each topic area. Presenters were identified by the project director in collaboration with DSS and the STEPS Advisory Board, and were selected based on direct experience and expertise in each area of development they were invited to address. See Table 1 for the goals and objectives for each module.

The following module summaries highlight the key elements presented in each session.

Module 1: Positive Youth Development.

Knowledge objectives for the first module include understanding the definition of positive youth development as it affects relationships and lifelong family connections. As an introduction to the entire training series, participants discuss key influences on youth development such as community ties, education, vocational learning, work skills and career planning, physical health, sexuality, mental health, juvenile justice, adolescent development across cultural variations, understanding adolescent cultures, and adolescent sexuality. An interactive experience demonstrating society's impressions of adolescents and particularly youth involved in the child welfare system enhances the broad definition of positive youth development.

Table 1: Module Goals and Objectives

Module	Goal	Objectives
1. Positive Youth Development	Supervisors' practice reflects knowledge of developmental and cultural needs of adolescents in foster care via strength-based case management and supervision of caseworkers	1. Supervisors will learn about Positive Youth Development as it relates to youth in care 2. Supervisors will develop strategies to support caseworkers in engaging youth in planning and decision making 3. Supervisors will understand skills young adults need to achieve self sufficiency
2. Community Ties and Life Long Connections	Supervisors and social workers will engage community resources and social networks to support youth in developing relationship skills and life long familial and community connections.	1. Supervisors will understand the importance of permanent connections in supporting youth's successful transition to adulthood 2. Supervisors will learn strategies for identifying youths' personal connections as potential permanency relationships 3. Supervisors will learn strategies to communicate with kin and foster families in planning for youth 4. Supervisors will have an understanding of what resources are available to help youth build the skills needed to achieve self sufficiency
3. Education and Workforce	Supervisors will learn strategies to lead and support social workers' efforts to foster and advocate for youths' educational and vocational skills and attainment.	1. Supervisors will learn about the educational system and its impact on the lives of youth 2. Supervisors will gain a deeper understanding of the significance of continuity of educational programming and its importance in life long outcomes of youth 3. Supervisors will learn how to guide social workers in the successful navigation of educational resources to ensure youth are provided the services needed 4. Supervisors will learn about IDEA and the IEP process to support social workers engaging the educational system on a youth's behalf 5. Supervisors will be informed of post-secondary education opportunities and funding resources 6. Supervisors will have an understanding of what educational/vocational skills young adults need to acquire in order to achieve self sufficiency and how to assess their skill level
4. Physical and Mental Health Needs	Supervisors will obtain a greater understanding of the importance of physical and mental health for youths' successful transition to adulthood and the unique considerations of adolescents in foster care.	1. Supervisors will learn specific physical and mental health needs, as well as the cognitive development of adolescents 2. Supervisors will be sensitive to the necessity of physical and mental well being for young adults' achievement of self-sufficiency 3. Supervisors will build skills for identifying risk behaviors and the need for mental health services 4. Supervisors will understand the unique needs of GLBTQ youth, how to understand and validate their needs, and how to keep them safe 5. Supervisors will be knowledgeable about accessing medical and mental health resources for older youth in care

Table 1: Module Goals and Objectives

Module	Goal	Objectives
5. Public Safety and Juvenile Justice	Supervisors' will support social workers on strength-based management with youth involved in the juvenile justice system	1. Supervisors will become knowledgeable about the juvenile justice system 2. Supervisors will learn how to oversee case management for youth involved with the juvenile justice system 3. Supervisors will learn strategies for managing communication with the juvenile justice system 4. Supervisors will gain knowledge of alternative programs for youth involved with the juvenile justice system
6. Implementing Strength-based Practices	Supervisors will have the opportunity to reflect upon the information and skills acquired in modules one through five and to share thoughts and practical strategies with colleagues about practice implementation	1. Give supervisors an opportunity to share how series has impacted their leadership practice with social workers' management of older youth in care in achieving permanency 2. Provide a community environment to allow supervisors to share and learn from others experiences and strategies for supporting social workers managing older youth in care 3. Provide forum for supervisors to share what issues or barriers impede effective supervisory practice related to permanency planning for older youth in care 4. Identify specific areas of the training that should be revised or expanded in future offerings

Module 2: Building Community Ties and Permanent Connections.

Placing community ties in the context of launching into adulthood, changes in social status and role, and demands as one moves into adulthood, are all themes explored in the second module. Some discussion of resiliency is included, as is the role that physical (e.g., income, inheritance, property); human (i.e., physical development, intellectual development, psychological development, emotional development, social development); and social assets (e.g., connectedness with family, peers, and others) play in a youth's launch into adulthood. An important point explored in the second module is re-engagement with kin families and building a network of community connections for youth in foster care. The role held by professionals in support of changing relationships as youth move into adulthood is examined.

Module 3: Collaborating with Education and Workforce Partners.

Navigating the educational system and understanding the significance of educational continuity are key themes in the third module. Distinctions are drawn between general education supports and special education supports and services. Overviews of the provisions of IDEA and 504 plans are provided. Planning for post-secondary education and workforce preparation is highlighted, as are timelines for key activities as youth prepare for post-secondary education and entrance into the workforce.

Module 4: Physical and Mental Health Needs of Youth in Care.

This session addresses the physical and mental health needs of adolescents in care. Starting from a normative perspective, physical, cognitive, social, sexual, and moral transformations that take place during adolescence are addressed. The presentation includes a discussion of adolescent sexual behavior and sexually transmitted diseases. Adolescent brain development and the impact of trauma on youth are discussed. Working with youth with serious mental health conditions during their transition to adulthood is a key element of this session as well. This element includes a comparison between typical cognitive, moral, sexual, and identity development of young people with that of those who have a mental health condition. An examination of outcomes for youth with mental health conditions with respect to completion of high school, trouble with the law, residing with family, pregnancy, and substance abuse is an important component of this module. Family development and the implications of segregated mental health systems for children and adults are included.

Module 5: Public Safety and Juvenile Justice.

The fifth session examines working with youth involved with juvenile justice system. The expertise of professionals from the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services and The Children and Family Law Program is used to discuss youth engagement across public service agencies. The population of children in the care of Department of Youth Services is reviewed and the session includes discussion of family, school, and individual risk factors. Additionally, protective elements such as family, community, school, and peers are discussed. Issues relative to youth and the court, including when youth might need an attorney and when youth are entitled to a court appointed attorney are addressed.

Module 6: Impact on Practice.

The final session is a facilitated discussion to weave together the threads of the first five sessions and to consider implications for practice. Facilitated by Casey Family Services, the thrust of this discussion was to identify practice strategies using a holistic approach. During each session offered in Massachusetts, promising practices were generated and shared statewide. In addition, DSS regional directors were invited to attend and participate in these discussions to consider ways to integrate promising practices into existing approaches and to influence policy development.

Addressing attitudes and bias was a significant consideration of the curriculum design. While content knowledge is important, awareness of overt and covert attitudes or bias and its influence on practice was a major consideration and theme throughout all six modules. The STEPS training series was designed to address implicit bias toward older youth in foster care by promoting self reflection and consideration of supervisors' own and others' perceptions of older youth in foster care.

Journals were supplied to all participants to encourage personal reflection and to capture supervisors' impressions and growth, with the intention that their thoughts would be used in the final session in which the discussion centered on the impact of the training on their supervisory practice.

A key thread integrated into all the sessions was an examination of associations and biases that professionals, and society at large, make regarding adolescents and the notion of permanency for adolescents who live in foster care. The entire series offered supervisors an opportunity designed to help them understand the impact of bias on their work with youth and families, while also making it possible for them to build strategies and techniques to help them better manage staff members and acknowledge that such bias may influence practice. Project Implicit and Mahzarin Banaji, Ph.D., of Harvard University worked in collaboration with the Center for Adoption Research to develop an Implicit Association Test (IAT) designed to specifically examine the issue of bias relative to youth for a child welfare audience. This tool provided supervisors with a mechanism to reflect on their unconscious associations toward adolescents and the impact that these associations have upon their practice. Specifically, two tests were developed that highlight implicit bias about older youth and permanency, and older youth and stereotypical negative behaviors. The STEPS program offered a venue to introduce the IAT to an audience of child welfare workers. It appears that this tool holds enormous potential to enhance thinking and practice in adolescent permanency for child welfare workers at all levels.

Supporting Materials

Each participant received a program binder at the first training session they attended. These binders included module materials for the first session. For participants who had not attended from the beginning of the training series, binders contained all previously covered materials. At the beginning of each subsequent training session, attendees were provided with participant generated materials from the previous session and materials for the current module. These materials, including supervisor identified best practices from the previous session, were distributed at each subsequent session to encourage field input and sharing. The binder materials were designed so that upon completion of the six modules, participants would possess a complete set of materials.

A user-friendly binder was designed with labeled dividers to separate the materials for each module covered. Each section included the goals and objectives of the module, a list of key terms and definitions, frequently asked questions, practice tools that were discussed during the module, and related articles. In keeping with an emergent curriculum model, materials were developed as each module was planned and not as an entire entity prior to the start of the project. Materials were designed to allow supervisors to maximize the parallel learning process that was imbedded in the curriculum. That is, materials were included that supervisors could immediately reproduce and use directly with their staff for added support of prom-

ising practices in serving youth. At the end of the STEPS program, multiple copies of the binder were provided to each area office in the Commonwealth so that all supervisors in the state would have direct access to the information.

A STEPS web site was built that includes all materials from all modules–*http://www.steps-umms.org/index.aspx*. In addition to the presentations, handouts for all sessions, and activities to use with staff members, visitors to the website can access lists of best and promising practices, and concerns and barriers that were identified throughout the series. The web site also includes the STEPS Resource Guide that is described later in this article. The STEPS Resource Guide will be available and continuously updated on the web site. A license was obtained to keep the web site active for a minimum of five years to ensure access to all materials going into the future.

Youth Participation

An essential component of this program was youth participation. It would not have been possible to suggest strategies to foster permanency and prepare adolescents for young adulthood without including acknowledgement of youths' own perspectives. To include the youth voice in each training session, various mediums were used. These included a youth panel, digital stories, recorded youth testimonies on experiences in the educational system, and a youth discussion group whose participation consisted of their discussion response to a digital story of a youth's experience while in foster care.

As part of the first module, "*Positive Youth Development*", a youth panel was organized to share their "voices of experience." Panels consisted of two to four youth and a facilitator. Each youth presented his or her story and then responded to questions from the supervisors. Prior to the panel discussion, youth were provided with a list of potential strength-based questions they could anticipate being asked. As a result, youth were quite open about their experiences in foster care and highlighted what supervisors can do to support social workers and their youth clients seeking permanency and preparation for adulthood. One particular issue reported repeatedly by the youth was the importance of maintaining appropriate geographical closeness between siblings, or at a minimum informing youth of where their siblings are and how they can contact them. Another theme frequently mentioned by youth was in regard to their need to participate in their own case planning activities. The facilitator helped connect the youth perspective with theoretical perspectives of positive youth development that could apply to both supervisory and direct practice of social workers.

In the "*Community Ties and Life Long Connections*" module the digital stories, "Telling It Like It Is: Foster Youth and Their Struggle for Permanency," created by the California Permanency for Youth Project were shown to participants. These digital stories document the experiences of ten former foster youth as they searched to find permanent connections. Each viewing was followed by facilitated discussion about

potential opportunities to assist adolescents in attaining permanency that may have been missed by social workers or others involved in the youth's life. Following this discussion, local community agency speakers provided a community perspective on how to initiate and foster conversations to enhance connections.

Youth digital testimonials on their educational experiences while in foster care were shared for the module on "*Education and the Workforce*". One particularly gripping testimony came from that of a girl who had attended 17 different high schools while in foster care. She was unable to receive her high school diploma due to failure of appropriate transfer of credits from school to school. This powerful testimony highlighted the frustration this young woman experienced over the lack of communication between multiple school departments, the Department of Social Services, and other service providers. Even though she was unable to obtain a high school diploma due to inappropriate transfer of credits, she eventually did go back and complete her GED and is now attending community college.

For the concluding module, "*Impact on Practice*", we returned to a youth panel format. The youth shared their perspectives on the need not only to have family connections, but more importantly, they emphasized how critical it is to be involved in their own planning. The supervisors and the youth viewed a digital story together. After the video, staff from Casey Family Services facilitated a discussion on the successes, struggles, and what might have been done differently from the youth's perspective in this particular story.

Challenges were encountered regarding the inclusion of youth throughout the series. Although there are established youth advisory boards throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, many of these same youth have been tapped repeatedly to present at various venues. Recruiting appropriate youth proved to be difficult at times. During the planning stage it was decided that in order to present a broad range of needs and experiences, a variety of adolescent voices and stories would be needed. These volunteer youth met with STEPS training staff prior to module presentations to prepare them for the session. Since these youth were new to the idea of discussing their experiences in foster care before an audience, this preparation session was an opportunity to describe the STEPS training in more detail, the make-up of the audience, and to ease their mind about their participation on the panel and speaking to a group of adults. Youth were encouraged to stay focused on the topic and to understand that this panel was not an opportunity to condemn their social workers to the supervisors. This strategy of preparing the youth ahead of time helped them realize that the panel was a time to offer suggestions on how social workers could better prepare youth for adulthood. All the youth who spoke were forthcoming with suggestions on how to promote permanency and prepare adolescents for adulthood.

Resource Guide

A supplementary strength-based resource guide listing adolescent services and support organizations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was provided to all

Massachusetts Area DSS offices. A central concern during the development of the resource guide was how to make it user-friendly for supervisors, social workers, and most importantly for adolescents exploring resources. Two key issues were identified during early discussions regarding development of the STEPS Resource Guide. One issue was the need to identify an easy-to-use format, and secondly, to decide which youth oriented programs and services should be included. It was decided early on that resources for all DSS regions of Massachusetts would be included in one volume. Previously, the Department had produced region-specific resource guides in which listings were exclusive to a specific region. Because cross-regional placement frequently occurs, it was determined that a state-wide resource with regional sections would be more effective. Thus, any worker placing a youth anywhere in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will have access to strength-based programs for any location in which the youth is placed. The guide is divided into six sections, each representing a region of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. The format for each section is identical and contains categories that delineate specific programming for that region. Strength-based programs that promote and support the needs of adolescents as they prepare to enter adulthood were carefully selected. Categories in each regional section include: education; job training and employment assistance programs; housing opportunities; transportation; basic need services (including food, clothing, and furniture resources); health and wellness programs; recreational, arts, cultural, and leisure programs; gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, and transgender networking; mentoring programs and faith-based institutions.

Barriers and Facilitators Relative to Training Roll Out

On a practical level, the logistics of planning the STEPS program was the major challenge encountered. It was a significant task to identify appropriate space with necessary equipment and catering services for a full-day event in every region. Considerable planning went into the development of an efficient registration system to allow for six different modules at five locations. Breeze© software was used to accommodate this need. Breeze© allowed participants to visit the web site, click on the date and location for which they planned to register, and complete registration online. This system was quite effective; however, it was not flawless, and on-site registrations were also completed at all sessions. During the early planning stages it was envisioned that a cyber café would be made available at each session to allow people to explore the Implicit Association Test (IAT) that had been developed for child welfare professionals as well as additional IATs that have been developed for other professions and for the general public. The cyber café plan required that all locations have simultaneous internet connectivity for multiple laptops to accommodate multiple users in a limited period of time. This plan proved to be logistically impossible. Thus, the final implementation was to make only the two child welfare IATs available, because the only requirement in that case was for each laptop to run the IAT Inquisit© software independently. Thus, no internet access

was required at any session site.

The entire project was implemented as a successful partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Social Services and The Center for Adoption Research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Some regional practice disparities were identified in the course of the series; this opened up the opportunity to discuss various practice models and identify particularly promising practices.

There is no question that a project of this nature could not be undertaken without a good fit of staff. As part of a public medical school, the Center for Adoption Research has access to the many valuable resources of the medical school, including access to expert presenters, space to hold trainings, and consultants to advise on various components of the project. Presenters were drawn from a rich pool of sources including the Departments of Social Work and Education at Salem State College, The Children & Family Law Program, Boston HAPPENS Adolescent clinic at Boston Children's Hospital, Private Consultants, the Department of Psychiatry at University of Massachusetts, the Department of Social Services Administration, and Casey Family Services. Staff from Casey Family Services facilitated the discussion in the final module, "*Implications on Practice*". The collaborative approach of the project added to presenters' enthusiasm and ready willingness to participate. No prospective presenters declined an invitation to participate and for many sessions we were able to select from a number of well-qualified and interested experts. Additionally, a particular advantage the Center for Adoption Research and the project team was a Center staff member whose previous experience included work as a supervisor for the Department of Social Services. The ongoing access to a supervisor's perspectives and insight was invaluable during all phases of the project. Finally, the project could not have been executed without the input of excellent support staff who managed all logistical details and contracts for expert presenters.

Evaluation Plan

A multi-level evaluation approach was designed to measure the impact of the STEPS training program on participants and their supervisory practice. This approach allows the evaluators to collect information about the participants' initial reactions to the training, any overall changes in participants' perceived competence and practice philosophies, and the real-world impact of newly learned supervisory strategies and techniques. The evaluation plan consists of module-specific process evaluations, a pre/post training survey tool, and post-training telephone interviews with supervisors and social workers. Table 2 provides a brief overview of each element of the evaluation, and the status of each element. The following sections provide more detailed information about the evaluation progress to date and anticipated future activities.

Process Evaluation

Process evaluations were collected, summarized, and reviewed by STEPS training leaders throughout the course of the program. The purpose of the process evalu-

ation was to gather feedback about training implementation and facilitation, as well as reaction to specific content areas. Information collected from the process evaluations was used to make adjustments to current and future training modules in an effort to best meet the needs of the participants. The results of the process evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. For example, a vast majority of participants (ranging from 70% to 96%, depending on the specific training module) indicated they would recommend the training to a colleague.

Table 2: STEPS Training Evaluation Components

	Goal To collect information about:	Sample/Sampling Strategy	Status
Process Evaluation (written)	Participants' reaction to content, trainers, and training format Suggestions for future training modules	All participants who attend the training. Survey distributed at the end of each module.	Complete
Pre/Post Training Survey (written)	Relative importance placed on issues of adolescent permanency Frequency of supervision of staff in the area of adolescent permanency Perceived competency level	All participants who attended the training. Surveys distributed at the onset of training, and again at the end of the final module.	Complete
Supervisor Interviews (telephone)	Identification of any changes in supervisory practice Assessment of how STEPS training fits into the bigger picture of adolescent permanency and existing initiatives/ programs	Supervisors who attended all (6) STEPS training modules. A random sample (stratified to represent all five geographic regions) chosen for participation (n=15).	In process
Social Worker Interviews (telephone)	Changes in supervision regarding adolescent permanency Greatest practice challenge in the area of adolescent permanency How can supervisors best support social workers in the area of adolescent permanency	Social workers whose supervisors had the opportunity to participate in STEPS. Participants will be categorized into two groups: one whose supervisors attended all six training modules, and one whose supervisors did not. Total sample will be 50.	Anticipated start date for social worker interviews is August, 2008.

The final process evaluation (Module 6:"*Supervisory Impact on Practice*") included three open ended questions designed to gather participants' feedback regarding information gained, service barriers, and future training needs. Responses to these questions were transcribed and reviewed to identify themes within the data. The major themes are presented below:

1. What were the most valuable things you learned from the STEPS series?

- Hearing the experience of youth during the youth panels

- The importance of permanency/stability to youth
- The need to think outside the box
- That youth need to be involved in their permanency planning
- Provided a great overview of permanency issues

2. In your role as a social work supervisor, what are the greatest barriers you face when addressing the permanency needs of older youth?
   - Lack of resources
   - Staff reluctance
   - Not enough time
   - Office policy/practice (systemic barriers)
   - Caseload size

3. Please identify any future training needs in the area of adolescent permanency.
   - Need to extend this training to social workers
   - Tools for helping achieve youth permanency
   - More teen presentations/panels
   - Mental health issues
   - Legal training

The process evaluation served as a valuable tool throughout the STEPS training. It provided an opportunity for participants to communicate their thoughts/needs to training staff, and allowed the STEPS facilitators to adjust the training appropriately to meet the needs of the DSS supervisors.

Pre/Post Training Survey

The pre-training survey was completed by 106 social work supervisors during the first training module. This represented a 95% response rate (106/111). The survey was designed to gather information about participants' perceived competency in training-related areas, the level of importance they placed on each area, and the frequency with which they addressed these areas during social work supervision. The survey was anonymous, however participants were asked to create a unique ID code in order to match their pre- and post- training surveys for the purpose of data analysis.

Table 3: Description of Paired Sample (n=35)

		n	%
Gender	Female	25	71.4
	Male	10	28.6
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	24	68.6
	Black/African American	5	14.3
	Hispanic/Latino	3	8.6
	Multiracial	2	5.7
	Asian American/Pacific Islander	1	2.9
DSS Supervisor	Yes	33	94.3
	No	2	5.7
How many STEPS Modules did you attend?	All Six Modules	24	68.6
	Five Modules	9	25.7
	Three Modules	2	5.7
Were you encouraged by management to attend STEPS?*	Yes	25	73.5
	No	9	26.5

	mean	range	sd
Age**	45.3	30-59	9.1
Length of Employment**	16.6	0-33	9.3
Length of Supervisory Experience**	7.8	0-26	7.6

* Missing data: n=1 ** Measured in year

The post-training survey was very similar to the pre-training survey and was designed to measure any changes in participants' responses. The post-training survey was completed at the end of Module 6 by 58 participants; representing a 100% response rate (58/58).

All survey data were entered into an SPSS database for analysis. In order to identify any changes in perceived competence, level of importance, and supervisory practice, researchers compared pre-and post-survey results for a matched pair sample (n=35)[1]. While there were considerably more than 35 participants in the STEPS program (average attendance per training module was 76), only data from participants whose pre-and post-training surveys were able to be matched using their ID codes were used for the evaluation purposes. Table 3 presents some demographic information about this sample of training participants.

The majority of sample participants were female, Caucasian, and employed as supervisors for DSS. The length of their supervisory experience ranged from less than one year to 26 years, with an average length of 7.8 years. The majority of sample participants attended all six training modules (68.6%) and felt that management supported their attendance at the training program (73.5%).

On the pre- and post-training survey, participants were asked a series of ques-

1 Not all supervisors who attended Module 1 and completed the Pre-Training Survey attended Module 6 and completed the Post-Training Survey. Therefore, only 35 participants' surveys were matched using their self-created unique ID codes.

tions about their competency levels in 10 areas of supervision[2], the importance they placed on 8 issues of adolescent permanency, and the frequency with which they provided supervision to their staff in these areas of adolescent permanency[3]. Participants responded using 4-5 item Likert scales[4] and changes in responses between the pre- and post-training surveys were identified. These differences in responses were analyzed using Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests.

The results of the data analysis indicate an overall positive trend in evaluation responses. For 96% (25/26) of the survey items, the average response values increased. These results represent positive post-training increases in perceived competency levels, importance placed upon issues of adolescent permanency, and frequency of supervision in these areas. Statistically significant positive value changes were identified in 6/10 of the Competency Level domains ($p<.01$):

1. Supervising workers regarding what contributes to positive youth development

2. Supervising workers regarding the effects of trauma on adolescent development

3. Supervising workers regarding community resources in the communities you serve

4. Supervising workers regarding the unique mental heath needs of foster youth

5. Creating and sustaining a constructive learning environment

6. Supervising workers regarding strategies that enhance permanency focused practice

Supervisor Interviews

A sample of supervisors who attended the entire STEPS series has been invited to participate in a telephone interview about their experience with the training. A total of 15 participants were randomly chosen from an eligible pool who signed

2 Competency domains include issues in the following areas: Positive Youth Development, adolescent development, community resources, mental health, juvenile justice, unit/office performance, practice standards, crisis management, educational environment, and permanency focused practice.

3 Importance and frequency of supervision items included the following areas: Engaging youth in their case plans, transporting youth to appointments/court, advocating for educational needs, addressing mental/physical health needs, assessing relationships with care providers, navigating the juvenile justice system, exploring social opportunities, and searching for resources to support life long relationships.

4 Scales used: Competency (4=Very Competent, 3=Fairly Competent, 2=Somewhat Competent, 1=Not Competent); Importance (4=Very Important, 3=Important, 2=Slightly Important, 1=Not at all Important); Frequency (5=Daily Basis, 4=Weekly Basis, 3=Monthly Basis, 2=Only if there is a Crisis, 1=n/a).

consent forms during the final training module (n=31). This sample was stratified to ensure representation from each of the five geographic regions in which the training was presented. This semi-structured interview is expected to last between 30 and 60 minutes.

Continuation of Project and Material Access

A one-day abbreviated version of the curriculum is being developed to be offered to child welfare programs and allied professionals such as physicians, mental health providers, attorneys, judges, educators, and juvenile justice professionals. This adapted curriculum will be available electronically for professionals to access beyond the life of the grant. It is the hope that this holistic model will begin to stimulate integrated practice across disciplines and help foster a spirit of cooperation in meeting the needs of youth in care.

As previously mentioned, a STEPS web site has been built that includes all materials from all modules—*http://www.steps-umms.org/index.aspx*. In addition to the presentations, handouts for all sessions, and activities to use with staff members, visitors to the website can access lists of best and promising practices and concerns and barriers that were identified throughout the series. The entire strength-based Resource Guide that was developed is also available and will be continuously updated on the web site. As mentioned previously, a license was obtained to keep the web site active for a minimum of five years.

In conclusion, the foresight of the Administration for Children and Families to offer support for the development of leadership in this field provided an opportunity for Massachusetts DSS and the Center for Adoption Research to reflect on the complex and intricate nature of the work of meeting the needs of adolescents in foster care as they strive for permanency. The Massachusetts response to that vision seeks to embed the philosophy and principles of Positive Youth Development (PYD) as opposed to developing exclusively specific skill acquisition. It is hoped, that with time this holistic model will begin to stimulate integrated practice across disciplines and will foster a spirit of cooperation in meeting the needs of youth in care–creating a system of care. Additionally, heightened awareness of overt and covert attitudes or bias and its influence on practice can stimulate reflective consideration of the approaches that can be taken by and with adolescents' cooperation toward securing permanency.

Going forward, all revised and abbreviated versions of this curriculum will continue to encourage strength-based practices across disciplines. In addition, youth voices in this work are critical. It is not possible to suggest strategies to foster permanency and prepare adolescents for young adulthood without acknowledgement of youths' own perspectives.

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PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD– SUPERVISING FOR SUCCESS

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The Preparation for Adulthood–Supervising for Success (PASS) training program was developed by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work, in collaboration with our subcontractor, the National Foster Care Coalition, along with state and city partners the Oregon Department of Human Services, State Office for Services to Children and Families, the New York City Administration for Children's Services and the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children's Services. The state/city partners were chosen in order to develop materials that could be used in diverse settings e.g. state and locally administered systems, rural and urban, as well as state's with a strong child welfare provider community. The goal of the Preparation for Adulthood–Supervising for Success training program was to generate a supervisory training curriculum and on-line transfer of learning guidebook to impart best practices of youth development, youth permanency, and collaborative decision-making, using innovative training strategies that could be duplicated by supervisors during their ongoing supervision. In this way both the content and the strategies of the training transferred directly into the workplace.

Rationale and Conceptualization

The project was proposed in response to an RFP from the Children's Bureau for three key reasons: First, young people (aged 18-21) leaving the foster care sys-

tem have very unsatisfactory outcomes including high rates of homelessness, incarceration and unplanned pregnancy, and low rates of education and employment (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 1998; Nixon, 2005; Reilly, 2003); Second, Title IV-E and John H. Chafee program resources appear not to have had the positive effects expected to ameliorate these poor outcomes (Nixon, 2005); And, third there was an identified need for training to assist child welfare supervisors in understanding youth development (Mallon, 2005).

The project's focus on positive youth development was designed to combat prevailing systemic beliefs against reunification or adoption possibilities for older youth (Mallon, 2005; Nixon, 2005). Training for child welfare supervisors has predominately focused on supervising staff to meet generalized permanency needs while focusing on the family as a whole. Most of the work is still done in the context of family-centered services that build on family strengths and meet family needs. There is limited attention given to assessing problem situations from the youth's perspective and preparing a youth for independence and/or transitioning out of foster care or toward another permanency option.

The purpose of this program was to provide what Nixon (2005) called a "cognitive and practice-related reorientation toward a positive youth development approach that includes an understanding of a young person's needs for family connections and a social network, supplemented by skills and competencies" (p. 573). The program was also developed to focus on strategies for supervising the child welfare worker to identify the specific needs of these youth and to develop a plan for achieving goals to meet those needs regardless of other permanency work being done in the family unit.

Four core principles have been identified as essential in order for adolescent transitional living programs to be successful—positive youth development; collaboration; cultural competence; and the creation of permanent life-time connections (Muskie School of Public Service, 2004). The PASS program was designed to incorporate these four core principles into practice, since it is likely that youth will be more successful when these four principles are honored regardless of the type of services provided. In addition, specialized skills are essential to work effectively with older youth. Mallon (2005) in his book *Toolbox No. 3 Facilitating Permanency for Youth* made the case for the development of these skill sets. Child welfare supervisors need training to understand youth development principles and strategies, to focus on giving young people age-appropriate opportunities to exercise leadership, to build skills, and to become involved in decision-making about their future. Furthermore, direct line staff need assistance from their supervisors about how to effectively engage youth in age appropriate ways as they go about developing youth-focused assessments.

Therefore, the program and its curriculum was developed to ensure that child welfare supervisors work with child welfare workers to understand and utilize a positive youth development philosophy; and to encourage the use of youth-focused, youth directed, assessments, with age-appropriate intervention planning.

Developing the Curriculum

The purpose of the initial phase of the "Preparation for Adulthood–Supervising for Success" project was to develop core perspectives that then informed the development of a training curriculum for child welfare supervisors to facilitate the effective delivery and management of Federal Independent Living Services for Youth in Foster Care. One of the earliest steps in the project was the development of a program logic model that served as both a blueprint for the program activities and for the evaluation (Figure 1). As can be seen from Figure 1, the logic model clearly laid out the feedback loop utilized for curriculum development and design as well as the plans for developing sustainability.

The logic model illustrates that a key first step in the process was to gather data about experiences of success from a range of constituents (supervisors, workers, and young people) using a variety of methodologies, including survey, phone interviews, focus groups and consensus workshops. Data were gathered from all three of the project sites (Mississippi Department of Human Services, New York City Administration for Children's Services, and Oregon Department of Human Services, State Office for Services to Children and Families). A full description of the methodology is available in the evaluation section.

Another key part of the early work was a review of all the preparation of adulthood curricula previously developed during federally funded training projects, as well as those developed by our state and city partners (Fordham University, 2003; Muskie School of Public Service, 2003; The Jordan Institute for Families, 2003). These curricula highlighted strengths-based practices, youth development, and emotional intelligence. Our city partner had developed a framework for practice and supporting worker curriculum, *An Integrated Approach to Working with Youth,* which focused on the intersection of youth development, permanency, and preparation for adulthood skills.

An essential ingredient in this early process was developing relationships with key stakeholders, including a foster care manager and an assistant commissioner, training directors, university partners, and independent living coordinators at our partner sites to foster investment in the project. During the initial visit to each site, we developed core teams that took responsibility for coordination for that location. In our meetings we learned about the various innovative programs they had implemented and used those practices as a foundation for the project framework. In order to insure that different voices were heard we conducted focus groups with child welfare workers, child welfare supervisors and young people who had been involved with the child welfare system. The focus group feedback was then analyzed for key themes.

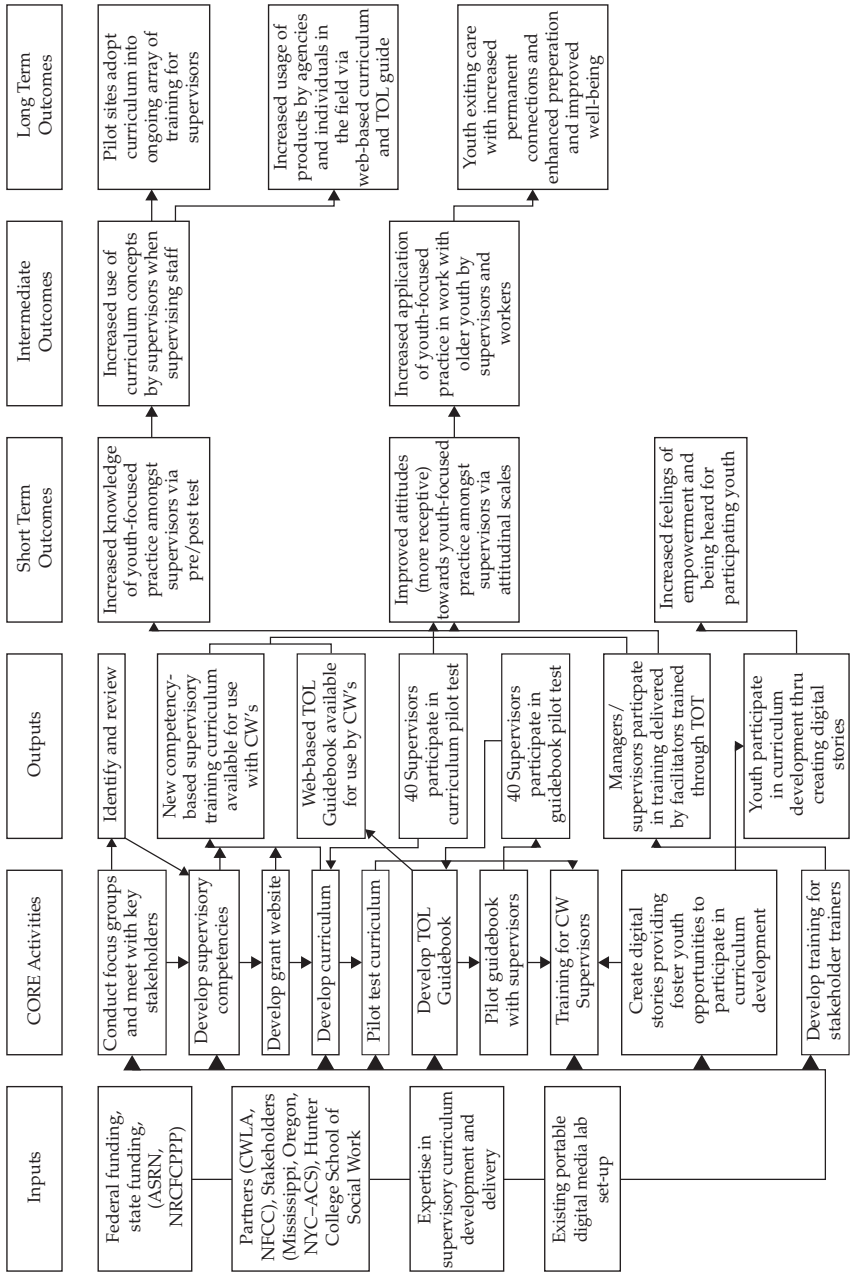

Figure 1: Logic Model

These various data sources, including curriculum, policy and procedure review and stakeholder focus groups, converged to create a surprising degree of overlap in response to the questions posed. Many important issues were raised and a range of themes were evident. Combining the feedback with available literature (CWLA, 2005; Muskie School of Public Service, 2004; NRCFCPPP, 2005; University of Minnesota, 2005) six core perspectives emerged. These core perspectives were then used to drive the development of the PASS training program. The six core perspectives identified were:

- Develop and maintain positive permanent connections between youth and caring adults.
- Actively engage youth in developing life skills that will prepare them for successful adulthood.
- Relate to youth as resources rather than recipients of the services in the child welfare system.
- Create and maintain environments that promote physical and emotional safety and well-being.
- Value the individual strengths and uniqueness of each youth.
- Involve a diverse array of stakeholders in the development of a comprehensive continuum of services and supports for youth transitioning out of the foster care system. (CWLA, 2005; Muskie School of Public Service, 2004; NRCFCPPP, 2005; University of Minnesota, 2005).

For each core perspective we utilized the National Resource Center framework to develop corresponding guiding principles and best practices (NRCFCPPP, 2005). The following is an example of the core perspective on youth permanency:

Core Perspective: Youth Permanency

Guiding Principles:

- The development of positive, meaningful relationships that foster a sense of belonging and connectedness over time is encouraged and supported.
- Adults and youth are consistently and actively engaged together in activities and experiences.
- Cooperative experiences that build trust and foster honest and open communication are developed and supported.

Practices:

- Provide youth with opportunities to create, maintain and strengthen sup-

portive and sustaining relationships with birth families including siblings, fictive kin, foster and adoptive families, and significant others.

- Provide opportunities for youth to develop connections to peers and mentors.
- Provide opportunities for youth to be engaged in youth/adult partnerships.
- Provide intentional recruitment for permanent adult connections.

The PASS Training Model

Once the content of the trainings had been determined then content delivery methods had to be developed. Utilizing existing supervisory training programs (Collins-Comargo & Groeber, nd; Copa, Lucinski, Olsen, & Wollenburg, 1999; Fone, 2006; Osmond & Darlington, 2005), and feedback from the focus groups and interviews we developed a supervisory skill set that would guide the development of our training materials. Specifically, we expanded the idea of a three-step process of discovery, engagement, and integration developed by the Portage Project (Copa, Lucinski, Olsen, & Wollenburg, 1999) to create a reflective practice model to disseminate the principles outlined in the core perspectives (See Figure 2).

In this reflective practice model the first step is discovery where administrators, supervisors, and workers can use the website to download relevant information in preparation for the learning circles, connect with information, and easy to use resources that can be utilized in the day to day management of cases. We heard from supervisors that some of their best professional development experiences had been in smaller training seminars and over an extended period of time. We used this information in our second step; engagement where supervisors participate in six learning circles. These learning circles are small, facilitated focused discussion groups which take place over time. During these circles participants develop a cohesive learning community and provide a structure for high quality peer learning. The learning circles define real-world challenges specific to the supervision of adolescent cases and identify incremental action steps that address issues raised by participants. During these learning circles participants are asked to take charge of their own professional development through active participation in the learning community. In order to assist in the transfer of learning to case workers we created a one-day supervisory overview training with the focus on supporting educational supervision.

In this reflective practice model the last step is integration. Supervisors can download on the job activities for use in their supervision, which integrate the concepts and strategies discussed in the learning circles.

To emphasize the collaborative nature of the project and to maximize the strengths of the different participating agencies, both the core principles and the conceptual framework were developed incorporating contributions from each project partner. We enhanced the core perspectives from curriculum materials de-

veloped at NYC ACS (Morse, 2007), the learning circle model was developed by the University of Mississippi as Clinical Supervision Learning Laboratory Projects (Collins-Comargo & Groeber, nd) and the template for the Supervisory on-the-job activities was contributed by the Child Welfare Training Partnership at Portland State University (*http://www.cwpsalem.pdx.edu/*).

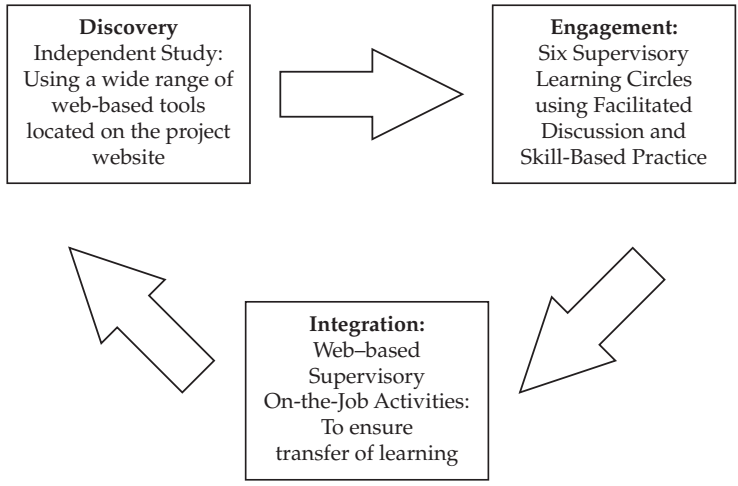

Figure 2: Reflective Practice Model
Model adapted from Copa, Lucinski, Olsen, & Wollenburg (1999).

During our curricula review and focus groups we heard the growing need to have youth voice as part of the training project. In order to honor the voices of youth in foster care, we created digital stories with our partners: the Oregon Department of Human Services, State Office for Services to Children and Families and the New York City Administration for Children's Services. According to Leslie Rule of the Digital Storytelling Association (nd),"digital storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Digital stories derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative, and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid color to characters, situations, experiences, and insights" (*electronicportfolios.com/digisotry/index.html*). Digital storytelling is a structured group experience that allows individuals an opportunity for self-expression by morphing words and narration with images created through the computer and Internet. The final outcome is an often powerful multi-media mix of images and voice. As part of the project we have created twenty stories each one told from personal points of view and reflecting issues of permanency and preparation for adulthood services, supports, and opportunities. The digital stories enhance the quality of the supervisory learning circles by incorporating the voices of young people, child welfare workers and supervisors to highlight critical practice issues. A number of Digital Stories are available for use

in supervision and training on the project website at (*http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/pass/digital-stories/index.htm*).

Structuring the Training—The Use of Ritual

During the first year of the project we created the framework, core perspectives, supervisory skill set, and materials for the learning circles. We also developed a series of learning circle ritual activities that would take place regardless of content to provide familiarity and to anchor participants to the continuity of the circles. First the learning circle always begins with a series of focus questions that are answered in small groups and shared with the large group. The focus questions ground participants in the topic to be discussed and also bring supervisory issues to the forefront. Then, we show digital stories that are reflective of the core perspective that is being discussed. During each learning circle we present promising practices and resources and discuss their integration into supervisory practice. Next, we have the participants engage in an experiential activity such as the permanency maze, foster care pipeline, broken squares, and bridge building to further illustrate core perspective concepts. Each learning circle concludes with an action plan for a short-term change effort developed by the supervisor and shared with the group. These action plans focused on incorporating new knowledge, skills, and attitudes into practice. Action plans are then reviewed at the beginning of each learning circle to assess the extent to which the plan has been successfully accomplished and, to identify factors that facilitated or obstructed completion.

Project Evaluation Plan

During the first two years, the development of the curriculum generated data relevant to process evaluation, with feedback both on curriculum content and training delivery methods. Feedback from the process evaluation has been actively used throughout to make adjustments to the program. We have also conducted limited outcome evaluation related to execution of action plans. In the third year, we are conducting a more comprehensive outcome evaluation including knowledge pre-and post-tests, and follow-up focus groups to discuss the impact of curriculum content on practice. The process evaluation also continued through the third year.

The first year evaluation focused on both quantitative and qualitative data to inform curriculum development and core competencies to be included in the training. Quantitative data was gathered using a 73-item self-administered questionnaire that was developed to determine how supervisors and child welfare workers viewed the relative importance of a range of factors in Transition, Independent Living, and Self-Sufficiency Services (TILSS). Respondents were asked to rank the importance of items representing CWLA's (2005) Standards of Excellence for TILSS on a scale from (1) not important to (10) very important. Respondents were also asked how important they felt it was for TILSS supervisors to be competent in a

range of areas, and to have particular values, knowledge, and skills using a 4-point scale ranging from unimportant to very important.

Qualitative data was gathered through focus groups with supervisors, child welfare workers and foster youth. Three different focus group guides were developed, with a similar focus, but with questions tailored to be appropriate for each distinct group. The questions asked participants to reflect on successful child welfare cases that they have been involved with as well as challenges they have faced in the delivery of services. Participants were asked to evaluate services (delivered or received), the types of training currently available, future trainings they desired, and whether or not the development of a website would be useful. Participants were also asked what content they would like made available online. Telephone interviews were used when key participants could not attend focus groups and to supplement the information gathered from focus groups. The phone interviews followed the same question guide as the focus groups.

First year results included analysis from sixty-six surveys gathered from across all three sites, including 29 in New York City, 19 in Mississippi, and 18 in Oregon. Eight focus groups, two with supervisors, three with caseworkers, and 3 with young people. The three groups conducted in Mississippi were with 8 supervisors, 9 caseworkers (all from Southern Mississippi), and 8 young people. In New York City the 3 groups included 5 supervisors, 8 workers, and 6 young people. In Oregon the two focus groups conducted were with 4 caseworkers, and with 11 Foster Club All Stars youth who represented Oregon (2), Oklahoma, Michigan, Washington State, South Carolina, California, Hawaii, Georgia, North Carolina, and Nebraska.

The qualitative results overwhelmingly raised positive relationships as the key point reinforced under success stories by the supervisors, the workers, and the youth. The development of positive and sustaining relationships fostered success. The workers and youth spoke of the importance of connection and of investment in the individual relationships. There was a sense of a caring relationship that went beyond 9-5 that was not about a job, but about authentic connection. Worker creativity was mentioned in relation to exceeding expectations and creating possibilities for the young people.

As outlined in the outputs section of the logic model, the second year evaluation focused on pilot-testing the curriculum for both content relevance and training delivery methods. Data were gathered for different purposes during the second-year of the program. Self-administered questionnaires were used to gather participants' reactions to the learning circles in which they participated. A short 24-item questionnaire was developed to assess how learning circle participants viewed the curriculum and training style. The feedback questionnaire began with 10 quantitative questions on a five-point scale, ranging from very low, low, average, high, to very high, that asked about the trainer's knowledge, preparation, and organization; teaching effectiveness; and responsiveness to participants. Other questions focused on content, asking whether the training content supported their job duties; materi-

als were useful and available for on-going use; stated objectives were achieved; and the event helped improve knowledge, skills and abilities. An overall session rating was also included, as was a question asking whether they thought their supervisor supported the use of the skills taught. The participants were also asked whether they would use the information obtained to train their own staff, and whether they thought that they would incorporate the new information and skills into their own practice. Qualitative questions explored the content and training style issues further asking for most and least valuable features of the session, and what other topics the participants would have liked to see included. Demographic data was collected relative to their length of time in child welfare, whether they currently supervise workers, how long they have been supervising, and their highest level of education.

Data were also gathered relative to changes in practice that occurred as a result of the learning circles. After each learning circle, participants developed Action Plans and shared them with the group. The Action Plan is a 3 X 3 table that focuses on the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during the session. Participants are asked to identify what new knowledge, new skills, and new attitudes were acquired during the training. Participants are then asked how they will apply the new knowledge, new skills, and new attitudes to their work—translating learning to practice. Prior to the next learning circle participants were asked to review their results. The circle facilitator noted all plans and they were reviewed at subsequent learning circles.

The digital story component of the project serves multiple functions. First, creating the stories serve as an emotional and empowering experience for the workers and youth who participated. Second, when analyzed, the content of the stories offers additional data to shape the development of the core principles—the main focus of the project's first year. And third, once completed the digital stories can be incorporated into the trainings adding the voices of both workers and youth into the supervisory training sessions. The successful completion and production of 20 stories, including 9 from child welfare workers and 11 from former foster care youth is a key achievement of the project so far, it is anticipated that 10 more stories will be created before the end of the project. The digital stories were completed in time to be used in the learning circles on safety and well-being in both New York and Oregon and in the well-being and strengths-based learning circles in Mississippi. Whenever they were used, they featured prominently on the list of things that the participants found to be most helpful. The narratives explored within the stories confirm many of the core principles identified by this project. The very special importance of connections or relationships was highlighted both by the youth and the workers, the idea of going the extra mile and staying connected was key. Many of the youth highlighted the importance of a worker, a teacher, or a foster parent someone who served as a mentor and provided a stable connection. The digital stories also highlighted the trauma created by sibling separation and the importance of sibling reunions. Collectively the stories were a testament to the potential for both individual and social change. They are a very powerful addition to the curriculum materials.

In the third and final year of the project the evaluation is focusing on outcome evaluation both in terms of knowledge acquisition and practice change. In addition to the content and delivery feedback survey that has been administered from the beginning, quantitative data will be gathered through the administration of a 20-item knowledge survey. The survey will assess knowledge from each of the learning circles to be administered pre- and post-participation in the learning circles. The data will be analyzed to assess changes in the knowledge of circle participants from pre-test to post-test. In addition, qualitative feedback will be gathered from training participants via voluntary participation in focus groups or telephone interviews regarding the extent to which content and skills or activities have been incorporated into their practice. Focus group and interview questions inquire about participant's experiences with the format of the learning circles, with the action plans, the extent that they have incorporated course content into their practice, and what impact that has had. In addition, questions address identifying any obstacles encountered when implementing the content and techniques introduced into the training.

Barriers to Success

In today's child welfare community there are competing training projects, policy agendas, and political issues. We found ourselves struggling with all three during the project's tenure. There was initial enthusiasm from our project partners which was strengthened as we built our core teams in each site. However, in two of our sites the core teams experienced a complete staff turnover. In two teams the department leadership changed which meant developing the teams all over again. We have been able to do this in one site but with competing training and political agendas the other site could not continue participation (however, they will remain active partners in our follow-up evaluations).

Sustainability and Dissemination

The major vehicles to support sustainability and to promote the dissemination of information to our partners in the child welfare community have been the development of the project website and the creation of reusable resources (*www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/pass*). The creation of Training for Trainers programs has also added to the potential for sustainability and dissemination. The project website contains links to valuable curriculum resources that supervisors can use in their practice. Examples of resources available include information on the core perspectives, learning circle content, and digital stories. We have found much interest in using the digital stories as vehicles for recruitment of foster parents, advocacy, and professional development with all three partners. The digital stories as well as the learning circles provided unique opportunities for the participants and provide opportunities to integrate these practices into youth development work for those who review these materials on the website. Beyond Oregon, New York, and Mississippi, others around the country have found these products to be innovative and useful in

their practice with youth and staff. In fact, the long-term outcomes identified in the logic model have actually been made manifest as one of the goals was to increase usage of the products developed.

In addition, we are holding training for trainers with our NewYork City partners and working with the Adolescent Services Resource Network at the Hunter College School of Social Work to develop training expertise in the PASS model so it can be part of the ongoing array of training offered in their project. We are working with Oregon Department of Human Services, State Office for Services to Children and Families to conduct training targeted to both trainers and supervisors. We feel that supervisors can convene their own learning circles once versed in the framework at their area offices. This would empower them to continue to build learning communities throughout the state.

Conclusion

The project experience so far has been very successful in achieving its goal of designing and delivering an innovative training program for supervisors. We feel that this model could be used with any training content and provide a different learning experience for participants. We are optimistic that through train the trainer sessions and continued use of web-based resources the projects usefulness will sustain beyond the immediate participants. We are also optimistic that the learning circle training model, action plans, and digital stories developed during this project could be used to deliver content on other key areas for supervisors and supervision.

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EVIDENCE-BASED SUPERVISOR-TEAM INDEPENDENT LIVING TRAINING: KENTUCKY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Nationwide, 20,000 adolescents each year leave the foster care system and attempt to live independently (GAO, 1999). Of the 550,000 children in foster care, 20% of them will age out of care and need to be trained in independent living skills so as to ease the transition to independent living. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (Chaffee Act) emphasized the need for the government to ensure that youth aging out of the foster care system move to independent living successfully and prevent health hazards, untreated mental illness, domestic abuse, substance abuse, unemployment, homelessness, criminal behavior and subsequent incarceration.

Kentucky has a substantial problem with children lingering in the foster care system, not being adopted, and thus needing to transition to adulthood without the benefit of a loving family to launch them. This issue was a concern in Kentucky's CFSR review in March 2003 and was a major focus of the first PIP. For example, the number of Legacy Children (those in care for 4 years or longer) has not been reduced substantially even though ASFA has been in effect for eight years. A recent dissertation study at the University of Louisville (Tungate, 2005) compared 125 legacy children with 125 randomly chosen children who had moved to permanency within 2 years. The analysis of numerous child, family, worker and system variables accounted for 70% of the variance in predicting what led to children remaining in the system for too long. Tungate found that Kentucky children who remain in the system for four years or longer were more likely to have come from larger families, poorer families with less community support, had more physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms at time of entry into care, had more time between updated case plans, had more moves in the system, and had a higher rate of termination of parental rights in their families due to more social workers on the case, fewer parent/

child visitations, and higher maltreatment at entry into foster care. Thus, children who are most likely to move from foster care to independent living are more likely to have severe emotional and behavioral problems as they make the transition to adulthood, making them vulnerable to enter other systems of care such as health, mental health, welfare, and criminal justice.

Previous research has shown that the provision of training, services, supportive interventions, and other concrete assistance is associated with positive outcomes for youth (Reilly, 2003; Lozano, 1993). Youth who receive appropriate services prior to leaving the child welfare system acquire necessary skills, change negative behaviors, and achieve self-sufficiency (Stoner, 1999). Child welfare teams who work with youth need competency-based training on these issues, as well as the ongoing reinforcement and support of their supervisor for these practices. A panel of experts in independent living recommended that independent living services must be holistic, provide training, and stress the importance of relationships (Melpignano & Collins, 2003). Many independent living programs use instructional models to teach self-sufficiency skills to youth (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger, 2005). Lozano (1993) found that the more independent living services youth receive, the better their outcomes are. These services may include training, support network development, and the provision of job experience (Reilly, 2003). The Citizen's Committee for Children of New York (2000) also asserts the importance of practical job experience and the securing of a permanent home prior to discharge from the system. Services provided to youth in a group format have been found to be helpful in reducing stigma and isolation (McMillen, Rideout, Fisher, & Tucker, 1997). Another essential component of services for youth is cultural sensitivity (Iglehart & Becerra, 2002). Child welfare teams should demonstrate respect for cultural diversity and consider the use of "rites of passage" during this transition (Gavazzi, Alford, & McKenry, 1996). Finally, there must be a gradual (not abrupt) transition to independence with the provision of aftercare (Mallon, 1998). Youth need continued family and community support after they achieve independence (Collins, 2001).

Research studies and results of the CFSR found that in order for members of the child welfare workforce to feel competent in their ability to execute their job duties, a strong training component must be built into their daily practice (Cicero-Reese & Black, 1998; Fox, Barbee, Harmon, Staples, & Spang, 2002; Anderson-Butcher, Lawson, & Barkdull, 2003; Milner, 2003), particularly in areas of engaging families, engaging children and youth through regular visits and interventions, comprehensive assessments, case planning, and fostering partnerships with other providers (Milner, 2003). Research has also demonstrated that workers who are rigorously trained with a high level of mentoring and field reinforcement by supervisors perform better on the job and have higher rates of organizational commitment than those workers without this type of professional development (Barbee, Yankeelov, Antle, Fox, Harmon, Evans, & Black, in press).

Our research in Kentucky over the past 16 years has found that 1) Higher

supervisory support and co-worker support significantly predicted greater transfer of training in the field in the form of assessments, case plans, and treatment (Yankeelov & Barbee, 1996; Antle, 2002). In addition, other researchers have found that when supervisors create clear expectations and establish rules for accountability that relate to a coherent organizational mission, workers' performance is enhanced (Coleman & Clark, 2003; Davis-Sacks, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1985; Ellett, Ellett, Kelley, & Noble, 1996; Vinokur-Kaplan, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1994). 2) Supervisory support can be enhanced through training and can then, in turn, lead to better outcomes including lower recidivism rates and better child well-being outcomes (Antle, 2002; Antle, Sullivan, Barbee, & Christensen, in press; Martin, Barbee, Antle, Sar, & Hanna, 2002). 3) Furthermore, child welfare workers are more highly committed to their jobs if they feel that their supervisors are competent, instrumentally supportive, emotionally supportive, and value a team approach to child welfare practice (Yankeelov, Barbee, Sullivan, & Antle, 2009). Other research found that supervisors that articulate clear performance standards, reward superior performance, and facilitate professional development are more likely to have workers with a high degree of organizational commitment (Ellett, Ellett, & Rugut, 2003). Thus, supervisors who are well trained to be supportive to their workers, coaching and mentoring the workers as they practice intricate skills such as assessing, case planning, and coaching and mentoring their clients, produce a better practicing and stable workforce that achieves better outcomes for children than supervisors that do not exhibit those key skills.

In the area of working with youth moving to independent living, it is critical for the youth's learning for them to be attached to the workers. Thus, the workforce needs to be stable and for those workers to be highly competent in their engagement and mentoring skills.

We understand the need for a specific curriculum aimed at supervisors to build their capacity to prepare and guide staff in their work with older youth involved in the child welfare system. We developed several supervisor and team based trainings that emphasize the components of quality supervision that contribute to optimal outcomes for children and families (Antle, 2002). One of these trainings focused supervisors on the casework process such as how to work with front line employees on the parallel process of treating workers the way we want workers to treat clients, conducting thorough assessments, writing case plans that flow from those assessments, engaging in effective case management, and building collaborations with community partners as well as how to build teams and how to be supportive of front line staff. The training utilized the Solution-Based Casework practice model (Christensen, Todahl, & Barrett, 1999) and trained supervisors and their teams together. The purpose of training the supervisors and teams together was to allow all members of a team to hear the same core message about practice. This led to enhanced accountability among team members and gave the supervisor support for the kinds of monitoring activities that they are re-

quired to conduct to ensure effective practice among their team members. It also gave the supervisors a chance to play a leadership role with their team members in a training context. Subsequently, when supervisors trained and coached their workers on specific skills that needed to be enhanced, their interventions were received better by the workers because of this early exposure to their supervisors as trainers. This mode of training supervisors was very effective in enhancing worker and client outcomes (Antle, Christensen, Barbee, & Martin, 2008). When supervisors and workers were NOT trained together there was low training transfer (Antle, Christensen, Barbee, & Martin, 2008) and poorer outcomes for children. Case managers need the support (emotional and instrumental) of supervisors to make practice changes or improvements. In order for case managers to use best practices for independent living, the supervisors need to share their knowledge and skills in a supportive and effective manner.

The training developed for Kentucky supervisors built on these previous supervisor trainings and on Kentucky's structured training reinforcement model that is a component of the state's quality assurance mechanism. It was noted in the CFSR findings that Kentucky has one of the more sophisticated training and training evaluation systems in the country and one of the few that has trained managers and supervisors in high level leadership and team building skills which will enhance the supervisors ability to help their workers achieve positive outcomes for youth transitioning into independent living. (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2003; Fox, Miller, & Barbee, 2004).

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD) identifies four core principles for adolescent transitional living programs: 1) youth development; 2) collaboration; 3) cultural competence; and 4) permanent connections. For youth development, there are a range of life skills youth need to learn in order to function independently. These youth need to learn skills in areas of education, employment, housing, relationship formation, and service acquisition. They must also be trained to recognize and respond to crises that place them at risk after emancipation. Another key component of youth development is the involvement of youth in the decision-making for their case. Youth need to be empowered to make these types of decisions so that they feel equipped to do so after emancipation. There are a number of educational and supportive independent living programs that target these necessary skills. Child welfare supervisors and their teams were taught to assess the youth's readiness for learning these target skills and the appropriate timing of interventions. Supervisors were trained to guide their workers in this assessment and determination process. They also were trained in the provision of training and supportive services to foster these skills in youth. Practice skills were not limited to education, but will also included concrete support particularly in the areas of employment and securing permanent housing (Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, 2000). Teams also were encouraged to involve youth in the development and decision-making of case plans and aftercare plans. Teams

were also provided with information on the aforementioned risk factors related to the transition to independence, as well as how to recognize and intervene around these risk factors.

Collaboration is another core principle and refers to the need for child welfare teams to seek community involvement in the life of the youth. This community involvement creates linkages that can assist youth after their emancipation and may provide them with job and mentoring opportunities. Child welfare supervisors and their teams need training in techniques such as family team meetings, which bring together multiple family members, friends/acquaintances, and professional helpers. Both intra- and inter-agency partners were encouraged to attend this training to enhance their understanding and support of the program.

Our understanding of cultural competence is constantly evolving as cultures change (Gavazzi, Alford, & McKenry, 1996). Given the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system, supervisors and workers must have an adequate understanding of youth strengths and needs related to culture. Iglehart and Becerra (2002) conducted a qualitative study that found youth transitioning out of care are not a homogenous group. Therefore, there is a need for culturally sensitive and individualized interventions. Child welfare supervisors and workers must model respect for cultural diversity and encourage the development of their identity. One strategy to encourage ethnic identity in the emancipation process is the use of "rites of passage" that are common to many ethnic minority groups. In this project, supervisors and their teams were taught to assess the cultural competence/sensitivity of independent living interventions, as well as other skills to foster cultural identity.

The final core principle, permanent connections, relates to the need for youth transitioning to independence to learn skills and have the opportunity to form healthy family and professional relationships. This principle underscores the importance of involving as many family and friends as possible in the casework process and transition to independence. Youth must be given the opportunity to explore their feelings about past family relationships and consider relationships they want to form in the future. They need specific skills training in relationship formation and maintenance (Melpignano & Collins, 2003). They also need the assistance of their child welfare worker to establish any necessary helping relationships to support them following emancipation (Collins, 2001). Youth transitioning to independent living have been exposed to poor role models of relationship initiation, maintenance, and dissolution through their families or origin and often in their foster homes. They need additional training and modeling of how to identify appropriate romantic and friendship partners, how to initiate romantic relationships and friendships, how to discern compatibility with others, how to maintain close relationships, and how to dissolve close relationships properly and safely when necessary.

Curriculum Development Process

Matrix of Previous IL Training Grants

Thre were multiple stages of development for this curriculum. First, the Kentucky team worked together with other grantees to create a matrix of key topics by curricula from first set of CB grants on IL (see Barbee et al. in this same issue). This matrix of previous grant curricula provided a thorough understanding of the key concepts and skills that had been addressed to date and areas of needed development. This review also identified excellent activities/exercises/resources that could be used to engage participants around youth issues. Previous grantees were contacted to obtain permission to utilize these resources to build upon their excellent work. At this time, the Kentucky team also updated the literature on IL with articles that had been published since the original IL grantees developed their curricula in order to address gaps and ensure the most recent and accurate research and practice findings were incorporated into the curriculum.

Next, based upon the conceptual framework set forth in Kentucky's grant application, which incorporates federal policies, core principles of the NRCYS, and Kentucky's practice model, the team posed key questions to guide curriculum development. These questions were 1) What is the key role of supervisors and managers in ensuring that youth receive the services they need to lead successful lives?; and 2) What do the key constituencies that deliver and receive the services say is needed that perhaps managers and supervisors can address? The first question was answered through an evidence-based literature review on key roles of child welfare managers and supervisors. The second question regarding the thoughts of key constituencies was addressed through focus groups with youth, public child welfare workers, private child care workers, and other key collaterals involved in the life of youth.

Evidence-Based Literature Review

For the first question (What is the key role of supervisors and managers in ensuring that youth receive the services they need to lead successful lives?), an evidence-based literature review was conducted. An evidence-based literature review begins with a COPES (Client-Oriented Practical Evidence Search) question to guide the review process (Gibbs, 2003). Next, search terms and filters are identified. Articles that fit these criteria are reviewed for their scientific rigor and extent to which they answer the COPES question. This evidence-based literature reviewed the following functions child welfare supervisors and managers: 1) supervisory support for workers (Davis-Sacks, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1985; DiGiulio, 1995; Decker, Bailey, & Westergaard, 2002; Smith, 2005; Wagner, Spence, & van Reyk, 2001; Yin, 2004); 2) supervisor tasks (Bernotavicz & Bartley, 1996; Silver, Poulin, & Manning, 1997; Ward, 2004); 3) create commitment (Ezell, Casey, Pecora, Grossman, Friend, Vernon, & Godfrey, 2002; Landsman, 2001; Quinn, Rycraft, & Schoech, 2002; Regehr, Chau,

Leslie, & Howe, 2002; Sevicki, 1999); 4) managers in child welfare (Regehr, et al., 2002; Sevicki, 1999; Ware, Dobrec, Rosenthal, & Wedel, 1992; Zunz, 1995); 5) middle managers (Antle, Barbee,& Van Zyl, 2008).

From this review, three key roles were identified for child welfare supervisors/managers: 1) Collaboration; (Klagge, 1998; Currie & Proctor, 2005); 2) Communication (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Balogun, 2003; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Klagge, 1998; Likert, 1961; Thompson, 1967); 3) Advocacy and Change (Balogun, 2003; Barbee & Cunningham, 2006; Currie & Proctor, 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1994, 1997; Hertzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Huy, 2002; Rouleau, 2005; Milner, 2003; Thakur, 1998; Wai-Kwong, Priem, & Cycyota, 2001).

For the role of collaboration, there is a need for both external and internal collaboration. External collaboration refers to the fact that for youth to gain all of the skills they need, child welfare agencies must collaborate with schools, mental health facilities, substance abuse treatment centers, job training centers, and the justice department. All youth need to maximize their education as much as possible to be ready to work. Most youth in foster care have some sort of mental health, substance abuse or disability issue to overcome to be able to form close, loving relationships and function in the workplace. Internal collaboration refers to the supervisor's ability to work with ongoing supervisors and workers who work with youth, supervisors and workers who work with foster parents, IL coordinators, foster parents, adoption supervisors and workers, adult protection supervisors and workers, and youth themselves.

For the role of communication, supervisors/managers must communicate internally with all of the groups that work with youth, as well as externally with all the groups that work with youth (e.g. other systems with which youth is involved). One skill to facilitate such communication is the offering of Family Team Meetings that bring all interested parties together to develop a collaborative case plan that addresses the range of needs for the youth.

Finally, for the role of advocacy and change, managers and supervisors need to identify existing barriers that may prohibit the system from functioning effectively. They must advocate for additional resources, new partnerships, legislative changes, and policy changes. They must facilitate collaboration and communication for the sake of youth aging out of care.

Focus Group Research

For the second question (What do the key constituencies that deliver and receive the services say is needed that perhaps managers and supervisors can address?), Kentucky conducted a number of focus groups between February and June of 2006. These focus groups were held in both urban and rural settings. Several of the focus groups were conducted with youth recipients of services, including those in private child care facilities as well as an innovative program to help youth ages 16-24 obtain their GED and employment. Focus groups were also conducted with

public child welfare supervisors and workers, foster parents, and other service providers such as private child care workers. Lastly, a focus group was conducted with the Advisory Board for this grant, which consisted of IL Coordinators, service providers, trainers, administrators, faculty members, and community leaders. These focus groups provided key insights into the needs of youth, gaps in the current training and service delivery systems, and significant need for collaboration between youth-serving organizations.

Pilot Testing of Curriculum

During the final stage of curriculum development, Kentucky pilot tested the curriculum and obtained feedback from participants through written evaluations and focus group methods. There were 5 supervisors and 19 workers trained in this pilot group. Data from this pilot showed that training methods were effective, as there was a significant increase in knowledge from pre- to post-training. Qualitative feedback pointed to areas of needed change or improvement, including more information on Kentucky policies and statistics, skills to engage difficult or multi-problem youth, and available resources for youth. Changes were made to the curriculum based upon these suggestions. We continued to revise the curriculum based upon feedback from trainees over the course of the grant. We also used feedback on additional training needs to develop supplemental modules available through an on-line format.

Content of Curriculum

The curriculum that Kentucky developed consists of ten modules, which are typically delivered over two and one half days of training. The core modules that are included in this training include the following: 1) "*Understanding the Context of Supervisor-Team Training*"; 2) "*Parallel Process*"; 3) "*Cultural Competency*"; 4) "*Youth Development*"; 5) "*Youth Engagement*"; 6) "*Relationships*"; 7) "*Assessment*"; 8) "*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues*"; 9) "*Collaboration*"; and 10) "*Case Closure*". The first module, "*Understanding the Context of the Supervisor-Team Training*", provides basic statistics on youth in care, as well as detailed information on federal policies that impact youth aging out of the system such as the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, Kentucky's Chafee Independence Plan, and the Child and Family Services Reviews. The second module, "*Parallel Process*", presents the idea that the relationship between supervisors and child welfare workers is parallel to or mirrors the relationship between the worker and youth; similarly, the relationship between the child welfare worker and youth is parallel to or mirrors the youth's relationship with significant others in his/her life. This working relationship can be used to model and teach key skills. The third module, "*Cultural Competency*", describes cultural influences and basic skills to promote culturally competent practice. The fourth module, "*Youth Development*", includes areas and stages of adolescent development and a discussion of the unique experiences of LBGTQ youth. The fifth module, "*Youth En-*

gagement", teaches characteristics of effective engagement for youth, Prochaska's stages of change, and motivators for change. There are also elements from Kentucky's Solution-Based Casework practice model (Christensen, Todahl, & Barrett, 1999), including solution-focused questions and stages of the professional helping relationship.

The sixth module,"*Relationships*", describes key concepts and skills for many areas of youth relationships, including stages of the professional helping relationship, emerging adulthood, relationship permanency, social networks and relationships, social skills youth need to build relationships, relationships with birth parents and sibling, foster parent relationships, and mentoring relationships. The seventh module,"*Assessment*", presents the concept of strengths-based assessment and teaches key skills to utilize standardized assessment tools for youth such as the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment*. The eighth module,"*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues*", defines substance abuse versus dependence, as well as brief screening tools (e.g. the CRAFFT) and interventions. The ninth module,"*Collaboration*", engages partners in the room in collaboration-building exercises and a discussion of raising versus protecting youth. The tenth module,"*Case Closure*', teaches skills to move youth toward case closure, develop aftercare plans, and document/celebrate successes.

In response to the identified need to promote collaboration among the various entities that serve youth aging out of care, we modified this curriculum for three distinct audiences: state child welfare supervisor-worker teams, private child care facility staff, and foster parents. Although core concepts from the curriculum are maintained, each version targets the specific needs and interests of these different groups. For example, the private child care version of the curriculum places more emphasis on inter-agency collaboration, while the foster parent version of the curriculum presents the critical role foster parents play in modeling healthy relationships and teaching other key life skills.

There were also key content areas that could not be addressed in depth through the core curriculum due to time constraints on training for public child welfare workers. Therefore, this key content was put into a web-based format and offered through on-line training modules. These are available at: *http://cwte.louisville.edu/IL/home/ilmodules.htm* and include:

1. Dating Violence
2. Motivational Interviewing
3. Developing Mentoring Relationships for Youth Aging Out of Care
4. Reconnecting to Birth Parents

Barriers and Facilitators in the Implementation Process

The team encountered a number of barriers in the implementation of this training grant. Despite a number of facilitating factors, including strong leadership for IL issues at the state level, this federally funded grant, and a large population of

children over the age of 12 in the child welfare system, the state was not focused on IL issues during the implementation of this project. Another barrier was the high level of training burnout demonstrated by several regions that were targeted for recruitment for this project. These regions had participated in a number of training initiatives, and teams were resistant to becoming involved in yet another project. A final barrier was the conflict between the time required for this project and other priorities at the state level, including CFSR reviews and a change in the Governor and Cabinet positions. These barriers made scheduling the training difficult, and the team had to devise creative strategies to reach target numbers for the grant.

The first strategy was to market the training to multiple levels of the public child welfare agency, including the Commissioner, Service Region Administrators, representatives of the Training Branch and Regional Training Coordinators, and members of the University Training Consortium. By presenting information on the training grant at multiple levels of the state bureaucracy, we garnered greater support and influence in the recruitment of teams. The second strategy that this team utilized was to market the training to specific regions and facilitate internal collaboration within those regions. For regions that we reached, we involved the IL coordinators, supervisors, and child welfare workers who serve foster parents, ongoing cases, and adoption cases. This strategy helped us increase our numbers within regions and promote the overall goals of collaboration identified in the curriculum development process.

A third strategy we utilized to maximize our impact through this training grant was to modify the curriculum and offer it to different audiences with an interest in or commitment to working with youth. As previously mentioned, we developed a version of the curriculum for private child care providers and foster parents, as well as the core curriculum targeted to child welfare agency supervisors. We also provided IL coordinators with a training of trainers in a healthy relationships curriculum for youth entitled *Love U2* (Pearson, 2006). These IL coordinators are now able to offer this relationship program to youth transitioning to independence. There were very high levels of interest on the part of foster parents, IL coordinators, and private child care providers throughout the grant period. In addition to these curriculum modifications, we experimented with diverse training methods, including offering the training through an on-line format and at a statewide youth summit hosted by this grant team during the last month of the grant period.

Other facilitating factors included the strong working relationship between this project team and members of the public child welfare agency and service community. There has been an increase in agency focus on youth issues since the second round of the CFSR results which showed poor results for youth aging out of care. Due to their greater focus on these issues, they have been supportive of the youth summit being hosted by this site. A final facilitating factor has been the Community Advisory Board formed by this grant, which is comprised of state administrators, trainers, faculty, child welfare supervisors/workers, and other service providers from

youth-based organizations. This Advisory Board has met two to three times per year for the three years of the grant, providing feedback on the curriculum, training implementation, and strategic planning at the state level to improve collaboration and quality of care for youth services. Similarly, our team has gotten involved with other youth coalitions at the local and state level in order to promote the grant and engage in inter-agency collaboration.

Evaluation of Training

The full evaluation of this training project will be based upon the Louisville Child Welfare Training Evaluation Model (Antle, Barbee, & van Zyl, 2008). This project will utilize three primary methods of evaluation: training evaluation surveys, intervention (training) fidelity check, and client assessment data. The Training Evaluation Surveys involve a pre-post design. All teams have been given the opportunity to participate in the training. Pre-training data has been collected on predictor variables, trainee knowledge, and skill. Post-training data has been collected on trainee reactions, knowledge and skill. Workers and supervisors have been notified of the need to complete web-based surveys via e-mail. All participants in the research (supervisors and workers) completed full informed consent forms prior to the completion of these surveys. This research was approved by the Human Studies Committee of the state child welfare agency and by the University of Louisville.

Satisfaction with training was measured along two dimensions: utility and affective reactions. Utility reactions refer to the degree to which trainees find the training material useful. Affective reactions refer to the degree to which trainees like the training. Both of these reactions will be measured using a scale adapted for this study–the Level One Training Evaluation Scale. This scale contains 12 items. For each item, respondents will indicate their degree of agreement on five-point Likert scales. A similar scale was previously used for the evaluation of substance abuse training in child welfare (Barbee & Barber, 1995). Satisfaction was measured immediately post-training. Learning was measured using a test of the training curriculum. This knowledge-based test was developed specifically for this curriculum and consists of multiple-choice questions on material from each of the key content areas of the training. Supervisors and workers in the training and control groups complete this test pre-training and immediately post-training. The change between pre- and immediate post-training test scores reflects the immediate learning of trainees.

Transfer of skill is being measured through a behavioral anchor rating scale. This type of scale has been used by the University of Louisville in other child welfare research, such as the evaluation of the Public Child Welfare Certification Program and Field Training Specialist Program (Barbee et al., in press; Fox et al. 2002). Behavioral anchors were developed based upon the IL training curriculum. These anchors specified the skills that supervisors and their workers should acquire or master through training.

The training outcomes component of this model has been based upon the

theoretical and empirical work of Kirkpatrick (1959) and Alliger and Tannenbaum (1997). The quality of the worker-youth relationship was measured through the Trusting Relationships Scale. (Mustillo, Dorsey, & Farmer, 2005). The Trusting Relationships Questionnaire is a brief measure of the quality of relationships between youth and their service providers with high reliability and multiple forms of validity (Mustillo, Dorsey, & Farmer, 2005). The Team Collaboration Survey measures the quality of collaboration between the state child welfare agency and other youth-serving agencies with which they work. This survey was developed by members of this project team to evaluate inter-agency collaboration among social service providers. Both scales have demonstrated strong reliability and validity in this and other studies.

Future Directions

In order to promote the sustainability of this training program beyond the federal funding, we will create a Credit for Learning course to be included in the Child Welfare Agency training system for supervisors and veteran workers. The Credit for Learning program is a university-state agency partnership that provides graduate level credit for completion of required and certain elective child welfare training courses. The Credit for Learning program operates at several state universities throughout Kentucky, which will expand the potential training sites beyond the grant as well. The on-line version of the course and advanced training modules will remain available beyond funding to provide another opportunity for exposure to the curriculum.

As previously mentioned, our team executed a statewide youth summit in September of 2008. The keynote addresses included Jamie Lee Evans and youth from her team in the San Francisco IL Project, who brought their museums of Lost Childhoods and Empowered Youth. Peter Correia and Dorothy Ansell from the National Child Welfare Resource Center spoke about the national initiative "Building a Shared Youth Vision." Larry Michalczyk and Lisa Johnson, a doctoral student who has worked on this project since its inception spoke about how disproportionality affects youth aging out of care. Youth panels from both California and Kentucky presented their stories during panel discussions on both days. Also at this conference, the training modules were offered and targeted to supervisors and workers as well as other private child care staff and foster parents that have not yet been reached by the grant. Additional workshops targeted those from the state child welfare agency and PCC providers who have already gone through the training to give them additional training on IL issues. These participants were provided with refresher modules. The second day was devoted to educating community partners, some from the state, but most from Jefferson County and the surrounding counties about how to build a network to support youth in care and those aging out of care in our most urban regions of the state.

Other future directions include the completion of the above evaluation research

and other research studies connected to the grant, as well as the continued dissemination of practice and research findings through peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and federally-sponsored events. There are tremendous lessons learned from this training grant that can inform the field regarding key issues for youth transitioning to independence, training development and methodologies, as well as organizational engagement and change.

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TEXAS TRAINING PROJECT: PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIVING SUPERVISOR TRAINING AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (PAL-STEP)

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The purpose of this paper is to present the process and outcomes of one of 19 grants the Children's Bureau has given since the Chafee Act was passed in 1999. The aim of the Preparation for Adult Living: Supervisor Training and Empowerment Program (PAL-STEP) project was to maximize for youth in foster care, their successful transition to independent living. All 19 training projects focus on enhancing the chances of success for youth aging out of the foster care system. The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (part of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 [P.L. 106-169]) main goal is the provision of more flexible funding to enable states to design and implement a variety of programs to assist youth in the process of making the transition from foster care to independent living to self-sufficiency. The Adoption Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) main goals of safety, permanency, and well-being must be the underlying practice principles guiding programs to assist youth of all ages transitioning from foster care to adulthood. The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) provide a means of evaluating state child welfare programs and examines if services are being provided to help the child achieve the goal of adult living. Successful transitions for youth in foster care to adulthood and self-sufficiency can be facilitated by effective training of child welfare supervisors on the delivery and management of independent living programs.

Texas Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) (conducted in February 2002) found Item 10, relating to the Permanency Goal of Alternative Long Term Care or Adult Living (part of Permanency Outcome 1), to be a strength for Texas. Since that time, the state has experienced a reduction in the rating for item 10. Child welfare supervisors have enormous influence on child welfare workers' performance and retention (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2003; 2007). Supervisors' training is

key to the transference of policy to practice. The project provided wide-ranging and collaborative training to child welfare supervisors. Training goals were to increase the child welfare supervisor's ability to guide caseworkers in understanding the developmental challenges of youth who will be transitioning to adulthood and self-sufficiency, and the programs available in the transition. Training for supervisors was thought to be one solution and was the motivation for applying for the Children's Bureau training grant in 2005.

The training projects provided an experiential and comprehensive approach to improve supervisors' and therefore caseworkers, knowledge and skills to address ILP policy and practice areas of concern. The project employed the collaborative efforts of the University of Houston and The University of Texas at Arlington schools of Social Work, and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). PAL-STEP developed, implemented, and evaluated a curriculum for child welfare supervisors focused on strengthening their supervision of worker interventions with foster youth. The training included web-based learning and a one-day workshop for experiential learning. To ensure transfer of knowledge, each trainee received a "tool kit" of teaching strategies to use with their workers. Over one hundred and twenty-five CPS supervisors in Texas were trained on the PAL-STEP curriculum. The locations of the trainings were spread throughout Texas and represented the diversity of Texas: urban and rural, multi-ethnic communities as well as those mainly Hispanic or African American.

Developing the Curriculum

The project built upon existing and longstanding partnerships between the Universities, DFPS, and the Protective Services Training Institute, along with established relationships with human service agencies working with youth aging out of foster care. One of the first steps we took was to establish an advisory committee of our partners, including foster parents, foster youth, and youth who have aged out of care.

Our underlying philosophical stance was that training be grounded in a culturally responsive developmental perspective addressing the challenges of adolescence from the perspective of the youth in foster care. After review of the existing evidenced based literature it was decided the curriculum needed to provide child welfare supervisors a better understanding of the philosophy of positive youth development and the developmental milestones of adolescence to better guide the caseworker in transitioning youth out of foster care. So often youth age out of care with no permanency options, little employment history, lack of high-school degree, and overall lack of independent living skills (Scannapieco, 1998, 2000). Given this, it was determined child welfare supervisors need to have knowledge of the community partners in their area so caseworkers will know who they can collaborate with to meet the needs of youth transitioning to self-sufficiency. PAL-STEP project delivered the necessary training to child welfare supervisors to strengthen their ability to

guide caseworkers in providing effective delivery and management of independent living services.

The training was designed in two parts. A web-based training was developed to present theoretical material, such as adolescent development and the four core principles indentified in the literature (positive youth development, collaboration, culture, and permanent connections). Completion of the web-based training was a prerequisite to participating in a one-day face-to-face training, delivered by a training team made up of a person who aged out of the foster care system and a university faculty member.The major goals and objective of the curriculum were:

Goal 1. CPS supervisors will have the knowledge and skills needed to ensure adolescent youth in foster care make a successful transition to independent living.

Objective 1.1. Develop a curriculum for CPS supervisors that incorporate the four core program principles associated with successful transition programs: positive youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, and permanent connection.

Objective 1.2. CPS supervisors who complete Preparation for Adult Living-Supervisory Training and Empowerment Program (PAL-STEP) will demonstrate increased knowledge of the theory and application of the four core areas of positive youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, and permanent connection, as demonstrated by a pre-test and post-test.

Goal 2. CPS supervisors will transfer their knowledge of the four core principles to those they supervise, enabling CPS workers to help foster youth successfully transition to independent living.

Objective 2.1. Develop a teaching kit for supervisors who attend PAL-STEP that will help them teach their workers the theory and application of the four core principles.

Objective 2.2. CPS workers whose supervisor has attended PAL-STEP will be more likely to increase integration of the four core principle in their work with adolescent clients than those whose supervisor has not attended training as demonstrated in their service plans.

Training Curriculum

The PAL-STEP training was developed with input from multiple sources. First, we convened an Advisory Committee comprised of DFPS-CPS administrators, foster care supervisors, independent living coordinators, foster parents, foster youth, former foster youth, university faculty, Protective Services Training Institute of Texas representation, and project evaluators. We also conducted focus groups with foster youth, former foster youth, foster parents, and independent living workers and supervisors in the Houston and Dallas regions (see Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Finally, a review of the literature on the issues facing youth aging

out of foster care, transitioning to independent living, and adult learning theory was performed. These three elements guided curriculum development. The Advisory Committee continually reviewed the curriculum, suggested changes and made improvements until a final version was approved.

The overall curriculum is based on four core concepts: positive youth development, collaboration, cultural responsiveness, and permanent connections. Transcending the four principles and infused through the curriculum is information on adolescent development, including an appreciation for adolescence and strategies to work more effectively with youth.

Positive Youth Development.

Positive youth development is a deliberate process by which youth are engaged in supportive relationships, which enables them to develop the living skills and knowledge to maintain their emotional health needed to function on their own (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001; Pruett et al., 2000; Roth, et al. 1998; Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Positive youth development requires not only a supportive environment, but also opportunities for leadership and the development of life skills. This philosophy is central to making a successful transition to self-sufficiency. Foster children who approach independence need a support system, formed deliberately and intentionally, based upon a thorough assessment of the adolescent (Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Assessment must be grounded in developmental theory and an understanding of the challenge of achieving self-sufficiency.

An underlying philosophical component of positive youth development is the idea that problem situations should be assessed from the youth's perspective. The bridge between childhood and adulthood, adolescence brings physical, social, emotional, and cognitive changes in an individual. Successful achievement of primary developmental tasks in adolescence can have a marked impact on this transition (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005). One goal of this training was to equip supervisors with the knowledge of developmentally appropriate and empirically based assessments and interventions for youth. Supervisors who understand youth-focused practice will be able to guide their workers in engaging youth aging out of care as participants in their case and life planning. It is the hope that youth who make permanent connections, have supportive environments, and become good decision-makers will be able to become self-sufficient adults and productive members of society. The knowledge and support supervisors pass to their workers is central to achieving this goal.

A core component of positive youth development and an appreciation of adolescent development indicate youth need to be involved in decision making for their future. Engaging youth as planners for their own lives is important because it embraces their ability to make decisions and affirms their capacity for self-sufficiency. We sought to equip supervisors with the ability to guide workers on adolescent

assessment and their readiness for independent living services. The curriculum is grounded in the philosophy that appropriate assessments will result in an identification of crisis situations, potential long-term stressors, and cultural issues that may have an impact on planning for independence; and supervisors who understand this will be able to train and supervise workers according to this philosophy. Supervisors who recognize the challenges of aging out including those related to obtaining housing, transportation, and employment; acquiring basic living skill; completing and pursuing education; reliance on public assistance; mental and behavioral health problems and understand the co-existing stressors of adolescence and self-sufficiency can guide their workers in more thorough planning and assessment, resulting in better independent living service planning and management services.

Collaboration.

Collaboration is also essential to successfully move youth to independent living. Collaborations help ensure a full array of services are available to the youth during and after their transition from care. Child welfare supervisors need to acknowledge youth, at least in the short-term, move from dependent to interdependent living rather than independent living (Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). An important aspect of living interdependently is the assistance needed from collaborators who are committed to the functioning, well-being, and needs of youth, and may include foster parents, community agencies, and persons with whom the youth feel connected. For example, supervisors can help caseworkers engage foster parents and foster youth to identify the type of life skills youth can practice in the home, such as grocery shopping or managing money. Supervisors can also guide caseworkers to assess the services youth need while they are in care to plan their needs when they exit care. Establishing collaborative relationships early, while the youth is in care, can help make the transitions more successful since supports will already be in place.

Training CPS supervisors, who in turn share their experience with workers, about community agencies who provide services to youth is also essential in giving youth the support they need to make this transition. Transition Resource Action Center (TRAC) in Dallas and The Houston Alumni and Youth Center (HAYC) in Houston partnered with this project and serve on the Advisory Team. The collaboration of DFPS, community agencies, foster parents, youth, and university experts in developing this curriculum solidified the common goal of training DFPS supervisors with the knowledge and skill to move youth to successful independent living. The importance of collaboration within and outside the agency is important for the transition to adulthood and was vital to the development and implementation of this curriculum.

Cultural Responsiveness.

Embedded in this project is a focus on cultural responsiveness. Attention to cultural issues transcends all areas of this project to ensure youth feel protected in their

environments. In the foster care system in Texas, Hispanics represent 36% of those in care, African Americans represent 29%, and Caucasians comprise 33% (DFPS, 2004). Understanding culture is essential to developing a training curriculum so youth are provided culturally and developmentally appropriate interventions and support systems to promote their independence. Beyond the ethnic cultures, this project also explored other culturally relevant issues that impact the successful transition to independent living. We viewed adolescence as a culture, and this appreciation is infused throughout the curriculum. We also included content on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth.

Permanent Connections.

Youth need permanent connections, whether formal or informal, to ground them in a community and provide the support traumatized youth often lack. Attention was given to this guiding principle in curriculum development. The importance of human relationships and connectedness to others during adolescence is well established and a primary task of adolescent emotional development (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005). Thoughtful planning and seeking for ways to increase the connectedness of youth achieving independence was central to the preparation of this developmentally grounded curriculum. Involving youth in the decision to seek connections and assisting them with developing and maintaining connections is an important role of the child welfare supervisor and worker.

Foster youth often lack both an emotional and physical place to return in times of need, and such connections must be established for youth in care who may age out, as well as those who have already exited care (Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Supervisors can help caseworkers talk with foster parents and caregivers prior to the youth exiting care to determine whether the foster parent is willing to be available to the youth. Other possible connections the youth may have should be explored, including family members, friends, and community agencies that may serve as a resource to the youth. Engaging the youth in identifying possible individuals to contact would also be useful, and serve the dual purpose of encouraging their input into their case planning. The need for permanent connections resounded loudly in the focus groups we conducted (see Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Some youth were aware that they had no one. Some alumni sought family after leaving care and were disappointed with the result. Believing they could rely on the family they dreamed of while in care, these youth felt abandoned and hopeless with no alternative plan for adult connection and support. As a result, the task of finding, mending, and establishing connections for the youth in care and after they have aged out is paramount to the successful transition to adulthood.

The role of former foster children who have made the transition to independence was central to both the development and implementation of this project. Engaging youth in curriculum development helped the program be more responsive

to youth (Zeldin, Shepherd et al., 2000), and research has shown youth involvement in independent living curriculum development to improve the quality of independent living curriculum, increase creativity of curriculum and ideas, provide a real-life perspective to the curriculum, and strengthen programs (Morse, Markowitz, Zanghi, & Burs, 2003). Alumni also delivered a part of the content during the face-to-face training, shared their own story of foster care and aging out, and answered participant questions, which is described in more detail below.

Structure of the Curriculum

The curriculum is divided into: 1) a web-based training, and 2) a one-day face-to-face training.

Web Training

The web-based training delivers information on adolescent development, theoretical material on working with youth, and introduces the concepts of positive youth development, collaboration, culture, and permanent connections to prepare participants for the one-day training. It also includes a case that applies the concepts in a practice setting so that participants can see how this philosophical change operates in practice. The training included the following modules:

- **Theoretical Framework –** This section included ecological and developmental theoretical perspective on working with youth
- **Adolescent Development –** This section included physical, social-emotional, and cognitive changes during adolescence
- **Maltreatment and Adolescent Development –** This section included the effects of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect on adolescents and adolescent development. It further included common manifestations of abuse in adolescence across developmental domains.
- **Four Core Principles –** This section introduced the key concepts of training: positive youth development, cultural responsiveness, collaboration, and permanent connections.
- **Case Example –** This section presented a case that illustrates how the core principles can be used in supervision and practice.

Consistent with adult learning theory (Knowles, 1970), the web-based training served the purpose of getting supervisors to buy-in to the importance of this information. Completion of the web-based training was required to attend the face-to-face training. The web training was developed to take approximately an hour. Participants registered to obtain a user name and password so that they could take the training in whatever progression she/he chose. A participant could leave and reenter the training as much as she/he wanted, but was unable to print the certificate of completion until all training modules and pretest/post-test were complete.

At the completion of training, participants received one continuing education unit and were able to print off a completion certificate.

The web portal that housed the web-based training also served as the overall project website (*www.palstep.com*). The Supervisor Toolkit, discussed below in greater detail, was added to the website so that as content was added to the Toolkit, the website was continually updated and available to interested persons. This also helped facilitate the transfer of knowledge from supervisors to caseworkers because supervisors could access training resources quickly to train their workers, or could have their workers access the information themselves.

One-Day Face-to-Face Training.

After completion of the web training, participants registered for the one-day face-to-face training. This training was delivered off-site at a hotel by an experienced trainer with participation from a former foster youth specialist. One primary goal of this training was for supervisors to understand the unique needs of youth aging out of care, and paramount to this project was the supervisor's acquisition of knowledge and its transfer to workers. Therefore, Knowles (1970) theory of adult learning informed the development and delivery of this curriculum. Several key components of adult learning theory include (1) adult learners must understand they need to know something before they will embrace it; (2) adult learners are self-directed learners; (3) experience has an important role in adult learning and incorporating the experience of the child welfare supervisors is essential to the delivery of this training; (4) adult learners are prepared to learn new things when they understand the utility of the information to their lives; (5) delivery of information needs to be problem-centered, rather than subject centered; and (6) adults are internally, rather than externally, motivated to learn. Supporting this philosophy, Verscheldenn (1993) found child welfare workers learned best from interactive training designs. Thus, learning strategies for the training utilized adult learning theory and principles. This project ensured training delivery was practical, applicable, relevant, and interactive and included several innovating training methods including:

- **Teach Back –** Teach back allowed participants to "teach" (discuss and present) some content (housing, transportation, physical/mental health, finances, community involvement, employment) to other participants. The trainer typically presented one of the sections first to model for them what to do. This method was designed to allow supervisors to the experience of practicing the presentation of the material so that they will be more comfortable training their workers.
- **Alumni Involvement –** Youth specialists, who are former foster youth and who have been hired by TDFPS in each region, were involved in the training. The youth specialists presented some content and shared their own experiences, and they were also given the opportunity to discuss regional

community resources available for youth. This also gave participants a chance to ask questions of the youth regarding her/his experiences in and out of care. The evaluation has shown youth participation is the highest rated aspect of the training.

- **Videos and Digital Stories –** The training incorporated three digital stories of youth discussing issues of aging out of care, loneliness, being gay and lesbian in foster care, and sibling separation. A film, *Teach Them How To Fish*, also presented material to supervisors on how to transfer the learning to their caseworkers.
- **Supervisory Tool-Kit –** During training, supervisors were given a CD-ROM that included the PAL-STEP Supervisory Took Kit, which is a collection of materials and techniques supervisors can use to transfer their knowledge to workers once they return to work. This Toolkit also included the entire curriculum, samples of agency documents that were altered to show how the four core principles can be integrated into current practice, and various other resources relevant to the aging out population including adolescent development, gay/lesbian/transgendered and bisexual youth, positive youth development, collaboration, permanent connections, and cultural responsiveness. The Toolkit is also on the PAL-STEP website so that supervisors and workers can access it at any time.

Challenges to Training

Although several potential challenges in implementing a culturally responsive curriculum for supervisors on youth independent living exist, this project encountered few obstacles in implementation. One potential challenge was bringing multiple agencies together with different cultures and missions to work cooperatively towards developing a curriculum for training supervisors on independent living. During the time of our project development and implementation, Texas was also undergoing a statewide emphasis on youth aging out. Our project nicely complemented the work the state was implementing, and therefore we were able to secure good representation from our partners. This emphasis also helped us overcome the potential challenge of overworked supervisors getting time off of work to attend the training. All the regions where the training was delivered had good attendance and participation of conservatorship supervisors. This was especially true in Houston and Dallas where CPS administrators on the Advisory Team put forth extra effort in calling supervisors to encourage them to attend. On the other hand, the state's interest in independent living also made it difficult for us to determine the individual impact of this project versus other efforts going on in the state.

Because our project had a web-based component, another challenge was overcoming potential computer problems related to the delivery of web-based learning. Fortunately, this was minimal. Some problems occurred in the printing of continuing education certificates and logging on to the system, but these were able to be

easily resolved. Our webmaster was very responsive and handled these few computer issues quickly.

We also anticipated that helping CPS supervisors transfer their knowledge to their workers once they return to the office would be challenging. To address this, the curriculum was designed to be as user-friendly and accessible as possible to supervisors. Extensive information, including the curriculum, training materials, sample case notes, and other relevant information was distributed during the face-to-face training and was put on the web for easy access for supervisors. The curriculum itself also included opportunities for the supervisors to practice the knowledge and skill gained so that she/he could feel more comfortable and familiar with training their workers. It was our hope that this would facilitate the transfer of knowledge, although our evaluation reveals that the challenges and overwork many supervisors experience once they return to the office are difficult to overcome.

A final challenge was the involvement of youth as partners in the curriculum development, members of the Advisory Team, and as trainers. We recognized former foster youth advisors need to be supported in their participation in this project so they feel comfortable in their role as a participant on the Team. Project investigators and trainers met with the former foster partners before and after meetings and prior to all trainings to determine her/his level of comfort, to reassure the alumnus of the importance and value of her/his participation, and to discuss any concerns the alumnus may have regarding her/his participation. This helped ease concerns and in time all of our former foster youth felt more comfortable in their roles. In particular, the feedback they received from their participation in the training was overwhelmingly positive, and the Advisory Team easily accepted and welcomed the experiences of the alumni.

PAL-STEP Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation of the PAL-Step training sought to answer four questions:

- Did the training engage participants?
- Did participants increase their knowledge of the four core principles of working with adolescents in foster care?
- Did supervisors transfer their knowledge to caseworkers?
- Did practice change?

Engagement

To assess engagement, participants were asked to complete a course evaluation at the end of the day-long training. One hundred and twenty-eight submitted a course evaluation. The evaluation form asked participants to rate four statements about the web-based training and seven statements about the face-to-face training

on a 5-point scale where 1="strongly disagree" and 5="strongly agree".

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of participants viewed the web training components as well organized (92%), interesting (84%), and a good foundation for the face-to-face training (83%). On average, the participants rated the web-based component positively (*M*=4.1, *SD*=.62).

Participants' ratings of the day-long training (Table 2) were higher compared to those for the web based training component. Items related to the trainer's presentation skills were the most highly rated characteristics of the training. Participants agreed or strongly agreed that the trainer presented information in a clear and organized manner (99%), encouraged participation (100%), and was knowledgeable (100%). While all ratings were high, with at least 60% rating the item at the highest level, participants were the least enthusiastic about having sufficient opportunities to practice new skills. The average total rating for the face-to-face training was 4.7 (*SD* =.44).

Almost all of the responses to the open ended question focused on the day-long training. One hundred and four participants identified at least one strong characteristic of the training. Over half of the respondents (58) stated that including the youth's perspective was a powerful element of PAL-STEP. In addition to general responses about youth, many (17) of these specifically noted that having a former foster child involved in the training and sharing his/her experience was important. Others (42) commented that the videos of youth telling their story were important. Nineteen respondents reported that the mix of interactive and other training techniques was a strength of the training. They specifically mentioned group discussion, peer feedback, handouts, and disc to take home.

Table 1: Web-Based Training Items and Participants by Rating (N=119)*

Items	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Presented the information in a clear and organized manner	1%	8%	56%	36%
The material was presented in a way that kept my attention.	3%	13%	48%	36%
The web-based component of the training prepared me for today's session	3%	14%	57%	26%
I feel my time completing the web-based training was well spent.	4%	16%	57%	23%

*Percentages may not equal 100% because of rounding.

Table 2: Face-To-Face Training Items and Participants' Rating (N=128)*

Items	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The trainer presented the information in a clear and organized manner.		1%	26%	73%
The trainer encouraged participation and questions.			25%	75%
I plan to apply what I learned to my specific job situation.		2%	26%	73%
The trainer was knowledgeable about the topic.			27%	73%
The material was presented in a way that kept my attention.		1%	34%	65%
I feel my time in the training was well spent.	1%	5%	30%	66%
There were sufficient opportunities to practice new skills.	3%	6%	31%	60%

*Percentages may not equal 100% because of rounding.

Thirty-eight participants provided suggestions on how the training could be improved. Seven participants suggested having more youth involved in the training, particularly youth who are in care. Nine participants felt the training could be improved by expanding the audience to all CPS caseworkers and two respondents suggested that foster parents attend.

Knowledge Gained

Participant knowledge of the four core principles was measured before and after the web-based training. Ideally the post-test would have occurred after the day-long training. However, time constraints limited our assessment to knowledge gained during the web-based training. One hundred and fifty-four people completed the 15 item test of knowledge before and after the web-based training. On average, participants' scores improved 1.9 points (SD=2.6) from pre-test to post-test. A paired-sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether the increase from pre-test to post-test was more than just chance improvement. The results indicated that the mean post-test score (M=11.10, SD=2.269) was significantly greater than the mean pre-test score (M=9.16, SD=1.734), t(153)=.-9.311, p<.00). The effect size was n^2=.36.

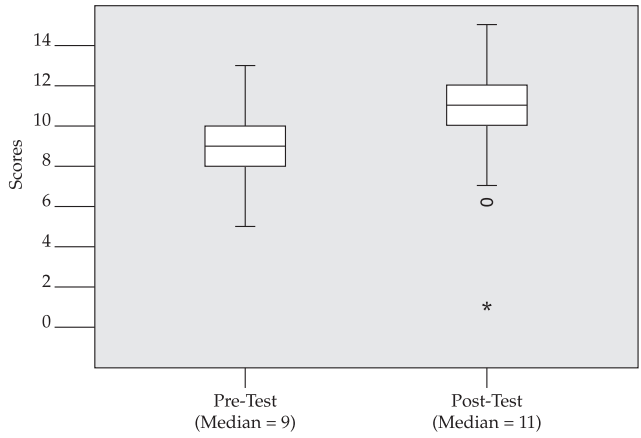

Figure 1: Median Pre- and Post- Tests Scores (N=154)

Transfer of Knowledge

Fifteen supervisors who attended the training and eleven of their caseworkers were interviewed to understand if and how the knowledge gained in the PAL-STEP training was transferred from supervisor to caseworker. In addition, the barriers to integrating the principles into practice, as well as the practice outcomes, were explored.

Supervisors used formal and informal means to transfer what they learned. Seven supervisors reported discussing the training and the four core principles in their unit meeting. One shared that she gave her workers copies of cases and other information from the training manual. The remainder reported sharing the information with their workers informally. For example, an investigative supervisor conveyed the concept of positive youth development by routinely asking workers "what does the teen want to do; what do they think is going on in the home; would they feel safer if we take custody of them". Another supervisor used what she had learned in the training to talk with a worker about stereotyping youth. Using the stories of youth in the PAL-STEP training she was able to paint a picture of the youth's experience.

Barriers to knowledge transfer fell into two categories: work load and belief that workers would learn better in a workshop. While some units were stable with acceptable caseloads, many had high caseloads related to staff turnover. In one unit the supervisor had a caseload of twenty and some workers reported caseloads of 60 and 75. Another reported supervising two units. As one supervisor said,"On the first, 61 cases came to my unit so I had to reassign those, and it's a mad house right now." Several supervisors felt that workers should attend the training. As one stated,"I was a little disappointed that it wasn't open to the workers because I felt the trainer could relate the information much more eloquently than me." Another

supervisor felt that caseworkers would learn better and be more motivated to put the principals into action in a workshop. She suggested that if she were to present the material, it would seem like a "directive."

Supervisors were asked to describe the extent to which their workers had been able to integrate the four core principles into practice and the associated challenges. Two supervisors reported that caseworkers in their units were receptive to the core principals, and specifically, to permanent connection and positive youth development. As one supervisor stated, "They saw it as doing their work better, it helps you with your work."

Case workers also reported that high caseloads were a barrier to integrating the core principles into practice. Several workers identified placement disruptions as a barrier. As one worker stated, "Disruptions are mostly barriers because it affects the child academically, emotionally, and sets them back." Four workers and one supervisor felt that foster parents sometimes hinder incorporating the core principles and they might benefit from participating in PAL-STEP training. For example, one supervisor found that foster parents did not understand the importance of facilitating sibling contact. A worker noted that many foster parents didn't know how to foster decision making in youth. She stated, "Foster parents are accountable to the placement agencies and they let it be known to the child that, well, you know, 'I have to track your every move'." Several supervisors and caseworkers did not see the four core principals as new but rather new names for concepts they were already implementing. One pointed out that positive youth development, collaborating with youth, and fostering permanent connections are central to the structure and process of Circles of Support. Two supervisors noted that cultural competence is a priority across CPS as the agency addresses disproportionality.

Change in Practice

Change in practice was evaluated in two ways. De-identified service plans completed by workers whose supervisor attended training, completed before and after the training, were compared to those of workers whose supervisor did not attend. Service plans were rated by two raters who were blind to the training status of the worker using a form developed for this project. Fourteen characteristics of practice based on the four core principles were rated on a scale of 0=absent, 1= marginal, 2= satisfactory, 3=excellent. For example, indicators of positive youth development included "unique service plan," "strengths based," and "youth participation." Ratings were summed to yield a total score.

Preliminary analysis of the documentation of 16 workers whose supervisors attended training and 15 workers whose supervisors did not attend suggest that both groups' documentation reflected increased incorporation of the four core principles at time two. Further, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

In addition to rating service plans, changes in practice were assessed in the

interviews with training participants (both supervisors and workers). Respondents were asked what changes had occurred in practice following the training. Supervisors reported change at both the system level and at the personal level. In one non-metropolitan unit, both the program director and a supervisor attended the training. At a program meeting they decided to focus on permanent connection and re-examine their PMC cases because "preserving connection was so profound." With the assistance from the State Office, they searched for families for youth. The supervisor proudly reported the efforts of her staff and the outcomes. Contact with extended family was initiated for one youth. Another child was connected with her grandmother who is exploring permanent custody. A third youth, who had been having "a really rough time over this past year, just the identity stuff" received information about his parents that, with the assistance of his worker, "helped him put some of the pieces together."

Sustainability of the Training

The curriculum developed, delivered, and evaluated by the project will remain within the state child welfare agency. In continuation of the ultimate goal of training all CPS supervisors on the issues relevant to independent living, this curriculum will become a part of the state's CPS Supervisor Certification program. Those supervisors who are not certified and who do not participate in the project will be required to attend the training as part of their requirements to achieve Supervisor Certification. Supervisors who are currently certified will be encouraged to attend the training as part of their certification renewal. UH-GSSW and UTA-SSW will continue to review and update course offerings in cultural competence, child welfare, and child development. Content from the PAL-STEP curriculum will be infused into appropriate courses.

Another means being used to disseminate the curriculum content is through revised versions for foster parents and caseworkers. Through another grant we have revised the curriculum and directed it to the foster parent and caseworker experience. Foster parents and caseworkers have responded positively to the content and process.

To date, we have participated in five national child welfare related conferences where we have discussed the curriculum and its content. Additionally we have distributed over 400 Toolkits on CD, which is available to the reader on the webpage, *palstep.org*. As discussed, the tool-kit includes the entire curriculum, Power Point presentation, and supporting materials. It is hoped other states will use the took-kit to train child welfare professionals and others who work with youth aging out of foster care.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the PAL-STEP training suggests that it engaged supervisors in the learning process, particularly in the face-face training. Further, participants in the web-based training demonstrated increased knowledge of adolescent develop-

ment and of the four core principles of positive youth development, cultural responsiveness, collaboration, and permanent connection. The findings on the transfer of knowledge are mixed. While many supervisors had formal training for their staff focused on the four core principles, the majority reported a less systematic approach. Specifically, supervisors shared concepts in supervision when the opportunity presented itself. For most supervisors, their workers', and their own case loads, prohibited a planned transfer of knowledge.

A change in practice was more difficult to assess. From the interviews with workers and their supervisors, it was clear that many changes occurred which can be attributed to the PAL-STEP Training. However, it is also clear that all workers, even those whose supervisor did not attend training, are increasingly incorporating the four core principles in practice as demonstrated by their documentation. In Texas, many recent initiatives in child welfare reflect a growing awareness of the need of adolescent youth in foster care and incorporate the four core principles. For example, the Circle of Support is built on the concepts of positive youth development, cultural responsiveness, collaboration, and permanent connection. Disproportionality concerns have raised awareness of cultural responsiveness for all youth in care. Finally, efforts to find children permanent homes have resulted in diligent searches for relatives that have resulted in permanent connections if not always homes for youth. In this context, the PAL-STEP Training is one many efforts which together are changing practice with adolescents.

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IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION

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Conceptual Base

The needs of older youth, especially those who are transitioning from foster care to independence and adulthood, are only recently being seriously addressed by child welfare services. This is in response to startling statistics on the number of youth who age out of foster care; more than 26,000 youth existed foster care in 2006 through "emancipation" (U.S.DHHS, 2008). The child welfare system has long focused its limited resources both on the "front end" (child protective assessment/investigation) as well as on the youngest and seemingly most vulnerable children. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that youth who enter adulthood by aging out of child welfare services are equally vulnerable, though in different ways. Relative to their peers who grow up in stable homes, youth who age out of foster care are disadvantaged economically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

The myriad of issues facing youth who "age out" of foster care are often portrayed in grim terms. We know that these youth are usually financially destitute and with limited human capital in terms of employment skills, or educational attainment (Blome, 1996), and are usually without safe and/or stable housing (Courtney et al., 2001). Because most of these youth did not have permanency resolution, they often lack positive support from family and peers, even though many return to their families-of-origin in which the youth experienced maltreatment. We also know that many older youth in care have been identified with special medical, emotional, behavioral, and developmental issues (Wattenberg et al., 2001). A higher proportion of youth from the foster care population compared to the general population become involved in the criminal justice system (Courtney at al., 2001) and they are more likely than their peers to experience pregnancy and parenting at young ages (Nollan et al., 2000). Furthermore older youth in care are disproportionately members of racial and ethnic minorities (Adler, 2001; Kemp & Bodony, 2000; Davis, 1992; Curtis & Denby, 2004), and may face additional problems due to discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas.

As part of the Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago's Mid-

west Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, relatively current data are available on former foster youth in Iowa. The picture that is presented is a profile of youth who have experienced child maltreatment, often of multiple types, youth who have experienced multiple placements and re-entries into care, as well as histories of running away from placements (Chapin Hall Center for Children, 2005). This study also documents a higher propensity for experiencing grade retention, suspension, and expulsion from school, involvement with the juvenile justice system, being a victim of violence, and needing mental health services among older youth in care. Yet, interviews conducted with these youth suggest a remarkable level of satisfaction with their care and with their relationships with family members, both foster and biological, as well as fairly strong levels of social support. Ninety-percent of former foster youth interviewed reported being optimistic about the future (Chapin Hall Center for Children, 2005).

If one looks at older youth in care solely from a problem-focused perspective, it soon becomes overwhelming. While not denying that youth aging out of foster care face many hurdles to economic, social, and emotional well-being, a positive youth development approach that recognizes the strengths and capacities of each youth in the context of cultural factors and needs, that seeks to build permanent connections and supports with the youth, and that engages a larger community as collaborative partners, offers a path to a more promising future than leaving the youth on his or her own at the legal age of 18.

The needs of older youth in care were recognized in the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and now long overdue efforts are underway at federal and state levels to address the unique needs of older youth in transition. For the past three years, the University of Iowa, School of Social Work (UI) and the Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) have been collaborating on a federally funded grant to improve outcomes for youth in transition from foster care to adulthood through training of public child welfare supervisors, workers, and community partners. The purpose of this article is to describe the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating this statewide training effort.

Our project was based on the key assumption that supervision is a specific area of practice with its own skill sets. Therefore supervisor training should include both content in the core principles of transition planning, as well as the skills for supervising caseworkers in the work of transition planning. As coaches, teachers, and mentors for their staff, public child welfare supervisors must themselves understand the needs of youth in transition, successful strategies for engaging youth from a positive youth development framework, the importance of permanent connections, and evidence-based interventions with older youth. Supervisors must also learn and model culturally competent practice, as well as practice in ways that involve collaboration with the multitude of individuals and community entities that work with older youth both formally and informally.

We conceptualized this project as a multi-level training, beginning with build-

ing knowledge and skills for supervisors, then moving to the next step of training caseworkers, with supervisors as co-facilitators. Iowa's public child welfare workforce is small, with approximately 115 supervisors and 750 caseworkers statewide. Training at both levels had the advantage of providing consistent content, and including supervisors as co-facilitators would help to reinforce their roles as coaches and mentors. There are also ten transitional planning specialists around the state; these individuals, as well as the state's transition planning program manager, were heavily involved in developing and implementing the training.

Originally we had intended to conclude the project with a statewide training to which a variety of provider agencies would be invited. However, during the course of implementation, we realized that many of the complexities around transition planning have to do with local systems. Therefore, we reconfigured the statewide roll-out as a series of localized events. Instead of hosting only one statewide training, we implemented a community day in each of the state's eight service areas. Supervisors and mid-managers in each service area shaped the format and content of that community day, based on local needs. Throughout the development and implementation of this project we have also kept the core principles for transition planning, positive youth development, cultural competence, collaboration, and permanent connections, at the forefront. These principles are discussed further under training content.

Supervisory Curriculum Development

At the time we began this project, UI and IDHS had been developing and implementing a statewide training program for Iowa's supervisors and mid-managers as part of a federal grant on improving recruitment and retention in public child welfare. The focus on supervision was based on a substantial body of research demonstrating the importance of supervision and supervisory support in promoting job satisfaction and retention of child welfare employees (Curry, D., McCarragher, T., & Dellmann-Jenkins, M., 2005; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Landsman, 2001; Mor Barak, Levin, Nissly, & Lane, 2006; Rycraft, 1994). The multi-phased supervisory curriculum was designed to engage supervisors at all career stages in honing skills as reflective practitioners in organizational leadership and supervision. We envisioned the transition project as complementary to the work in progress, permitting a special focus on developing supervisory skills in this content area.

The supervisory curriculum provides theoretical foundation, concrete application, and emphasis on the improvement of client outcomes through enhanced organizational effectiveness. Material is presented in the context of a comprehensive model of child welfare supervision. This includes acknowledging the various roles of the supervisor in the unit (administration, education, consultation, counseling, and evaluation), the contextual factors influencing supervision (e.g., law, policy, economic conditions, and political realities), and the role of the supervisor in the organization (advocating for resources for staff and clients, negotiating relationships

with community providers, and responding to client and community concerns).

Our approach to curriculum development is based on sound principles of adult learning, emphasizing practical application of useful concepts and best practices, using case-based applications, and providing adequate time for collegial interaction. The training integrates measurable outcomes and learning objectives and supports the IDHS practice model and redesign initiatives. Supervisors are provided tools for self-assessment of their own supervisory behaviors as well as detailed task analyses of worker competencies which can help them develop individual and unit plans with their staff. We have also developed easy to use resources to share with staff and provide supplemental reference materials and web-based resources for use in direct on-the-job application.

Curriculum development occurred through a process of gathering information and collaborating with a variety of stakeholders. At the beginning of the project we convened an advisory committee, which has continued to meet and provide feedback on a monthly basis over the three years. The advisory committee encompasses the IDHS training committee which oversees all child welfare training for the state. We added two transition planning specialists and two project consultants who work with Iowa's youth initiatives to this committee. Combining our project advisory committee with the state's child welfare training committee helped to ensure that our training would be consistent with and supportive of other IDHS initiatives.

In preparation for developing supervisor training that would be responsive to Iowa's needs, we conducted a series of focus groups in each of the eight service areas around the state with IDHS supervisors, seeking input from as many supervisors as possible. In addition, we conducted focus groups with caseworkers in rural and urban areas, with a small group of IDHS social workers called transition planning specialists, with youth who had recently aged out of foster care, with Native American families, with and providers of aftercare services for youth in care. We also conducted interviews with key informants representing foster parents, public health, IDHS administration, advocacy organizations, and organizations serving primarily minority youth and families.

In addition to gathering information though focus groups and interviews, we conducted a systematic review and analysis of the content of the twelve independent living curricula for caseworkers developed by Children's Bureau grantees. This activity was accomplished in collaboration with the University of Louisville. A matrix summarizing key elements of each curriculum, organized according the four core principles of transition planning, was used in specifying competencies for supervisors and caseworkers and in curriculum development.

Information from the focus groups, interviews, and review of independent living curricula were all used to inform the development of competencies for supervisors and a complementary set of competencies for caseworkers. We shared these with the project advisory committee and revised them in accordance with feedback. The competencies, used in guiding curriculum development, focus on improving

practice with youth in transition by promoting stronger youth involvement in case planning and decision-making; engaging a youth-centered team for strengthening the youth's permanent social or family-like connections and providing support for life skill development; approaching the youth's preparation for adulthood from a positive youth development perspective; understanding the youth's cultural heritage and incorporating this in transition planning; strengthening collaboration among the various entities involved in transition planning and support; and addressing the complex needs of youth.

Our multiple information gathering activities enabled us to better focus the content and approach of the training curriculum while attending to the original goal of addressing the four core substantive areas. For example, while we proposed a round of supervisor-to-worker trainings, the widespread concern about the need for better community collaboration led us to develop a regional approach and to include community partners in the second day of regional training. Another example of how the training was informed by the focus group research is the inclusion of youth voices throughout the curriculum. Two young adults, one who had aged out of foster care and another who was adopted as a teen, serve as curriculum advisors; one of these advisors attends each training session as a resource and co-facilitator. Youth panelists from the statewide foster care youth group called *Elevate* present their perspectives at the closing session of each training. Throughout the two-day training, youth perspectives are presented through multi-media such as video, photography and quotes from the youth focus groups which appear on PowerPoint. *Elevate* staff and participants developed a music video for the section on permanent connections, presenting their songs and poetry about dislocation and multiple moves, fear of attaching to a new family, grief over the loss of sibling connections, and hope for reconnection and success (*Elevate*, 2007).

In implementing the training, we divided the supervisors into four groups, mixed geographically in order to provide opportunities to meet with others across the state. The training was provided in two-day sessions in Des Moines, the most central location. The first training also served as a pilot, with revisions made according to consumer and trainer feedback.

Curriculum Development for Regional Trainings

Following training of supervisors, we turned our attention to the caseworker and community trainings to be held in each service area. Due to variation across service areas in how community agencies were working together, and because we wanted to create opportunities for IDHS supervisors to take visible leadership roles, we decided to offer community trainings in each of the eight service areas and involve supervisors in planning and hosting the events. To maximize efficiency, the community training was scheduled the day after the worker training at the same location whenever possible.

Planning for the caseworker and community trainings began on the second day

of each of the four statewide supervisor trainings. Supervisors from the same service area worked in teams to complete a planning questionnaire for the community rollout, recommending goals for the community day, suggesting topics for training and facilitated discussion, and drafting a suggested invitation list. Supervisors were also invited to volunteer for a planning committee if they so desired. After completion of the statewide supervisor trainings, we compiled results for each service area and contacted the eight service area managers (top regional administrators) asking them to appoint a planning committee. Our suggestion was that each committee include one social work administrator (supervisor of front line supervisors), the IDHS community liaison, the transition planning specialist, and some or all of the supervisor volunteers. Our recommendations were accepted, and some service area managers chose to add to the basic committee a decategorization coordinator, a juvenile court officer, and/or facilitators of the local *Elevate* (foster youth) chapter.

The UI team of co-trainers and a consultant hired to manage coordination for the rollouts, traveled to each service area and met with the eight planning teams, reviewing recommendations made by the supervisors and discussing the best way to approach the community rollout. Questions guiding the discussion included: 1) Where is your service area currently in terms of community collaboration to improve outcomes for youth in transition?; 2) Where do you want to be a year from now? What are your priorities?; 3) How could training and/or resources help?; 4) Who do you need to have at the community day to make that happen?; 5) What would constitute success for a day of training?; 6) What kind of preparation would need to be done to facilitate a successful day?; and 7) How should youth be involved?

We offered the committees options about the length of the training day (which usually depended on the target audience and travel times), the relative proportion of the day to be spent on training and facilitated discussion, and the number of topics to be addressed. Each planning committee was responsible for managing invitations and replies. All eight areas invited the representatives of their legislatively created transition review committees, and all eight areas are also invited a panel of former foster youth to talk about what has made a difference to them in their own transitions. Most service areas included providers under contract to IDHS to provide transition services. Three service areas invited judges, attorneys, and juvenile court officers, and one area reached out to voluntary organizations such as the Salvation Army and local church congregations. Educators and visiting nurse associations were also on many invitation lists. The content of the community training is discussed further later in this article.

A similar planning process was used for the worker training. We asked supervisors to review the content of their two-day training and recommend which topics would be most useful for a one-day worker training. While engaging all of the supervisors in this initial process, we emphasized the importance of their role in coaching and reinforcing best practice. When we met with the regional planning committees, we proposed a full-day training, but offered some options about the

relative emphasis on training topics and offered some workshop options to allow for worker choice. We also gave the committees the choice about whether to involve child protective assessment workers in the training; all decided not to include the assessors but one committee asked that we work with them to create a half-day training for assessors. The committees were very engaged in thinking about how best to use the day. All of the committees decided to include a youth panel.

Supervisor Training Content

The supervisor training is delivered in two full consecutive days of training. We begin with a review of the model of supervision that we had developed through the Recruitment and Retention project, showing where the transition training fit into the larger structure of supervision practice. We then present to the supervisors what we had learned our focus groups, key informant interviews, and recent research from national data and Iowa's population of youth aging out of care. This information is used to "make the case" for improving the quality of service to older youth in the child welfare system.

Key "Youth in Transition" Curriculum Concepts for Supervisors

Start Early.

Though Iowa law does not mandate transition planning until the youth's sixteenth birthday, our training emphasized that youth participation in case planning should begin much earlier. Formal tools for assessing a young person's life skills, such as the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment*, can be used with youth beginning at age 14. Giving youth choices, treating them as resources and partners for generating solutions to problems, assuring their attendance at court hearings, and informing youth about their family's progress are elements of youth participation which can be implemented for younger youth in care, and certainly for preteens and teens. Youth who have had every important decision made for them by a government agency without their participation are ill-equipped to face the challenges of adulthood.

Incorporate Positive Youth Development into Supervision and Case Planning.

Positive youth development (PYD) approaches focus on the *whole child* and highlight the achievement of developmental tasks, concentrating on interactions with family, school, neighborhood, societal, and cultural contexts (Catalano et al., 2002). PYD stems from positive psychology, which focuses on the development of positive qualities in youth such as competence, optimism, compassion, and other strengths. Positive psychology downplays the notion that youth misbehave because they are in some way damaged, or defective, and in need of repair, while focusing attention on responses to the absence of contentment, common sense, and other positive qualities of healthy child development (Kelley, 2003).

A core tenet in PYD is that young people are the primary agents in their own developmental process seeking ways to meet their basic physical, emotional, spiritual, and social needs and to build competencies and connections they perceive as necessary for survival and success (AED/Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996). The PYD approach sees youth as resources rather than problems. All youth have talents, energies, strengths and constructive interests that can be used to facilitate their acquisition of competence and the capacity to contribute to the world (Damon, 2004).

The second tenet of PYD is that the role of youth helpers (e.g., other people, organizations, and institutions) is to promote positive development through providing opportunities and supports. The typical inclination of caregivers and educators is to do things "to" and "for" youth rather than "with" them. The insight of positive youth development (PYD) is that young people thrive when adults listen to them, respect them, and engage with them in meaningful investments in the community (Nicholson, Collins, & Holmer, 2004).

A significant challenge to incorporating the positive youth development approach in public child welfare practice is transforming a traditionally problem-focused system into one that is built on recognizing and working from strengths. While "strength-based" language is now pervasive in child welfare, this approach is not always evident in practice. Child welfare workers are accustomed to viewing older youth in care as burdened with problems, whether a result of lengthy placement histories, years of maltreatment, behavioral and emotional problems, inability to be adopted, or placement instability. A positive youth development approach requires a profound change in the way that older youth are viewed and in intervention strategies to help youth become successful.

In training, supervisors make the connection between the child welfare field's focus of safety, permanency, and well-being and the twelve desired outcomes in positive youth development: physical health; mental health; intellectual ability; employability; civic; social and cultural ability; safety; self-worth; belonging/membership; responsibility/autonomy; mastery; and spirituality/self awareness (AED/Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996).

Supervisors consider how they, with their workers, can help youth in care to access necessary opportunities for positive development—opportunities for expression and creativity; group membership; part-time paid employment; contribution service and exploration; practice; and reflection. Supervisors discuss how best to assure that youth in care have relationships with adults that will provide high expectations; standards and boundaries; nurturance and friendship; connections to important resources; and strategic support—assistance in planning and assessing their options, motivating, and coaching. The role of the caseworker is carefully considered—how the worker approaches interactions with the youth, using an adaptation of Lofquist and Miller's (1989) Object/Recipient/Resource framework: what kinds of direct support workers can provide, and how workers can recruit others to

engage with the youth. The opportunity to share perspectives with other supervisors has proven especially helpful. During one training session a supervisor stated "when making case transfers, I give top priority to maintaining older youths' relationships with their worker."

Promote Culturally Responsive Practice with Older Youth in Care.

In a two-day training it is impossible to adequately address all of the cultural issues for foster youth. We decided to frame the inquiry in terms of the adolescent's development of social and cultural identity, with the added challenge that youth in out of home care must often undertake this task apart from their families, cultures, and communities. To stimulate conversation, we view two videos, *Knowing Who You Are* (Casey Family Programs, 2005) and vignettes from *Breaking the Silence: LGBTQ Foster Youth Tell Their Stories* (National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2005). Supervisors draw lessons from the videos, primarily about the importance of their workers listening to and engaging youth in conversations about culture and identity. Supervisors discuss strategies for increasing workers' cultural competence and ways to find mentors and other cultural opportunities for youth of color. They consider ways to assure that LGBTQ youth feel safe to disclose to the agency their sexual orientation, gender identity, and problems with victimization such as harassment or bullying at school. We also examine family-centered approaches to working with those who have rejected youth based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Build and Sustain Permanent Connections.

Research has documented the tendency for youth who age out of care without achieving permanency to return to their families of origin (Courtney & Barth, 1996; Landsman et al., 1999; Mallon, 1998; McMillen & Tucker, 1999; Westat, 1991). For older youth who are unable to be reunified with their own families and who have not achieved another permanent home through adoption or guardianship, child welfare has begun to expand its definition of permanency to include "relational" permanency, that is, helping youth establish "enduring family relationships that provide for physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual well-being" (Frey et al., 2005). "Permanent connections" are those with whom the youth has some emotional attachment—birth family, extended family, kin, foster family, mentors, etc.—and who can be expected to provide lifelong support. Establishing permanent connections is key to helping youth sustain support systems as they enter adulthood.

Best practice points to blending the goals of exploring permanency and helping the young person develop life skills using a youth-centered team. Where older youth are concerned, the youth-centered approach places the youth at the helm of planning for her/his future, with support from family, kin, and other individuals who play a key role in the youth's life. For older youth who are approaching adulthood without having had permanency resolution, supporting their capacity for self-determination is critical for their successful transition. The youth-centered

team composed of the youth, the worker, and the significant adults in the youth's life, meets regularly to "explore and support the highest level of commitment that each adult can make as a permanent parent or extended family member" and to develop a comprehensive case plan that addresses the youth's current needs and future hopes and plans (Frey, 2007). The youth's needs for permanent connections and to acquire life skills are integrated by recruiting adults in the youth's social network to support the youth in skill development (e.g., teaching the youth to drive or cook) and to offer various forms of material, emotional, and strategic support for the attainment of the youth's goals (e.g., career exploration, college applications). (Frey, 2007).

Training activities around youth permanency include using materials to build "models" of permanency and the introduction of a variety of tools to assist workers in talking with youth about permanency and identifying potential permanent connections. Small group work with brief case scenarios gives supervisors an opportunity to consider the potential utility of these tools in practice.

Youth permanency is a multifaceted construct which includes legal status, stability and appropriateness of the youth's placement setting, connectedness to family and significant others, and the youth's emotional well-being (Landsman et al., 1999). The curriculum presents research and best practice for maintaining placement stability, including providing more intensive support (e.g., worker visits, therapeutic support) for the youth and foster parents in the youth's first six months of placement.

Develop Community Collaboration for Youth in Transition.

The literature on interagency collaboration identifies a set of characteristic dimensions: stakeholder involvement, shared goals, responsibilities, rewards, resources, authority/decision-making, evaluation, structures, and vision/values (Austin, 1997; Urwin & Haynes, 1998; Walter & Petr, 2000). Each of these dimensions serves to strengthen the structure and the common purpose behind it. Shared vision and values, in particular, are believed to be crucial to successful interagency collaboration (Bailey & Koney, 1996; Harbert, Finnegan, & Tyler, 1997; Morgan, 1995). Walter and Petr (2000) describe shared values as the core of the interagency collaboration. These shared values become the guiding force for the collaborative and the basis for the activities that are undertaken. Our training involves guest panelists representing both the public child welfare agency and community-based agencies in rural and urban settings, with a focus on what is working well and the role of the public agency in improving collaboration. The panel presentation leads to a discussion among the supervisors about strategies for strengthening existing structures for collaboration, including legally mandated transition plan review teams and Iowa DHS community partnership initiatives. The supervisors work in small groups to share ideas on common challenges in their local collaborative efforts, such as building a shared vision and making their collaborations more culturally diverse.

Content of Regional Trainings

Most of the service areas identified a specific focus for their community day. For some it has been increasing community and provider participation in youth centered team meetings. For others it is communicating to their community partners how IDHS is working to meet its responsibilities to transitioning youth, combined with an invitation for closer collaboration. For the service area focusing on voluntary organizations, the goal is to educate those organizations on the resources available to youth who age out. At each community training, we have provided data presentations on outcomes of concern for area youth in transition.

During the development of the supervisory curriculum we had worked with two creative transition planning specialists who developed tools to help workers track the transition planning process, understand the available resources for transitioning youth, and how to access them. We had also developed a presentation and materials on how to make better use of the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment* in transition planning. The local planning committees felt it was very important to give their local transition planning specialists the opportunity to be seen as leaders and experts in their regions. In response, we met with the transition planning specialists, invited them to present and reviewed our materials. The result was another transition planning specialist creating an even richer presentation which was used by his peers. Participants rated the resource presentation among the most useful portions of the training content. The process of each transitional planning specialist "owning" the work was an important benefit of the regional approach.

We felt that the presence of supervisors at the community training was a critical component, so we worked very hard to secure their attendance and to offer them visible roles during the day, including welcoming participants, offering introductory remarks, and leading table discussions. The interactive nature of the day allowed for supervisors to show their leadership through skillful discussion of the topics.

A variety of training methods were used, including short PowerPoint presentations, large group and small group discussions, and videos. A key goal was infusing the training with the voices of youth, which we did in a variety of ways, including presentations by youth, incorporating comments from the focus groups with youth into the presentations and training manual, and using a variety of videos, including a music video created by *Elevate* specifically for our training.

Most of the planning committees asked that we save time at the end of the day for community attendees to make "commitments" about how what they intended to implement in their individual practice and what they intended to take back to share with their agencies. Those commitments were memorialized in a variety of ways. In one area, the workers in their training the previous day created paper dolls signifying a youth in care with whom they were working. The dolls were on display at the community training, and community participants were asked to write their commitments on paper umbrellas which were then attached to the hands of the paper youth. This idea was generated by the local planning team.

Content of Worker Training

Caseworker training was provided in a one-day session in each of the eight service areas, and focused on the four core content areas. Workers were asked to bring information about one older youth to the training, to help make the content more relevant for them. One particularly useful part of the training included introducing a variety of tools for identifying permanent connections. Workers had opportunities to review each tool and to talk with each other and with their supervisor about how they might apply these tools in practice.

We knew from the focus groups that we needed to address the challenges of transitioning special needs youth into the adult mental health system; because of a wide variation in practice across the state we decided to accomplish this at the regional level. We recruited the two IDHS staff who work with the county Central Point of Coordination (CPC) staff to transition youth into adult services. They offered a 75 minute workshop on the process, and invited local county CPCs to join them in the presentation. This was a great plan, as it engaged these individuals in the community day and encouraged them to make public commitments to collaborate. Several CPCs participated in the entire community day.

A key component of the grant is strengthening the supervisors' role in training their workers. We approached this in several different ways. First, we created a set of supervisory tools for the supervisors to use in their administrative, education, consultative, and evaluative functions. Second, we gathered a variety of training resources for supervisors to use in unit meetings. Third, we recruited supervisors as hosts for the worker training, to sit with their teams during the training, and to facilitate table discussions. We provided the supervisors with prepared discussion questions for the cultural competence portion of the training. We also provided the workers with a set of practice tools in their participant's manual.

By engaging supervisors in planning and implementing workers' training and providing workers with an introduction to best practices, we supported and empowered the supervisors to lead their teams to improve outcomes for youth in transition. The trainers noted informally that workers appeared much more engaged in training when supervisors modeled that engagement and enthusiasm.

Barriers and Facilitators

One of the challenges to our project has been implementing a statewide training that also takes into consideration the differences by locality. Iowa's 99 counties are organized into eight service areas, and some of these service areas are predominantly urban or rural. There are often vast discrepancies in resources and services available in rural counties compared to urban areas, a fact that we had to keep in mind as we developed the curriculum. In addition, supervisors in rural areas typically supervise multiple counties, thus having less face-to-face supervision time. Finally, some areas were already further along in thinking about transition planning than others, and we had to find ways to capture the best of current practices while re-

maining sensitive to the variation across the state in the area of transition planning.

Another significant challenge to implementing our project has been the almost continual changes that have occurred within IDHS during the same three-year period. In implementing a new Model of Child Welfare Practice, IDHS had renegotiated its contractual services, which also affected the way that supervisors and caseworkers were viewing their own jobs. Our training team had to stay on top of these changes to make sure that the training was consistent with "current" practice. Having the IDHS training committee as our advisory committee was helpful in this regard, alerting us to imminent changes.

Our project has benefited from some facilitative factors as well. One such factor is that Iowa's foster youth group, *Elevate*, was available to work as part of our team and to assist with our training efforts, including our regional trainings around the state. Having a youth presence at the trainings was very important to maintaining the primacy of the positive youth development framework.

In addition, we have observed that over the three years of this project, considerably more attention is being paid to the population of older youth in care. When we began this effort, it was sometimes a struggle to engage training participants in addressing the needs of this population. However, over time more resources and initiatives addressing the needs of older youth have been developed, and CFSR outcomes will now be addressing older youth. These factors have reduced our need to "sell" the importance of transition planning for youth aging out of foster care, as we had to do early on. Of course, we like to think that our efforts have played a role in bringing this increased focus on youth aging out of foster care.

The fact that we had already developed a collaborative relationship with IDHS supervisors through our Recruitment and Retention project also helped to facilitate the transition training project. We have been able to build on the supervision practice model with a specific focusing on the unique content of transition. With this foundation, we have also able to train and support the local leadership role of those who supervise the work of transition planning, as well as to train the caseworkers and community partners who work directly with transitioning youth.

Project Evaluation

Both processes and outcomes are being evaluated in this project. The process evaluation has examined issues related to implementation, such as timely completion of project activities and extent of participation in trainings by supervisors, caseworkers, and youth. The outcome evaluation focuses on the extent to which the desired results are achieved, and we have identified short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes by which to evaluate this project's effectiveness.

Short-term outcomes include satisfaction with training content/perceived usefulness of the training, and increased knowledge of transition planning and core principles by supervisors and caseworkers from pre- to post-training. Consumer satisfaction has been measured through surveys distributed at the conclusion of

each training session, with feedback used in revisions of the training content and methods. To assess knowledge gain, we developed tests and administered them prior to the training and at the end of the training. We conducted item analyses and revised the test questions to eliminate items that performed poorly.

The key intermediate outcomes identified and measured in this project are utilization of knowledge and skills by supervisors in their supervision practice and improved transition planning based on the core principles discussed earlier. Utilization of knowledge and skills is being assessed through supervisor self-reports on their own supervision practice over time, using a behavioral assessment measure developed for this project. Originally we had planned to use a similar assessment for workers, but with only one measurement opportunity we decided that it would not be useful to attempt to track this information longitudinally with all public child welfare caseworkers. With regard to the intermediate outcome of improved transition planning, this is being assessed through a cohort study described later in this section.

Longer-term outcomes for this project include those that we envision occurring beyond the funding period of this grant. One such outcome is the incorporation of transition training in the IDHS training plan. The UI will be available to continue to provide this training to public child welfare supervisors and caseworkers beyond the funding period. A second long-term outcome, the integration of the training content in UI child welfare curricula, has already been achieved—we have included transition as a unique topic in the School of Social Work's course on child welfare policy and practice. The ultimate long-term outcome, improved well-being for youth in transition out of care, will need to be assessed over time.

As noted previously, the intermediate outcome of improved transition planning is being evaluated through a cohort study of transition planning prior to and following training, using interviews with youth who are nearing the age of 18, and with the youth's permission, an interview with the caseworker as well. The focus of the interview is on planning for the transition process. Issues assessed from both perspectives include: whether permanency goals are better articulated after the training, whether there is evidence that youth are playing a stronger role in their transitional planning, the extent to which permanent connections are being pursued and implemented, whether an appropriate array of services, as well as informal supports, are being identified and coordinated. The working hypothesis is that transition planning from pre-training to post-training will demonstrate greater youth involvement, attention to cultural needs, collaboration with community entities, and strengthened permanent connections. We did not ask questions about the youth's child welfare history, risk factors, and behaviors; rather we asked about the youth's plans for turning 18, the youth's role in transition planning, and what steps had been taken toward the transition process. Nevertheless, this study took close to year to receive approval by the Institutional Review Board, primarily because we were requesting a waiver of parental consent to participate in the interview.

The first cohort of youth was identified prior to conducting the first supervisor training. We used stratified random sampling to select 12 youth from each of the state's eight service areas who were between the ages of 17.3 and 17.9, who did not have a diagnosis of mental retardation, and who were not residing in a juvenile detention facility. The latter two criteria were established to ensure that the youth was capable of giving informed consent and without coercion. We sent a letter to each of the 96 youth explaining the study and letting them know that a researcher would be following up by telephone to provide more information and to find out if the youth was interested in participating in the study. We prepared a script for the follow-up phone calls to cover all aspects of the study procedures and to make sure that the youth understood the concepts of voluntary participation and informed consent. For those who agreed to participate in the interview, a time and place for the interview were arranged. The interviewer made an additional contact prior to the agreed upon time to confirm the appointment. During the face-to-face interview, written informed consent was obtained, and the interviews were audio-taped with the youth's permission.

Making contact with the youth turned out to be quite a challenging task. Many of the youth were no longer at their address of record. Some had returned home, several had run from their placement, some had their cases closed, and a couple were in jail. Multiple attempts were made to find every youth, but ultimately out of the 96 youth selected for the original sample, we were able complete interviews with 22 youth and 21 caseworkers (one youth did not give permission to contact the caseworker), representing slightly less than 25% of the sample. Twelve of the youth interviewed were residing in group homes and ten were living with foster families or relatives.

Now that we are nearing completion of the training, we will be selecting a second stratified sample of youth who are approaching the age of 18 and who meet the other criteria previously noted. Comparing the interview data between the first and second youth cohorts will allow us to evaluate whether transition planning practice has changed after the statewide training effort.

Sustainability

From the outset we have considered how to sustain training for transition planning after the conclusion of the grant. This is being accomplished through the preparation and dissemination of written curricula, integration of transition content in the UI School of Social Work's child welfare curricula, and the availability of continued training to IDHS and other child welfare agencies through the UI School of Social Work's National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice.

Activities to sustain the work are already in progress. We are preparing written curricula for training public child welfare supervisors to effectively supervise line staff in transition planning for older youth. The curricula will be prepared in print and electronic versions for varied dissemination purposes. Included in these

curricula are visual PowerPoint presentations that accompany the on-site training. The printed version will be available at cost from the UI and the e-copy by downloading from the website (*www.uiowa.edu\~nrcfcp*). An on-line toolkit with resources for supervisors for transitional planning will also be produced and made available to trainees within the Iowa public child welfare system and disseminated nationally.

In order to facilitate sustainability of the training between the UI and IDHS partnership, the curriculum for supervisors and workers will be available on a continuing basis. The training programs will be added to the menu of training programs offered by IDHS, and NRC trainers will be available to conduct new groups on an as-needed basis. Because we were able to train all current supervisors and a large proportion of caseworkers, subsequent trainings will only be necessary for new employees.

We have also integrated the content of transition training into the UI School of Social Work's child welfare curricula for undergraduate and graduate students. A segment of the course, child welfare policy and practice, focuses on the issues of youth in foster care and the transition process. Thus, social work students who are preparing for child welfare careers will receive content that is timely and relevant to working with the youth population.

Our project team is prepared to make this training available to other interested states and communities. Readers who wish to learn more about the training program described in this article should contact the primary author at *miriam-landsman@uiowa.edu*.

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Y.O.U.T.H.FULL INTELLIGENCE FOR CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS

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Connection

Connection is everything. I saw that caption recently at the bottom of a movie poster. And yes, I thought "Connection ***IS*** everything". That could be the caption on the bottom of the movie poster for the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project's child welfare supervisor training alternately titled: *Y.O.U.T.H. Full Intelligence for Child Welfare Supervisors* and *Through the Eyes of the Youth: How Child Welfare Supervisors Can Positively Impact the Lives of Foster Youth*. Yes, there are two titles…and there begins the story of our training curriculum.

Background

The Y.O.U.T.H. (Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help) Training Project started in October of 2000 with a three-year grant from the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) Children's Bureau. The grant was to develop and deliver a training curriculum on transition-aged youth for child welfare workers in California. The project, named by the youth who developed our first curriculum, was a collaboration between the Bay Area Academy (BAA) of San Francisco State University (a child welfare training organization), and California Youth Connection (CYC), a statewide foster youth advocacy organization. The project was always imagined as a unique bridging of academia, professional child welfare trainers, and current and former foster youth. Leadership by current and former foster youth was infused from the inception of the grant, co-authored and envisioned by a social work professor and a former foster youth. Former foster youth were hired to implement the program's goal of truly empowering current and former foster youth to develop and deliver curricula to child welfare professionals, and that is what we did.

In 2003, the Children's Bureau announced that there would not be any continuation grants for the 12 transition-aged youth training curricula programs like ours. After three years we were finally getting somewhere: had trained about 20 young people (ages 16-24) to develop and deliver curricula, had presented the training to nearly 500 social workers, and we were ready to continue this good work. The project, originally housed at the San Francisco offices of CYC, to support good connection and easy access to youth leaders, moved across the bay to the Oakland offices of BAA. Seeing the value of the project and not wanting to lose momentum, BAA and Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project staff sought additional funding from local foundations and like-minded organizations, namely the California Permanency for Youth Project and the California Social Work Education Center. After surviving a year on patch funding, the project secured a two-year collaborative grant from two foundations and a local county. The county's participation allowed the project to draw down Title IV-E training funds and nearly double the foundation contributions. We trained 40 additional current and former foster youth to train our curricula, and updated the curricula to match some of the state's needs around the topics of permanency and youth engagement. We trained more than 2,000 child welfare workers in California and responded to an invitation to train child welfare workers and foster parents in the state of Hawaii. In 2005, we applied for and received funding from the Administration of Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Our work to train child welfare supervisors was underway.

Project Conceptualization

We were delighted to receive the child welfare supervisor training grant from ACF so that we could continue our project mission: "This is not just a training. It's a movement. Join us!" Indeed we are true believers that some of the best experts on fixing the foster care system are youth who have been there. Our project has always had two overarching goals: To improve the child welfare system through our trainings and to improve the lives of the current and former foster youth who are our trainers. Receiving a grant to continue our work with supervisors was an affirmation that the child welfare system was maturing, that youth engagement was authentically having an impact, and that there was an interest that this work continue. Connecting current and former foster youth with child welfare supervisors, we believed, would continue to heal or improve a wounded system. The Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project builds with youth is what helps them to be strong, vibrant presenters. Child welfare workers and supervisors alike say that hearing from the youth directly, being reminded about the importance of having good daily practice, is what makes our training powerful for them. This is what the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project is about: we're not just a training, we're a movement, and with each presentation we give, we invite child welfare staff to join us.

We conceptualized the project with a few points of reference including: 1) the grant guidelines (which later dictated our training competencies) that directed us

to cover the topics of permanency, positive youth development, youth engagement, independent living readiness, stress and crisis, and cultural competency among others; 2) the commitment to utilizing former foster youth as curriculum developers; 3) the importance of understanding our audience and their unique needs; 4) the belief that current and former foster youth can be excellent trainers (beyond passing out handouts and telling their personal story).

We held three focus groups with child welfare supervisors (Los Angeles County, Orange County and Alameda County) and asked them what they needed in terms of training and how they wanted the training delivered. We heard a few common themes: 1) child welfare supervisors wanted regional trainings that would allow for cross county learning; 2) child welfare supervisors wanted trainings that would be inspirational, and different from the general trainings they attended; 3) child welfare supervisors wanted the training environment to be in a retreat like setting, off site and definitely not at child welfare offices; 4) child welfare supervisors valued the youth voice and wanted to hear from youth.

After gathering child welfare supervisor feedback, we assembled a team of six former foster youth who now hold professional jobs within and outside of foster care to develop our curriculum. Our team consisted of a nonprofit lawyer, a graduate student, an undergraduate student, a businesswoman, a university administrator and a child welfare supervisor. The curriculum developers also had varied experiences in foster care. Some were in kinship care, one had an excellent relationship with her foster parents, several were in group homes, and one experienced a failed adoption. One curriculum developer was placed in several psychiatric facilities and was a child prostitute, several had mental health diagnoses, some agreed with the diagnoses others did not. One curriculum developer was already a parent, all were doing well in their fields and all struggled, at least occasionally, from trauma related to foster care.

We met on weekends for a period of six months developing this curriculum. Before we began writing the curriculum, the team received training on adult learning styles, adolescent development, the daily life of a child welfare supervisor, evaluation principles, and transfer of learning theory among other topics. And over time the curriculum was formed, re-formed, revised, and piloted and revised again. We hired a child welfare supervisor (not a former foster youth) to advise us to keep our message(s) clear and useful to child welfare supervisors. Our curriculum, an eight-hour compilation of modules, was filled with humor, art, media, speeches, panels, and energetic activities. We capitalized on the availability of Y.O.U.T.H. Trainers who we would train to write keynote speeches and deliver them to large and small groups. And though the curriculum developers were primarily over the age of 21, they developed a creative and unique training experience, seldom found in child welfare trainings.

Developing Curriculum and Ancillary Materials

Unique and Tangible: Material Development

Having heard from the child welfare supervisors that they were tired of the same old training techniques, the curriculum developers strove to do something unusual in our training. We were never trying to get too clinical or too academic– we did not try to reach out of our skill set, we knew our strengths lay in telling real stories, teaching from direct youth experience, and in our creativity. We developed digital stories (short documentaries created entirely by youth) on the competency areas, we collected foster care artifacts and created the Museum of Lost Childhoods, we imagined the training would start by asking child welfare supervisors to walk in the shoes of a foster youth by placing all of their beloved belongings into plastic trash bags, or "foster youth luggage," as they are commonly called.

Y.O.U.T.H. artists created a treasure map of an agenda, the idea being that participants would be given a treasure map upon entrance to the training room and at the end of the day, if they had reached all the listed destinations (Mountains of Permanency, Foster Youth Culture City Center, etc.) they would receive a treasure at the end of the day. The treasure, incidentally, was a re-usable grocery/tote bag (yes, we are California after all, Go Green!) that they would receive for trading in the plastic garbage bag. The emotional schema of the day was "break 'em down, and build 'em up!" We developed a second museum to aid in the build 'em up section, the Museum of Foster Youth Empowerment held artifacts of success from various foster youth we encountered. The Lost Childhoods museum would be up at entrance and the second museum would replace the first in the afternoon. Our trainee packets included foster youth developed best practices (on white paper suitable for duplication for staff) covering the topics of the training, as well as instructions on how the child welfare supervisor could use our materials to transfer learning. The last piece of our curriculum titled, "*Giving Back*" was a chance for child welfare supervisors to get advice from youth on challenging cases, our chance to give back to child welfare staff!

Content of Training

The plan for the day is strategic, as we discussed above in the curriculum development section. Before the day officially begins, participants receive a taste of the training's content. First, when they register, they are each given a garbage bag, in which they are instructed to carry all their belongings for the rest of the day. This "foster youth luggage" is used as a teaching tool to simulate the foster youth experience. Participants are also given a case consultation form to fill out for a panel later in the day. It is optional, and provides an opportunity for supervisors to consult about any challenging cases about which they would like youth input. Next,

they are guided to explore the Museum of Lost Childhoods[1], a collection of artifacts of foster youth culture. Many of these artifacts are actual items from former foster youth's lives, contributed to the museum in hopes of making an impact on the Child Welfare System. The artifacts include such items as empty bottles of medical prescriptions, a sanitary napkin made of toilet paper stapled together, and a hospital gown a youth was required to wear while living in a psychiatric facility. They are showcased on risers or in cases, displayed on black tablecloths. Each artifact is accompanied by a description of the item in the context of foster care, as well as the experience of the person who contributed it.

The training begins with a welcome and introductions. Participants are introduced to the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project, as well as to each individual trainer and staff person on site.[2] Following introductions is a review of the day's agenda, and a review of the contents of the packets the trainees will use throughout the day. We believe packet review is an important part of the day, because we believe that if you touch all the documents in a training packet, you are more likely to use them again in the future.

An opening keynote speaker addresses the topic of foster youth culture, the theme also addressed through the museums. The speeches are always delivered by a former foster youth. By foster youth culture, we mean the collection of shared experiences that influence beliefs, understandings and behavior. Examples of foster youth culture given by various speakers include a shared language full of acronyms (such as CPS, ILP, CASA, etc.), being without family in a culture where biological families are the norm (especially the case in Hawaii where family is so valued), and allowing other former foster youth to stay with you when they would otherwise be homeless. This shared culture is an important cultural competency for child welfare professionals to understand. The opening speech is followed by a question and answer period.

This brings us to the first workshop session. Trainees are divided into two groups to attend workshops. They attend either *Pooling Resources* or *Crisis Consensus*.[3] *Pooling Resources* is a workshop about Positive Youth Development (PYD), and the local resources available to help Child Welfare Supervisors implement this practice. The first activity in this module is a matching game similar to *Memory*, the childhood matching game. Participants are split into small groups, where they try to match the 11 elements of PYD with their definitions. These elements include

1 As mentioned above, in the original training design, the Museum of Lost Childhoods was displayed for the first half of the day, and the Museum of Foster Youth Empowerment for the second half of the day. This proved to be a logistical challenge, so we recently began presenting both museums simultaneously for the duration of the training, equencing them intentionally so the Museum of Lost Childhoods would be viewed before the Museum of Foster Youth Empowerment

2 Typically at each training there are 5-8 youth trainers, as well as 2 support staff.

3 Participants all have the opportunity to attend both workshops (one in the morning, and one in the afternoon session). In some cases where space or the number of participants was limited, only one workshop could be presented at a time.

bonding; resilience; social skills; emotional competence; cognitive ability; principles and values; self-determination; spirituality; opportunity; appreciation; and youth engagement. The winning group is awarded prizes. Next participants watch a digital story and contemplate the PYD elements they identified, as well as missed opportunities. Following that is an activity called "Pooling Resources". Participants are split up into small groups (by county if it's a multi-county training). They are given a box filled with questions on slips of paper. Trainees take turns picking questions, which the group then tries to answer, exhausting all possible answers they can identify.[4] The answers are recorded on post-it notes and then posted on a pool poster on the wall. The end result is a "pool" of the county's resources for youth—a useful tool for implementing PYD. The pool of resources is later typed up by staff, emailed to participants, and made available on our website.

The concurrent workshop, *Crisis Consensus*, is a crisis management workshop designed to encourage supervisors to assess crises in foster youth's lives through different perspectives. The first activity, which takes up most of the time allotted to the workshop, involves watching three movie clips of potential "crisis" situations.[5] Each clip has a corresponding worksheet to be filled out afterwards. Then participants, divided into small groups, must come to a consensus about the urgency level of the situation (very urgent, somewhat urgent, or not very urgent). The reasons for the chosen urgency levels are discussed among the large group. After the third film clip is discussed in this manner, it is also used for the final activity, in which supervisors must use their small groups to conduct a mock Team Decision-Making Meeting (TDM). A youth trainer usually sits at the table with each group to include a youth perspective.

Once the workshops have ended, lunch is served. Having lunch included in the training was one of the requests supervisors made of our training design. By this point, the Museum of Lost Childhoods has been taken down, and the Museum of Foster Youth Empowerment set up in its place. The Museum of Foster Youth Empowerment includes such items as a youth's journal, pictures of a youth's current family, and a display of college graduation items. Trainees can begin looking through the museum during this break. At this time, the completed case forms for the Giving Back Panel are collected. Trainers and staff meet at lunch to read through them in preparation, as well as to do a general check-in about the day.

After lunch, an engaging activity called "ILP Readiness" picks up the energy level of the group. "ILP Readiness" is a simulation of what it feels like to be a youth going through ILP (Independent Living Skills Program) before emancipation. It begins with an analysis of when youth are ready to learn independent living skills. This is done in two ways. First, trainers hold up posters, in turn, one of a piggy bank, one of a lemonade stand, and one of a bank and ATM. This illustrates the point that

4 An example of a question is "What is a program to which you can refer youth to make them feel like they're changing the world?"

5 The movie clips are drawn from the movies *John Tucker Must Die, Freeway,* and *Girl Interrupted*.

youth are always ready to learn independent living skills, in ways that are developmentally appropriate to their age, using money management as an example. Next, trainers ask the audience to stand up if they agree with the statements asked. An example of the type of statements is, "Stand up and remain standing if you did your first load of laundry before the age of 12? 15? 18?" The diversity of answers in the room illustrates that youth are ready to learn independent living skills at all ages. Next comes the heart of this activity. Three volunteers come up to the front and are challenged to perform a list of ILP-related tasks in three minutes. Their task list includes tying a tie, sewing a button on fabric, finding an apartment that meets certain criteria, filling out a FAFSA, mapping a bus route between specified points, collecting 10 business cards, and getting three letters of recommendation from audience members. This challenge is set to Charlie Brown's "Linus and Lucy" as background music, which makes it energetic and fun. Afterwards participants show the trainers what they have achieved (usually only a few of the seven tasks) and receive a prize. This game illustrates how stressful it is for youth to have to cram all of their independent living skills training in the few years before they emancipate. The final activity about ILP readiness gives breaks supervisors up into for groups. Each group is given one of four youth descriptions (see Figure 1). Using the descriptions, they design ILP program recommendations for that youth. Each group shares their youth description and recommendations with the large group, after which it is revealed that the "four youth" are really four different descriptions of the same youth. This exercise highlights the point that youth and the services they need are often viewed through the lens of case notes. Those case notes reflect the bias of the person writing them, rarely offering a holistic picture of the youth.

Trainees then listen to a keynote speech on permanency, grief, and loss. This speech normally has a strong impact which is made even stronger by a youth panel following it. A panel of three youth trainers, moderated by the person who gave the keynote, answer questions about permanency, grief, and loss. The point of this segment is to (re)educate child welfare supervisors on the common experience of grief that foster youth share. This grief is often expressed through challenging youth behaviors, which often lead child welfare workers to believe adolescents seem inappropriate for permanent relationships. Next the trainees are again split into two workshop groups. This time, those who attended *Pooling Resources* in the morning attend *Crisis Consensus* in the afternoon, and vice versa.

The Giving Back panel follows the second workshop session. It is another moderated panel of youth trainers, this time giving feedback about the situations on the completed case consultation forms. These situations are usually quite challenging and complex. Youth trainers are prepared to give recommendations in thoughtful, self-reflective, and strengths-based ways. The day closes with trainees filling out their evaluations, which they exchange along with their garbage bags for the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project tote bags.

Youth 1
This youth who will emancipate soon is high risk and vulnerable. He experiences mental health challenges such as depression and trouble managing anger, and often has difficulty feeling hopeful about the future. He is on psychotropic medications. He has no permanent connections to any adult. He frequently has difficulty making good decisions and being responsible for his actions.

Youth 2
This youth who will emancipate soon has the potential to be very successful in college. He is smart and resourceful, but needs specific guidance on getting ready for higher education and the options available. He lacks information on scholarships, financial aid and timelines for application.

Youth 3
This youth who will emancipate soon has very little work experience and skills. He has never had any job training, and has no soft job skills. He has no clothing appropriate for employment or interviews, and lacks transportation to get a job. He does not have documents he needs for employment such as a birth certificate, social security card, and ID card. He is parenting, and will also need childcare in order to obtain employment.

Youth 4
This youth who will emancipate soon is struggling to complete high school and receive a diploma. He has attended non-public schools and special education classes, and lacks credits and basic academic knowledge. He is behind several grade levels, and needs special assistance catching up. He has no clear idea of what kind work he want to do as a career or a job he'd like to hold in the short term.

Figure 1: Descriptions of the "Four Youth" from "ILP Readiness" Activity

Barriers and Facilitators to Making the Trainings Happen

Unexpected Budgeting and Resource Issues

One barrier we faced was budgeting and overall resources, both in our program, and the agencies we trained. Unexpected training design elements, the resources available in different counties, and unexpected transportation costs all influenced training delivery. Of course, the California state budget crisis also played an overarching systems-level role in as our training was delivered to various counties. We found that counties with the most budgetary turmoil struggled to get supervisors to the training.

One unexpected element was the amount of props and supplies needed for the training. This was the case when we developed the museums. We did not initially know we were going to create them. The idea emerged in the curriculum develop-

ment process. Therefore, we did not budget for them, and we had to seek additional funding to cover costs such as cases and risers. Transporting them was also an issue. We found it was more cost effective to drive our museum materials across the state of California (500 miles long), rather than to ship them. This decision also minimized breakage and loss of fragile or unique museum materials.

Another unexpected issue was the overall amount of training supplies and props. We think young people tend to develop curriculum that requires a lot of props, more so than curriculum developed by adults. Maybe it's because they haven't experienced years of schlepping materials around, maybe because they are more creative? Nonetheless, we had a lot of supplies to bring to trainings! Between the museums and other training supplies, we filled an entire minivan with necessary materials for the training. Some materials in the original training concept had to be dropped or modified for this and other reasons.

Originally, we had our "agenda" in the form of a treasure map, rolled and tied with a band. The agendas were given out by facilitators wearing pirate hats to sell the gag, and baskets of gold medallions were placed at the entrance of the training space. Early on we decided to abandon all of the treasure map business. First, the trainers thought it was too corny and didn't work with their professional training attire. Second, there were already too many props, so we abandoned it for that reason. And third, because the trainings were delivered differently depending on the kind of space we trained in, the participants couldn't follow the linear map we developed. We kept the training map posters that designated training locations/topic areas, and left it at that.

Another moment of levity that we dropped in the training came at the end of the "ILP Readiness" module. The writers, trying to emphasize that youth are always ready to learn independent living skills, had our artists make 7 large posters that read "Always." These posters were supposed to be held by trainers and staff in an answer to the question posed to the audience, "When are youth ready for independent living skills?" The trainers found this unbearably embarrassing and refused to hold the posters up. We then decided to tape the posters to the wall for that module and in answering the question posed to the audience we'd say, "The writing is on the wall." Slightly clichéd but still survivable.

We also initially were unaware that Child Welfare Supervisors would want the trainings delivered in a retreat-like format. Most of them stated they wanted it in a non-traditional setting. We did not budget renting hotel conference facilities, meals, etc. Instead we sought out collaborators to sponsor trainings in terms of spaces and meals. Supervisors also asked us for regional trainings, where they would have opportunities for cross-learning with other counties. This matched up with our idea of delivering the trainings in conference format. We asked counties to co-sponsor trainings that other counties would be invited to. That meant paying for space, breakfast, snacks, and lunches for their counties. What we experienced was that few counties were willing to cover the costs of attendees from other counties.

Not all counties have equal resources. Training spaces were very diverse. Youth trainers had really diverse experiences delivering the training. Sometimes it would be in a conference center with five star meals, excellent technological equipment and ample space, and sometimes our training would have to take place in one small crowded room without a podium or microphone.

Transportation also played a role as either a barrier or facilitator. In general, though we were able to budget our most preferred form of travel, costs of fuel and all forms of travel increased, which was challenging at times. The high cost of transportation between the mainland or Hawaii and Guam or American Samoa was a specific issue. Thus we have not been able to get to those islands to train them, or to get them to attend the trainings in Hawaii. In terms of our California trainings, having a statewide team of trainers was helpful. It allowed us to cut down on travel costs by inserting trainers from the region in which the training happened. This also better enabled us to address specific regional needs and respond authentically from a youth's perspective. This is true of our trainings in Hawaii as well. We trained youth from the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition to train alongside us, which also made the training more culturally relevant.

Organizational and Regional Culture

The cultures of our organization and other agencies/counties impacted our training delivery. Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project organizational culture was one of the facilitators to successfully rolling out our curriculum. Our staff is majority former foster youth and so there's an affinity there. We also have a social justice commitment and perspective. All staff have personal lives that can accommodate the frequent travel which is required of us. The staff has really prioritized the work, and finds it and each other enjoyable. That has facilitated the training process. We see our success as encouraging to other foster youth. Not only do we expect that our training will have a positive impact on social work, we also expect that it will increase the sense of possibility in foster youth watching the project from afar. Some of our staff were continuing their education in social work while working for the project, and were able to take on research as part of their educational goals that also benefit the project.

Organizational culture had a big influence on when or how a county was able to follow through with their commitments to us. One county in our state (who we will not identify) simply stated they did not believe they needed training on serving the needs of teenagers. When they were surveyed about receiving our training, they fully passed on the opportunity. This is a county that believes they have enough knowledge to serve youth well and are beyond needing to be trained by youth. They are actually a county that only hires MSW level staff and believes they are in need of very little training because there just that good on their own. Needless to say, this organizational perspective troubles us.

There were also organizational facilitators that helped us deliver our trainings.

On a bureaucratic level, ACF's understanding, open, trusting, and flexible attitude towards program delivery made the overall experience better. On a county organizational level, some counties facilitated ways for supervisors to attend, going above and beyond what we asked of them. Some counties were very supportive of the training and of what Child Welfare Supervisors asked for. For example, one county provided additional resources so child welfare supervisors could have a very special lunch and more giveaways than normal during the training, and therefore more incentive for supervisors to participate. Another county mandated the training for its supervisors, and required managers to handle all emergency phone calls that day so that supervisors could really enjoy the training.

One aspect of organizational culture especially stood out, and should get a mention all of its own: one county had low enrollment each of the two times our training was offered in their county, and we had to cancel the trainings both times. Our steady child welfare supervisor advisor did a little underground sleuthing for us (she asked her colleagues) and found that several people did not sign up for the training because they thought that our current and former foster youth trainers would just come to "yell at them." We were shocked to hear this, but strategized with our advisor and other child welfare supervisor allies on how to address this issue. This is when our second training name was born. We decided that for whatever reason the child welfare supervisors were "afraid" to attend our workshop, we would respond by clarifying that our workshop was not about blaming or shaming child welfare staff, but about supporting child welfare supervisors in their work and seeing the work from the eyes of youth. Somehow our *Y.O.U.T.H. Full Intelligence* title was too threatening, so we changed the name and happily recruited staff from that county. There was a slight confusion with one or two child welfare supervisors who signed up for the newly named training after having taken the previously named (but same) training, but they were good natured about it.

Lastly, cultural differences between Hawaii and California impacted our trainings there in particular. General island culture influenced child welfare staff in Hawaii so; therefore, we had a cultural bridge to cross. In organizing the trainings, we had different work styles. While we like to have registrations done well in advance, Hawaii's island style was able to recruit a full house of participants within less than five days of the training. It was a learning experience for us all.

Scheduling

A few scheduling issues became barriers. The first, typical to many grant situations, we received notice of our grant within weeks of our project start date. Because of lengthy university hiring processes and bureaucracies we had a late start on some of our programming. The second scheduling barrier was the over-scheduling of youth trainers. Sometimes there are only a handful of youth available at a given time, as many youth have work and/or school obligations. Finally, we were sometimes forced to schedule trainings back to back, due to a limited number of dates to

choose from when coordinating schedules with counties. Back-to-back scheduling is never ideal and required staff to go from training to training, sometimes on the road for a week at a time.

Project Evaluation

The Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project uses a training model based on transfer of learning theory and research. The project focuses on the critical relationship between the caseworker and his or her supervisor and its pivotal role for public child welfare agencies to achieve federal outcome standards around permanency, safety, and child well-being. The primary cohort of trainees are supervisors, but child welfare managers and directors are included to ensure a "top" to "bottom" understanding of and commitment to a youth-focused approach to supporting transition age youth.

Our training model is reflected in our evaluation design. It involves a retrospective pre-test survey, as well as a follow-up survey three months post-training. In addition, select counties are identified as sites to conduct additional follow-up, in the form of child welfare worker surveys, and manager and director interviews. See Figure 2 for more details. These tools are used to evaluate progress toward short-term and intermediate outcomes in the current evaluation (see Figure 3).

- **Retrospective Pre-test Survey:** Training participants complete an evaluation form at the end of the conference to measure training satisfaction and changes in knowledge, attitudes, and intended practice.
- **Follow-Up Survey (with trained and untrained supervisors and managers):** Supervisors and managers complete an online survey three months following the training to learn whether and how participation in the training has resulted in changes in a department's approach and achievement of successful outcomes for transition age foster youth (as compared with departments whose supervisors were not trained).
- **Child Welfare Frontline Workers Survey:** Frontline workers complete an online survey three months following their agency's supervisors' and managers' participation in the training to discern any changes in the training, direction and support they receive from their supervisors as it pertains to their work with transition age foster youth.
- **Interview Agency Directors:** Korwin Consulting will interview agency directors to determine their perspective on benefits of training to the organization and its ability to improve child welfare outcomes.

Figure 2: Evaluation Methods

Short-term Outcome
There are five desired short-term outcomes:

- Resource materials are accessed by those working in the field.
- The new training curriculum on youth-centered practice is available for use with child welfare supervisors.
- Foster youth have increased skills and feelings of empowerment and being heard.
- Child welfare supervisors are better able to listen to and understand foster youth.
- Child welfare supervisors have gained skills and knowledge required to increase their ability to supervise a worker in seven competency areas (see figure in curriculum development section).

Intermediate Outcomes
There are five desired intermediate outcomes:

- There is an increase in training of supervisors/managers with the new curriculum on youth centered practice.
- Youth have an increased sense of control over decisions that affect them.
- Supervisors/managers are integrating skills and knowledge in the seven competencies (see full list in Short-term Outcomes list, above).
- Supervisors/managers are providing increased supervisory support for front-line child welfare workers.
- There is improved collaboration between public child welfare agencies, community partners and foster youth.

Figure 3: Short-Term and Intermediate Training Outcomes

Continuance

We received feedback from supervisors that they would like their workers to receive this same topical training, with slight adaptations to gear it more towards workers' experience. Therefore, we will be seeking state and foundation support to adapt the curriculum and provide the revised training to child welfare workers. We will also provide the supervisor training on a fee-for-service basis to counties throughout California, Hawaii, and possibly other states as requested. We will work with our regional child welfare training academies to assess interest and find available resources to provide this training to child welfare supervisors. We also hope to continue presenting the museums as a stand-alone traveling exhibit.

Any discussion about continuing any particular curricula that Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project develops begs the question about the continuance of a youth-driven training program in general. We will be looking at how to continue developing youth in California to be able curriculum developers and trainers. We are also hoping to use everything we learned in the last seven years of public and foundation funding to assist other states in doing the same. Part of the issue of continuing a foster youth driven program is the task of convincing adults that young people have more to offer than just a sad story and that, in fact, youth can provide a fresh and

needed approach to child welfare training curricula. Furthermore, this curricula lives beyond the original youth who write it and train it initially. It's not just about the curriculum, it's about youth developed and delivered trainings. We will continue to challenge adultism in order to keep these trainings available.

Accessing Materials

Nearly all of our training material is available online for those who want to utilize it. However, we have a strong and specific preference that our training curricula be delivered by young people who have experienced the foster care system. Materials are currently available on our website, *www.youthtrainingproject.org*. Digital stories are available for a small fee to cover duplication and shipping costs. Resource lists from the Pooling Resources workshop described above are compiled by county and available on the website. There are also biographical descriptions of the trainers, available to speak on various topics, as well as for fee-for-service trainings. The website will soon also have curriculum posted on it. A slideshow of the museums is available, along with information about how to book the museum to come to your city. Also on our website, you can access best practices developed by current and former foster youth, as well as California child welfare legislative policy updates.

Journal of Child and Youth Care Work

PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND EVALUATING TRAINING PROJECTS FOR PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE AGENCY SUPERVISORS: THE APPLICATION OF LOGIC MODELS AND THEORY OF CHANGE

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James Bell Associates

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In the fall of 2005, the Children's Bureau funded six projects to develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate a training curriculum for public child welfare agency supervisors. The curricula were intended to strengthen supervision of staff providing interventions to older youth who are in foster care and/or Independent Living programs. Social workers are faced with the responsibility of assisting foster youth in making a successful transition to adulthood and achieving self-sufficiency. It is hoped that foster youth who are taught to successfully advocate for themselves and navigate multiple systems—in regard to personal housing, transportation, employment, and education—can avoid long-term dependency on the social welfare system (DHHS, 2005).

Findings from previous demonstration programs led to the development of the supervisory training projects. Five years earlier, the Children's Bureau had funded 12 projects to develop training on Independent Living services for child welfare caseworkers. One of the findings from these previous projects contributed to the development of the funding opportunity for the training of child welfare supervisors: in order for child welfare caseworkers to effectively support youth in transition, their supervisors also needed training on youth development, the service needs of youth in care, and supervision practices that would support workers providing Independent Living services (DHHS, 2005). The 2005 funding announcement identified four core principles that the supervisor training projects should incorporate: 1) Positive youth development; 2) Collaboration; 3) Cultural competence; and 4) Permanent connections.

The projects were funded through the Children's Bureau's Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (Section 430, Title IV-B, subpart 2, of the Social Security Act) (42 U.S.C. 629a). Grantees submitted applications for the discretionary grant

funds through a competitive grant application process. Six grantees were chosen and received funding for a period of three years.

This paper provides an overview of the training projects designed and implemented by the six demonstration projects in this grant cluster. In particular, the paper explores the theory of change adopted by this grant cluster (i.e., what these projects hoped to achieve and how) and presents a cluster logic model that visually articulates the theory of change that was incorporated into the grantees' general approaches to planning, implementing, and evaluating their projects. Variations among grantees in key areas of the theory of change and approach to training are also explored. The paper concludes with a review of the outcomes evaluated by the grantees and the evaluation methods employed, as they relate to testing the theoretical assumptions upon which the individual projects were designed and the overall theory of change adopted by the cluster.

Logic Models

For nearly 30 years, logic models have been used as a tool to help organize and systematize program planning, management, and program evaluation functions (Wholey, 1979; 1983; Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 1994). Logic models exist in many different formats and there is not one "correct" design. They typically are depicted as a series of boxes representing program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, with arrows between the boxes that reflect the direction of change. Some logic models are represented in table format. Some are reflected horizontally with the direction of change moving from left to right; others are presented vertically with the movement flowing upwards. The common feature of any logic model, however, is that the models depict graphically the underlying assumptions upon which the undertaking of one activity is expected to lead to the occurrence of another activity or event. In the context of child welfare training programs, such as the training of supervisors in Independent Living services, logic models reflect a sequence of causal chains that seek to explain how doing activity A, activity B, and so forth, will result in changes that will eventually affect supervisors or workers in a desired manner (e.g., shifts in frontline practice with youth).

There are different conceptualizations and uses of logic models that infuse the field of program evaluation. Cooksey, Gill, and Kelly (2001) characterize logic models as "flow charts" that display a sequence of logical steps in program implementation and the achievement of desired outcomes. The United Way of America (2006) describes a program logic model as a framework for depicting how a program theoretically works to achieve benefits for participants, with the "If-Then" sequence of changes that the program intends to set in motion through its inputs, activities, and outputs. A logic model also helps ensure that there is a clear understanding of what services and activities are being implemented, what goals program staff hope to achieve, how the program's success will be measured, why various data are being collected, and how the data will be used (James Bell Associates, 2007).

The Harvard Family Research Project (2000) frames a logic model as a summary of the key elements of a program that shows the cause-and-effect relationships between a program and its intended outcomes, all "on one sheet of paper." According to Chen (1990), the goal in developing a logic model is to arrive at a model that can be used for system level process evaluations as an "ideal type" or for impact evaluations as a guide for hypothesized relationships. The logic model links theoretical ideas together to explain underlying assumptions about how program services are expected to produce expected outcomes and impacts (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Theory of change, then, becomes a driving force in the development and application of logic models.

Theory of Change

Theory of change refers to the theoretical assumptions that underlie the decisions a program makes for proposing particular approaches to address a problem. In a program evaluation, one is testing a set of assumptions about the activities, resources, and/or interventions that will bring about desired change. This set of assumptions is called a "theory of change," which is defined as a conceptual framework that links desired ultimate outcomes to specific avenues that are believed to be necessary to achieve those outcomes (Connell & Kubisch, 1999; Weiss, 1995).

The Children's Bureau's child welfare training projects that focus on training supervisors in Independent Living services are based on a philosophical approach and specific theory of change that is especially relevant to improving the well being of youth. The underlying theory is that increasing knowledge and awareness among child welfare supervisors and workers through new materials and trainings will theoretically result in increased utilization and application of skills and knowledge, which should, in the long-term, result in organizational changes that support youth-focused frontline practice.

In following a "theory of change" approach, Weiss (1995) emphasizes that evaluators need to work with program designers, administrators, staff and other stakeholders to identify and explicate their expectations with respect to the avenues of change they believe are necessary to achieve the ultimate desired outcomes—i.e., their "theories of change." Once this is done, evaluators must carefully track the progress of the initiative in accordance with the change process. Milligan, Coulton, York, & Register (1999) note: "If the initiative's programs and activities are shown to lead to expected outcomes over time, the evaluation begins to build a case for the effectiveness of the initiative. Even without a control group to support the counterfactual, the order of occurrence of the outcomes and the resemblance of those outcomes to those predicted can support inferences about effectiveness."

Why Logic Models are Important

Logic models serve an important purpose for program managers and provide useful benefits. They are useful to any individual attempting to plan, manage, ac-

count for, audit, evaluate, or explain the connections between what a program requests in terms of resources and what it seeks to accomplish. With an emphasis on increased accountability, program managers need to become more aware of how program activities bring about desired outcomes. It becomes critical for program managers to ask not only what the desired outcomes are, but also how they can best get there. Logic models assist in the process of articulating critical program components and their desired effects.

Logic models also help build consensus among program staff, evaluators, funding agencies, and other stakeholders regarding the evaluation. Specifically, stakeholders can reach agreement on the intended goals of the program and appropriate and meaningful program outcomes. A logic model provides an opportunity for stakeholders to jointly assess the feasibility and practicality of measuring change in selected program outcomes.

Another reason why logic models are important is that they are helpful in designing or improving programs, whereby logic models can be used to identify activities that are critical to goal attainment, are redundant, or have inconsistent or implausible linkages about the program components.

Logic models are also important for showing what intermediate results are critical to achieving ultimate goals or outcomes. They suggest corrective action when intermediate outcomes are not met. They are useful for formative evaluations that guide programs and policies as well as for summative evaluations that assess effectiveness and efficiency.

Finally, logic models are particularly useful for providing a framework for analyzing alternative strategies for achieving desired end-results. A logic model provides a roadmap for identifying alternative strategies for accomplishing results through the articulation of underlying assumptions and logic regarding connections between activities, outputs, and outcomes. In summary, logic models help guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs, including training programs such as the cluster of grants providing training for public child welfare agency supervisors in Independent Living services.

Project Planning and Implementation

The six grantees represent universities, public child welfare agencies, and collaborations between the two. These six grantees are located in different regions of the country and serve diverse target populations in varied child welfare climates (See Exhibit 1). The California grantee provided training in mostly urban counties in California, where Hispanic children comprise the largest ethnic group in foster care, and in Hawaii, Guam, and American Samoa, where Asian Pacific Islanders represent the largest ethnic group in foster care. The Texas grantee tested its curriculum in three distinct regions of Texas, where African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites comprise nearly an equal share of the State's child welfare population.

Exhibit 1: Cluster Grantees' Target Populations and Key Program Activities

Grantee and Project Name	Primary Target Population	Key Program Activities
San Francisco State University *Y.O.U.T.H. Training Curriculum for Child Welfare Supervisors* San Francisco, CA	Child welfare supervisors and their key child welfare managers/directors in select counties in California and branch offices in Hawaii, Guam, and American Samoa whose caseworkers have already received training on IL services	• Conduct focus groups with current and former foster youth, CW supervisors, and other youth-serving organizations to inform content. • Conduct literature review and develop best practices. • Research and compile ILSP services in all 58 counties. • Convene and train youth curriculum development team. • Launch a Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project website. • Produce 30 digital stories by current and former foster youth to be used in trainings and posted on website. • Conduct SIP/PIP assessments of counties to be trained. • Develop, pilot test, and finalize a training curriculum for child welfare supervisors and their managers/directors. • Provide training to Youth Trainers (who are responsible for training CW supervisors); trainers are former foster youth from CA and Hawaii. • Youth Trainers will provide training in 7 key competency areas to CW supervisors and their managers/directors. • Dissemination.
Department of Social Services (DSS), State of Massachusetts *Supervisors Supporting Workers Transitioning to Adulthood* Boston, MA	DSS social work supervisors in all area offices (300 – 400 persons); and supervisors in community lead agencies that provide services to a large portion of DSS youth ages 16-21	• Conduct needs assessment that includes in-depth interviews with youth, DSS regional and area directors, program supervisors, and central office staff; convene local focus groups (with DSS staff and with community based organizations) and regional roundtables. • Conduct literature review and review of best practice tools. • Design and field test training curriculum; finalize curriculum; develop training manual. • Run training sessions over 18 months with the goal of training all DSS social work supervisors and additional supervisors from community agencies. • Train high-level CW agency personnel in order to effect organizational change. • Dissemination.
Research Foundation, CUNY (Hunter College) *Training CW Agency Supervisors in Effective Delivery and Management of Federal Independent Living Service for Youth in Foster Care* New York, NY	Public child welfare agency supervisors in New York City, Mississippi, and Oregon (about 260 persons)	• Identify best practices and review current curricula from all Federal ILS grantees and existing curricula from NY, MI, and OR. • Conduct focus groups to identify issues in working with older youth. • Develop a set of supervisory competencies to guide curriculum development and TOL guidebook. • Develop training curriculum. • Develop digital stories from youth in foster care to bring "youth voice" into the training program. • Create web-based supervisory TOL guidebook that mirrors training curriculum with on-the-job activities, checklists, materials, and resources to support ongoing supervision. • Provide training to the "Training Teams" in TOT (training for the trainers) sessions. The Training Teams go back and train their supervisors. • Dissemination.

Exhibit 1: Cluster Grantees' Target Populations and Key Program Activities

Grantee and Project Name	Primary Target Population	Key Program Activities
University of Louisville Research Foundation, Inc. *Evidence-Based Supervisor-Team Independent Living Training* Louisville, KY	Supervisors in ongoing and foster care units and their workers who deal with adolescents, foster children, and any children transitioning to Independent Living in Regions with the largest number of children likely to move to Independent Living	• Conduct evidence-based literature review; review existing curricula and practices; conduct focus groups with KY CW workers and case managers regarding the IL training needs. • Develop competency- and team-based training curriculum and training plan; will include a video that models effective practices with youth and workers. • Train teams (supervisors and their frontline workers) in Regions with highest number of youth needing IL services. • Evaluate effectiveness of team training; revise training curriculum/delivery methods as necessary. • Train existing CW trainers/instructors in State CW training system (so that the training can be integrated into the state's training system). • Dissemination – integrate training into state's training system through university continuing education.
University of Houston *PAL-STEP: Preparation for Adult Living—Supervisory Training and Empowerment Program* Houston, TX	CPS supervisors who manage foster care workers in three Texas regions: Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, and El Paso	• Assemble advisory team to offer advice and approve the curriculum development, which will include former foster youths, and University and community experts. • Develop web-based training curriculum to present theoretical material on adolescent development and 4 core principles. • Pilot test curriculum; evaluate and refine curriculum; prepare training materials for delivery to supervisors. • Provide one-day, face-to-face training for supervisors that completed web-based training. • Training delivered by training team that includes youth graduate of IL program and University faculty. • Provide supervisors with PAL-STEP Supervisory Tool Kit, used to transfer their knowledge to workers when they return to work. • Dissemination.
The University of Iowa *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition Through Supervisor Training* Iowa City, IA	IDHS supervisors, IDHS case managers, and transitional planning staff representing each of the state's eight service areas	• Convene statewide project advisory group. • Conduct focus groups with youth, supervisors, and frontline staff; conduct interviews with key informants to inform curriculum content. • Develop competencies specific to transitional planning-at both supervisor and worker levels; conduct curricula review. • Develop training curriculum for supervisors. • Field test supervisor curriculum with supervisors in both urban and rural areas; revise curriculum based on feedback. • Implement supervisor curriculum statewide, with all public CW supervisors and supervisees in the eight service areas around the state. • Develop curriculum for learning/teambuilding between supervisors and their workers; field test curriculum; and revise curriculum. • Implement learning/teambuilding curriculum statewide, where supervisors transfer knowledge to worker in a learning environment. • Dissemination.

The Iowa grantee implemented its training statewide, which is largely rural, and includes areas with large populations of Native youth in care. The Kentucky grantee also operated its training in predominantly rural areas. The New York grantee tested its training in New York City, Mississippi, and Oregon, three areas representing both urban and rural populations and a range of racial and ethnic diversity. Like Iowa, the Massachusetts grantee implemented their program statewide, where non-Hispanic, White children comprise more than two-thirds of children in foster care. By selecting grantees that operate in different child welfare environments among diverse populations, the Children's Bureau intended to learn a great deal about the effectiveness of various approaches to supervisor Independent Living training projects among different target populations.

Needs Assessment

The first phase of program development is typically focused on identifying needs and resources, determining program goals and objectives, and identifying procedures for program implementation and evaluation (Nastasi & Berg 1999). Data collection at the outset of a program helps program developers to better understand the target population, the need for the program, the resources available to address the need, models of best practices, and stakeholder input on the program approach. For the Supervisor Training in Independent Living grantees, a needs assessment was the first step to determining the content and approach to curriculum development and training design. Information gleaned from the needs assessment was applied to the development of curriculum goals and objectives, which were then reviewed and approved by multiple stakeholders. The needs assessment also informed other aspects of program development, including evaluation tools and methods and the process of training delivery.

All six grantees collected primary data from supervisors, caseworkers, and administrators through focus groups and interviews. The purpose of these data collection efforts was to identify issues related to working with older youth and ascertain their needs regarding Independent Living services training. Some grantees also collected qualitative data from contracted service providers, youth-serving agencies in the community, local foster youth advocacy groups, and other youth-focused community based organizations to identify opportunities to work together, as well as barriers to collaboration. Focus groups with foster parents and youth—both current and former foster youth–were also conducted in order to better understand their experiences with foster care placements and Independent Living services, as well as facilitators and barriers to permanency. If programs targeted multiple populations (e.g., urban and rural or different racial and ethnic groups), research was conducted with diverse groups to gain differing perspectives and experiences. Grantees also consulted State laws and policies, as well as Child and Family Service Review outcomes and Program Improvement Plan tasks related to Independent Living services.

Grantees reviewed training curricula for both supervisors and caseworkers focused on working with older youth transitioning out of foster care and supervision. Some grantees focused their review on curricula currently implemented by their State agency or contracted service providers. Other grantees conducted a more comprehensive review of the curricula developed and implemented by multiple States, such as those developed by agencies that received prior Child Welfare Training grants from the Children's Bureau (Independent Living Section 426 grants). In addition to reviewing existing curricula, some grantees conducted a resource assessment and compiled a directory of Independent Living programs currently available in their State, with the intention of integrating this knowledge of existing services into the training.

Grantees conducted a literature review on best practices in positive youth development, promoting collaboration between youth and adults, and developing culturally competent permanent connections for youth. These findings not only informed curriculum development but also the delivery process, the evaluation design, and the process of engaging stakeholders. Grantees obtained the input of various stakeholders throughout the processes of developing, implementing, and evaluating the training curricula. Most grantees instituted an Advisory Board, which allowed projects to engage stakeholders on an ongoing and consistent basis. Advisory Board members represented the project partners, youth in foster care, academic and medical partners, experts in child and family services, legal professionals, and various community partners.

Curriculum Development

After gathering information from child welfare supervisors, youth in foster care, community partners, and stakeholders on the critical issues impacting the delivery of Independent Living services; the training needs of child welfare supervisors; and the existing Independent Living curricula, services, and resources, the grantees began the process of developing curricula. The Curricula were developed in accordance with the four core principles of youth transition planning: positive youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, and permanent connections (DHHS, 2005). The first step was to develop a set of supervisory competencies that guided curriculum development. These supervisory competencies describe the set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that guide a supervisor's work with caseworkers as they engage with youth to achieve positive outcomes in their transition to adulthood. Some grantees also developed a set of caseworker competencies related to providing Independent Living services to youth.

In addition to developing a training curriculum, most grantees developed a transfer of learning (TOL) toolkit, to help supervisors teach their workers both the theory and application of working with youth in transition. The toolkits were designed to mirror the curriculum with on-the-job activities, informational materials, checklists, and resources to support ongoing supervision.

Grantees worked with agency personnel and other stakeholders to identify the mode of curriculum delivery (e.g., online, in person, etc.), the methods of instruction (e.g., lecture, learning circles, etc.), and the overall process for delivering training to large numbers of public child welfare supervisors (e.g., selecting supervisors to participate, training trainers, etc.). Once drafts of the curriculum, TOL toolkit, and training procedures were developed, most grantees conducted a field test to assess the quality, usefulness, and presentation style of the curriculum. Evaluation tools were also piloted to assess their feasibility and validity. After the field test, the results were evaluated and the curriculum revised based on feedback from the Advisory Board and other stakeholders.

Training Delivery

Grantees developed a unique approach to training that was designed to achieve the project's desired outcomes. The trainings were delivered using various formats including in-person lecture and discussion, online modules, and exercises that required trainees to develop and role play interventions with caseworkers and youth. All trainings provided materials and exercises to facilitate the TOL process.

- *New York*. This curriculum was delivered through six learning circles that focus on six core principles or competencies. During the learning circles, supervisors develop action plans to translate learning into practice, discuss the successes and challenges encountered, and assess progress made towards goals defined in previous circles. An online TOL guidebook with a series of activities, checklists, and informational resources was provided.
- *Kentucky*. This project implemented a three-day training that included learning readiness interventions to promote TOL. The initial training was followed by in-person and online refresher trainings as well as a conference of 200 state staff and community partners from across the state.
- *California*. This training project was developed and staffed entirely by former foster youth, who were involved in designing the curriculum, creating and reviewing materials, and delivering the training to supervisors.
- *Massachusetts*. This training consisted of six modules, one of which was set aside to gather participant feedback on the training to gather data on their successful practices. Each module included a presentation of theoretical underpinnings, interactive activities, participants sharing of best practices, and a facilitated panel discussion. A journal was provided to encourage self reflection. All materials were available online and in hard copy.
- *Iowa*. This grantee developed a two-phase training, where supervisors built skills at an in-person training session during the first phase. The second phase brought supervisors and their staff together in order to develop a team-building approach to working with youth in transition. The second phase also included a community oriented event.

- *Texas*. This training was delivered both on-line and in-person. The training module covering theoretical constructs related to positive youth development was delivered online, which was followed by an in-person training focused on the practical application of the core principles and supervision techniques. A TOL Guidebook and curriculum manual were provided online and on CD.

The Cluster's Theory of Change

The child welfare supervisor training grantees employed essentially the same theory of change across the projects: that developing, testing, implementing, and evaluating training for child welfare supervisors on Independent Living services would lead to an increase in knowledge about Independent Living services in supervisors and the caseworkers they supervise. Additionally, supervisors are expected to transfer their knowledge of Independent Living services to the caseworkers they supervise and provide support to them in the application of this knowledge. The caseworkers, in turn, are expected to utilize their knowledge in their work with youth in the foster care system, thereby improving the youth's independent living skills and, ultimately, well being. Exhibit 2 illustrates this basic theory of change.

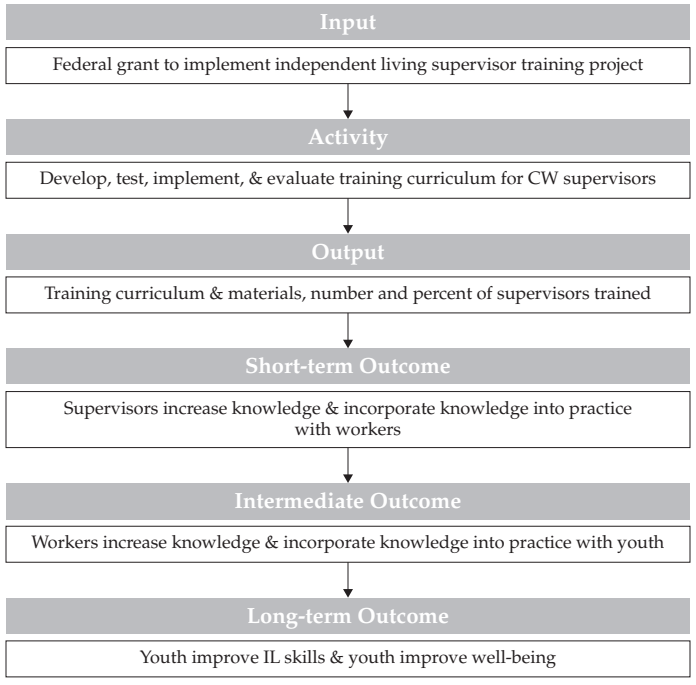

Exhibit 2: Independent Living Cluster Basic Theory of Change

While this is the basic theory of change underlying the training projects in the cluster, developing and administering a training curriculum in a way that produces the intended positive outcomes required extensive planning and a detailed theory of change, codified in a logic model. All of the projects incorporated a logic model into their grant applications as a way of demonstrating the purpose and structure of their proposed projects. In the fall of 2005, the grantees participated in a cluster kickoff meeting sponsored by the Children's Bureau, where logic modeling was a primary discussion topic. The grantees were briefed on the use of logic modeling in program planning and evaluation. Then, they participated in a group process that laid the foundation for development of a "cluster logic model," a model that reflected pathways of change that were common to the majority of grantees (i.e., the underlying theory of change that would be employed by the grantees in this cluster). The cluster logic model is presented in Exhibit 3.

Through this group discussion, the grantees identified the key components of a cluster logic model, including activities, outputs, and immediate and long-term outcomes. Most importantly, they worked to achieve consensus on the sequence through which their training efforts were expected to bring about change in child welfare supervisors' attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. This logic model was then further developed by the evaluation technical assistance provider, based on the input received during the meeting. The cluster logic model depicts the primary components of the training projects, but it is not an exhaustive representation of each project's activities and outcomes. Although there is some variation across the grantees, the basic hypotheses are essentially the same.

Program Inputs

A logic model begins with the inputs, or resources, utilized for the project. The training projects generally employed the same set of inputs: funding, including Federal, State, local, and private funding; a grantee's capacity and expertise, which can include institutional knowledge of child welfare practice, prior experience implementing Federal child welfare demonstration projects, and pre-existing infrastructure and technology for curriculum development and delivery; community partners and stakeholders; supervisor experience and prior training; and youth involvement. A logic model allows inputs to be tied directly to specific activities or to all activities. In the cluster logic model, funding, grantee experience, community partners, and supervisor experience all contribute to the three successive primary grant activities: needs assessment, curriculum development, and training delivery.

Program Activities

Grantees conducted a needs assessment in order to better understand the needs of supervisors and caseworkers regarding Independent Living services, appropriate methods and processes for delivering training, and issues impacting youth in transition. Grantees also conducted a resource assessment where existing

Independent Living services curricula were reviewed along with existing Independent Living services and best practices in the field. The information gleaned from these activities informed the development of supervisory competencies, the training curricula, and materials developed to aid with TOL from supervisors to caseworkers. The training was then piloted, evaluated, and revised based on feedback from Advisory Board members and other stakeholders. Each grantee produced training products and materials that included instructor guides, participant manuals, learning activities, and materials for supervisors to use in their work with caseworkers on Independent Living services. Materials were made available to trainees in hard copy and/or online. These materials were also developed for dissemination to the child welfare community to enable replication of the curriculum by other agencies or to be incorporated into University curricula and standard training programs offered by the grantee's public child welfare agency.

Program Outcomes

The training projects identified short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. The common primary outcomes are displayed in the cluster logic model. Short-term outcomes can be expected to occur immediately following the intervention, or in this case, the training. After attending training, it is expected that supervisors will increase their knowledge and awareness of positive youth development and other issues related to transition planning for foster youth. Supervisors also are likely to change their attitudes toward youth centered practice. This includes an improved ability to listen to, understand, and empathize with foster youth. In addition to changing supervisors' attitudes, level of knowledge, and awareness, the trainings aimed to increase supervisors' management skills of staff as they work with youth in transition.

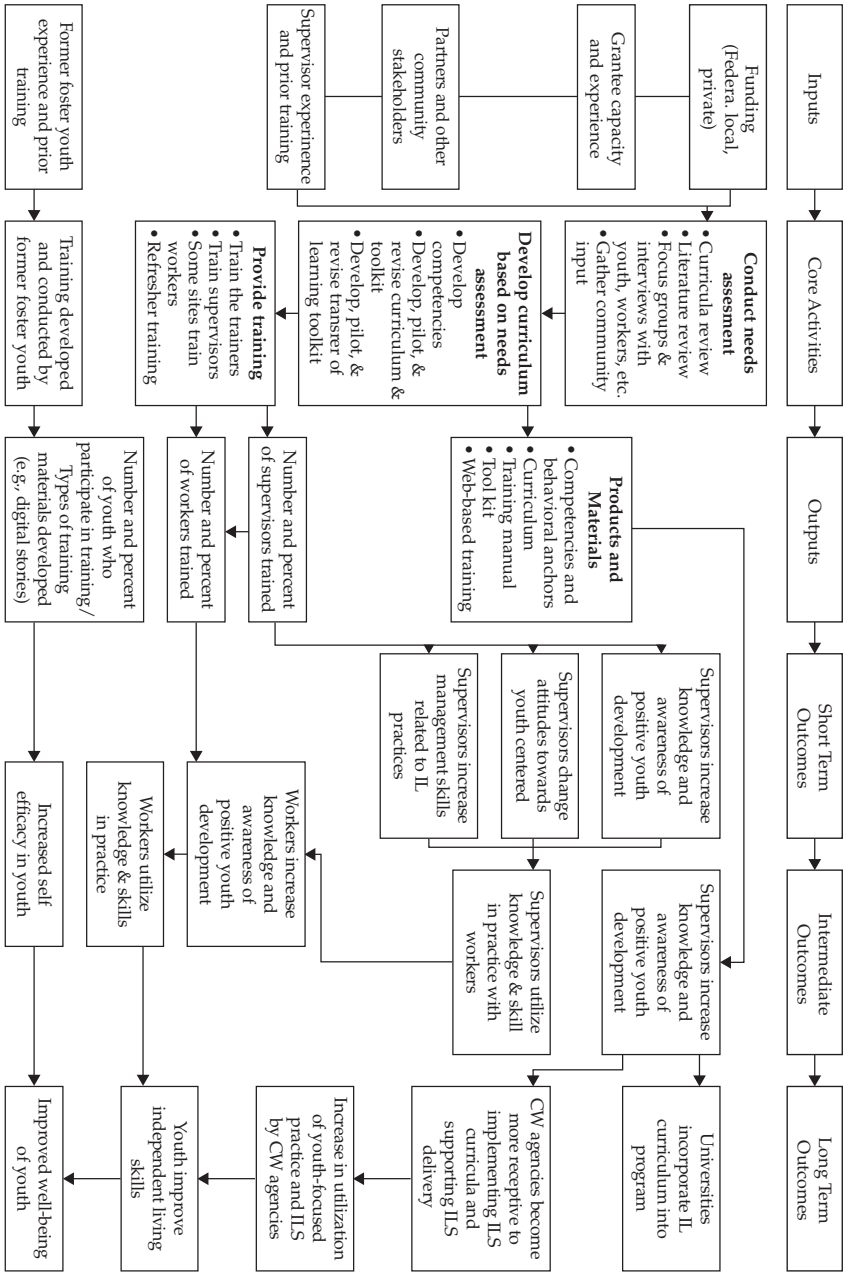

Exhibit 3: Cluster Logic Model for Child Welfare Supervisor Training in Independent Living Services Grants

The training projects identified intermediate outcomes, or changes in participants that are expected to present themselves after the intervention has occurred, or once enough time has passed for the material presented in the training to be absorbed and implemented. Supervisors are expected to utilize their new knowledge of positive youth development and management practices in their supervision of caseworkers. This outcome is reflected by supervisors showing increased levels of support for caseworkers, improved training and mentoring of workers, and a greater ability to use curriculum concepts when supervising staff.

The intention is that, through the act of a supervisor implementing curriculum concepts and supportive management practices into their supervision of caseworkers, the caseworkers will in turn increase their knowledge and awareness of positive youth development and effective ways of working with youth in transition. Through caseworkers' application of their knowledge and skills to their work with youth, long-term outcomes can be achieved. The training projects' long-term outcomes are focused on changes in youth, namely improved independent living skills and, ultimately, improved well being.

Transfer of Learning

Many of the outcomes hinge on the TOL that occurs between a supervisor and the caseworkers they supervise. There are key differences in the way this TOL happens. Four of the six projects subscribe to the program model described above, where supervisors are trained in the core principles and provided materials and activities to help facilitate a transfer of learning during their daily supervision of caseworkers. Two of the projects implemented a different program model, where caseworkers received training in addition to supervisors. The Kentucky project trained caseworkers and supervisors together because, during the needs assessment and program design phase, the grantee decided that to effectively change the practice of transition planning, supervisors and caseworkers needed to receive the same training simultaneously. The University of Iowa chose to train both supervisors and caseworkers as well, and like Kentucky designed the training to address their differing roles and responsibilities. Supervisors received a one-day training, before joining with caseworkers in a training that emphasized joint learning and teambuilding related to working with youth in transition. The California project is operating in a different context. Prior to this grant, the grantee was already operating a training project for caseworkers on Independent Living services. As such, this project is less concerned with ensuring a TOL from supervisor to worker, but this project is in the unique position to be able to test whether the additional support provided by supervisors and other managers for Independent Living services will lead to better outcomes for youth.

Organizational Change

In order to ensure that the TOL is effective, support at the administrative level

is critical. The grantees worked to gain buy-in from agency administrators for their approach to training, youth-centered practice, and transition planning. In order for these training programs to continue beyond the grant period and be integrated into the standard agency training, the grantees needed to gain and maintain support at the agency level. Projects worked to effect organizational change in various ways. Some projects included managers and administrators in their trainings. New York developed and delivered a one-day overview highlighting the main concepts of the supervisory training program and some TOL concepts for 50 administrative staff. Kentucky worked to train all existing child welfare trainers in the State's child welfare training system so that the training would be integrated into the existing statewide training.

Youth Involvement

Youth involvement was a primary component of the training projects. Youth were engaged early on during the needs assessment phase, where foster youth provided valuable input during focus groups which helped shape the curriculum. The youth experience or "voice" was incorporated into the training either through youth trainers or digital stories. Digital stories are short videos developed by current or former youth that allow youth to share his or her experience in foster care and their transition to adulthood. Youth involvement served to bring a level of authenticity to the trainings and helped to change the training participants' attitudes toward foster youth. This component was also expected to impact the lives of those youth involved in the project. As depicted in the cluster logic model, former foster youth who participated in developing and delivering training were expected to increase their feelings of self-efficacy through the ability to share their experiences and "be heard" by the child welfare field. Additionally, youth trainers would be expected to gain new skills, greater self esteem, and—in the long-term—improved well being.

Evaluating Project Outcomes

Through the child welfare supervisor training projects in Independent Living services, there is an opportunity to test the theoretical assumptions underlying the training projects funded under this grant cluster. Local evaluators conducted project-specific evaluations that examined the validity of the assumptions on which the individual grants were based. The findings of the process of testing these assumptions will determine what the impacts will be for the Children's Bureau, universities that train new and ongoing child welfare supervisors and workers, staff that work in child welfare agencies, and for the field in general.

The six grantees evaluated a range of short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes that were expected to occur in supervisors, caseworkers, youth, and the agency (see Exhibit 4). Common short-term outcomes expected for supervisors included: an increase in knowledge and skill in the key competency areas related to the curricula (i.e., youth-focused practice, Independent Living services, the four

core principles: positive youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, permanent connections); improved ability to understand and listen to foster youth; and increased skills related to coaching, mentoring, and supporting workers in their practice with youth. Changes in supervisors' knowledge, skills, and awareness were most often evaluated using pre/post tests; some grantees were able to collect follow-up data to evaluate whether changes were lasting. Grantees that trained caseworkers in concert with supervisors evaluated similar outcomes using pre- and post-tests.

The grantees primarily examined three categories of intermediate outcomes focused on behavior change and transfer of learning: supervisors' application of their improved skills, attitudes, and knowledge in their practice; the provision of increased support to caseworkers in providing youth-focused services; and increased training, mentoring, and coaching of caseworkers related to transition planning (i.e., transfer of learning to caseworkers). Through the increased support and training provided by supervisors, caseworkers were expected to increase their knowledge, skills, and awareness and apply what they learned as they worked directly with youth. The grantees employed various evaluation methods to assess these intermediate outcomes. Some grantees conducted interviews and focus groups with supervisors to determine whether supervisory practice had changed as a result of the training. Others conducted a review of case plans, looking for evidence of a change in practice at the supervisory and caseworker levels. Another strategy involved surveying or interviewing caseworkers to determine whether their supervisors were providing more support and training around working with youth in transition and if their own work with youth had changed as a result.

Three grantees (i.e., Iowa, Kentucky, and Texas) were able to use quasi-experimental evaluation designs to understand whether training supervisors in Independent Living services impacts the way caseworkers prepare foster youth for adulthood and whether youth show improved outcomes. The Iowa grantee undertook a cohort study of transition planning before and after training in order to observe changes in practice at both the supervisor and caseworker level. The Kentucky grantee utilized a treatment and comparison group, which allowed the grantee to compare data from case records of both groups and survey managers about supervisors and caseworkers from both groups. The Texas grantee assessed case plans and other documents completed before and after the training for both treatment and comparison groups.

Exhibit 4: Cluster Grantees' Stated Outcomes and Evaluation Methods

Grantee	Stated Outcomes	Outcome Evaluation Method
San Francisco State University *Y.O.U.T.H. Training Curriculum for Child Welfare Supervisors*	**Short-term** • Stronger skills and knowledge among supervisors in seven key competency areas. • Improved ability to listen to and understand foster youth among supervisors and workers. • Improved collaboration between public child welfare agencies, community partners, and former foster youth. • Increased skills and feelings of empowerment by former foster youth. **Intermediate** • Supervisors will demonstrate an integration of skills and knowledge in seven key competencies. • Increased level of supervisory support for frontline child welfare workers. • Improved supervisory training and mentoring of workers. **Long-term** • Change in organizational culture that integrates and applies learning. • Improved accountability and consistent practices throughout organizations.	• Supervisors took retrospective pre-test, post-test, and online follow-up survey at 3-5 months after training. • Caseworkers were surveyed 3 months after training to discern any changes in the training, direction, and support they receive from supervisors. • Interviews with agency administrators. • Comparing outcomes of offices who have received worker training on Independent Living programs and offices that have not.
Department of Social Services, State of Massachusetts *Supervisors Supporting Workers Transitioning to Adulthood*	**Short-term** • Increased knowledge among supervisors regarding attitudes and behavior that reflect youth focused practice. **Intermediate** • Supervisors provide support to social workers and program staff in "positive youth development" practice. • Supervisors are in place in every agency office that are qualified in specialized practice for adolescents in care. **Long-term** • Increased capacity of agency to provide youth with lifelong connections and support and skills for successful, healthy lives after agency discharge. • Enhanced leadership to collaboratively build a system of services and develop a safety net for youth aging out of custody.	• Pre-/post-test measuring changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior related to positive youth development. • Post-training telephone interviews with a sample of supervisors to identify changes in supervisory practice. • Post-training interviews with a sample of caseworkers whose supervisors were trained.

Exhibit 4: Cluster Grantees' Stated Outcomes and Evaluation Methods

Grantee	Stated Outcomes	Outcome Evaluation Method
Research Foundation, CUNY (Hunter College) *Preparation for Adulthood – Supervising for Success*	**Short-term** • Increased knowledge of youth-focused practice. • Improved attitudes toward youth focused practice. • Increased feelings of empowerment or "being heard" for participating youth. **Intermediate** • Increased use of curriculum concepts by supervisors when supervising staff. • Increased application of youth-focused practice in work with older youth. **Long-term** • Curriculum is adopted into ongoing supervisor training. • Increased usage of products by agencies and individuals. • Increased permanent connections, enhanced preparation, and improved well being for youth in transition.	• Pre-/post-tests to measure changes in supervisory knowledge • Assessing outcomes through action plans developed by supervisors at the end of each module and their self-reported ability to carry them out at next module • Follow-up focus groups and interviews to discuss impact of curriculum on supervisory practice.
University of Louisville Research Foundation, Inc. *Evidence-Based Supervisor-Team Independent Living Training*	**Short-term** • Supervisors improve skills in coaching and mentoring workers. **Intermediate** • Enhanced quality of clinical support to foster care and ongoing workers. • Improved quality of training and mentoring with youth. • Enhanced quality of support to youth. • Creating evidence-based knowledge about program effectiveness. **Long-term** • Increased youth stability. • Enhanced youth skills in employment, relationship management, and daily living. • Increased usage (statewide & nationally) of evidence-based youth interventions and program strategies. • Fewer youth enter other systems such as health, mental health, substance abuse, and criminal justice.	• Quasi-experimental design. • Pre-/post-survey of training participants with online follow-up. • Case file review to assess youth outcomes, TOL, and case mediators in caseloads of both treatment and comparison groups. • Managers in treatment and comparison groups will complete survey regarding behavior of supervisors and workers. • Client functioning assessment (*Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment*) with youth whose workers did and did not received training. • Review of State management data reports to evaluate impact of training on systemic outcomes.

Exhibit 4: Cluster Grantees' Stated Outcomes and Evaluation Methods

Grantee	Stated Outcomes	Outcome Evaluation Method
University of Houston *PAL-STEP: Preparation for Adult Living—Supervisory Training and Empowerment Program*	**Short-term** • Increased knowledge among supervisors about theory and application of the 4 core principles (positive youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, permanent connection). **Intermediate** • Supervisors transfer the knowledge gained by training CPS workers on theory and application of 4 core principles. • Increased application of the 4 core principles in CPS workers' work with adolescents. **Long-term** • Incorporation of the curriculum into State agency training for supervisors. • Increase in number of adolescents that successfully transition to Independent Living.	• Quasi-experimental design. • Online pre-/post-tests to measure knowledge. • Qualitative interviews with supervisors and workers to assess modes of and barriers to TOL from supervisors to workers. • Pre- and post-documentation (case plans and circle of support documents) from treatment and comparison groups.
The University of Iowa *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition Through Supervisor Training*	**Short-term** • Supervisors increase knowledge of transition planning and core principles. • Workers increase knowledge of transition planning and core principles. **Intermediate** • Supervisors utilize knowledge and skill with workers. • Workers utilize knowledge and skill in practice with youth. • Increased self-efficacy of former foster youth. • Improved transition planning based on core principles. **Long-term** • Incorporation of transition planning in supervision practice. • Incorporation of transition planning in State training plan. • Integration of training content in University of Iowa child welfare course. • Improved outcomes for youth in transition.	• Pre-/post-test to measure knowledge gain for both supervisors and workers who attended training. • Follow-up survey with trainees. • Cohort study of transition planning before and after training. • Qualitative interviews of youth and their caseworkers.

A number of grantees were able to evaluate outcomes expected in foster youth whose supervisors and/or caseworkers received the training. The Kentucky grantee assessed youth outcomes through a case record review and the administration of the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment* to youth whose workers received training and a comparison group of youth whose workers did not. The Iowa grantee, collected outcome data from youth in qualitative interviews and a case file review. For youth involved in the training projects, grantees evaluated the impact of participation through feedback received from youth and other staff involved.

The grantees also sought to explore outcomes at the agency level including: change in organizational culture that supports and applies learning, increased capacity of the agency to serve youth in transition, and the incorporation of the training curricula into the existing public child welfare agency training and University programs. Grantees evaluated these organizational-level outcomes by conducting focus groups and interviews with agency administrators, reviewing State management data reports, and tracking curriculum dissemination and utilization.

Evaluation is critical to determining whether a program's theory of change was veritable, i.e., whether a program's activities produced the intended outcomes. While this paper discusses evaluation methods, we are not able to discuss findings at this point, as the grantees' evaluation results will be submitted with their final reports to the Children's Bureau. The outcome evaluation findings will show whether the expected outcomes were achieved for supervisors, caseworkers, youth, and the agency. Coupled with data from the process evaluation, the evaluation findings will not only assess what was accomplished but whether the assumptions underlying the theory of change were accurate and provide needed context regarding factors that facilitated and hindered the implementation of the program and the grantee's ability to achieve the desired outcomes. The training curricula produced by the grantees as well as the forthcoming evaluation findings will undoubtedly contribute to the child welfare field and its knowledge base on working with youth in transition.

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INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TRAINING: TRANSFER OF LEARNING RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: The authors emphasize the importance of designing, implementing, and evaluating transfer-of-learning interventions. Implications from more than a century of transfer-of-learning research are applied to independent living skills training. Suggestions are provided for designing transfer-effective independent living skills training based on research-driven transfer-of-learning principles and conceptual models focusing on instructional design, ecological intervention, and stages of learner development,.

Key Words: Transfer of learning, independent living skills, instructional design, training evaluation

Although the concept of transfer of learning has been around since the beginning of the previous century, (Thorndike & Woodworth, 1901; Thorndike, 1903), training initiatives often fail to utilize the existing knowledge base and plan effectively for lasting performance within the life and work space of the learner. This article will provide examples of how to incorporate more than a century of transfer-of-learning research into practical suggestions for independent living training initiatives.

Early research pertaining to transfer emphasized instructional strategies involving such things as identical elements, general principles, stimulus variability, and response availability (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). However, recent approaches can be described as being more ecologically focused, recognizing the important role of the learner's application environment. These approaches also emphasize the importance of key persons before, during, and after the formal training session (Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Curry et. al., 1994). For example, one approach, developed and utilized at the Northeast Ohio Regional Training Center (NEORTC), builds on Lewin's force field theory and advocates for assessment and intervention within a worker's transfer field. It is described as the transfer of training and adult learning (TOTAL) approach (Curry et. al., 1994; Curry & Caplan, 1996, Curry, 1997).

In addition to the recent emphasis on environmental factors, developmental approaches have emerged, influenced by research from the fields of cognitive and

educational psychology exploring areas such as metacognition and differences between novices and experts (Anderson, 1985; Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981). Given its emphasis on child and youth development, it should not be surprising that the child and youth care field has also emphasized a developmental approach to worker development. Garfat (2001) provides a comprehensive review of various developmental models in the child and youth work literature. This article will discuss traditional, developmental, and ecological implications for transfer of learning of independent living skills (ILS) training. The focus will be on the youth worker and learner. However, many of these same principles can be applied to the transfer of ILS training for youth.

Implications from Transfer of Learning Research

Ultimately, effective utilization of skills on the job or within the life space of the youth is desired. Transfer of learning has been described as the application of learning (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) acquired in a training setting to the job (Curry, Caplan, & Knuppel, 1994). Baldwin and Ford (1988) developed a useful overall framework for examining transfer of learning that can help to promote competence in independent living. They emphasized the importance of individual trainee characteristics, the work environment, and the training design. For example, one of the most important individual factors is what a trainee already knows. Similarly, environmental factors such as organizational support, the organizational value of training, administrative support, supervisory support, coworker support, and opportunity to use training have been found to promote transfer of learning (Brittain, 2000; Curry, 1996; Holton et al., 1997; Tracey et al., 1995). Interventions to promote effective practice on the job incorporate individual and organizational and environmental elements into the training design. Interventions with youth must also focus upon both the individual and life space elements.

Traditional Transfer of Learning Research Principles

A large body of research has been conducted on four areas of instructional design (identical elements, general principles, stimulus variability, and response availability) that are relevant to training in independent living (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Curry, 1996; Goldstein et al., 1979).

Identical Elements

The principle of identical elements basically says that transfer will be enhanced if the training and transfer settings are as similar as possible. The degree of similarity between the training and transfer situations determines the extent of transfer. Based upon this principle, here are suggestions for ILS training:

1. Use independent living training case scenarios that are as similar as possible to actual situations that workers will encounter. Create a feedback loop from the practice setting to the learning setting and

back to the practice setting. For example, Dodd, Morse, and Mallon (in press) describe how they used learning circles to discuss the ways newly learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes were used in practice. This was an attempt to integrate the learning and doing settings to promote effective transfer.

2. Use instructional strategies that closely approximate how the workers will train ILS on the job. For example, workers may rehearse in training an individual or group ILS session that they plan to implement with youth.

3. Help learners cognitively store ILS training information with retrieval in mind. Identify where and when potential teaching situations are likely to occur. Making these cognitive connections in training increases the likelihood that the workers will recognize when an opportunity exists to use newly learned skills. Similarly, help learners identify cues that will signal the workers that an opportunity for teaching an independent living skill to youth exists. As an example, a television program or movie might prompt a discussion that could highlight content for later instruction or reinforcement in a structured skills training session.

4. Use examples, forms, terminology, and so forth in training that are similar to what are used in the work environment. Consider conducting the training, or a portion of the training, in the work environment where the workers interact with youth. Provide application aides in training that can be used in the work environment. Hall & Coakley (in press) describe the use and distribution of a strength-based resource guide, listing adolescent services and support organizations that could be used on the job.

5. Help learners recognize those things that are common between the learning and transfer situation for learning to transfer.

General Principles

Transfer occurs when general rules and principles which underlie the subject matter are taught. The teaching of critical thinking, general problem-solving and decision-making skills is based upon this principle. This principle implies that independent living training should do the following:

1. Train underlying principles of the teaching of independent living skills for youth that transcend context. Help learners recognize these

underlying principles. Salomon and Perkins (1989) refer to this approach as promoting "mindful abstraction." Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, and Steinberg (in press) provide an example of the teaching of general principles. Four underlying general principles were interwoven into their Texas training project for supervisors: (1) positive youth development, (2) collaboration, (3) cultural responsiveness, and (4) permanent connections. The transfer matrix (Figure 1 described in a later section) is an example of a transfer-of-learning model that can be used with any type of training, including independent living skills.

2. Utilize parallel processing. For example, have the learners examine how the relationship of trainer-trainee, supervisor-supervisee, worker-youth, and parent-youth balance the need for rules and structure, connection and relationship, and autonomy and independence. Ask the workers to examine how their own development toward becoming an independent but connected practitioner with other professionals resembles a youth's development of independence and interdependence with others. Help workers to recognize factors that can help or hinder effective transfer of learning for them and the youth (e.g., a coworker or peer that reinforces or negates the importance of ILS training).

3. Teach metacognitive skills. Help the training participants learn how to learn and apply the application principles regarding ILS training. Help them learn to use general principles of positive youth development, collaboration, cultural responsiveness, and permanent connections to monitor and guide their practice. For example, provide suggestions and application aides that can serve as reminders to workers on the job that a case situation may apply to one of the principles in training. Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, and Steinberg (in press) describe the use of a teaching kit for supervisors to promote these underlying principles.

Stimulus Variability

This principle suggests that transfer of ILS learning is promoted by using a variety of relevant stimuli, such as the following:

1. Use a variety of case examples for each ILS training principle to strengthen a learner's understanding of the principles.

2. Provide examples of when a principle applies and when not.

3. Teach ILS training with a variety of situations and with a variety of individuals. Involve persons from the work environment (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, youth) in the training. Hall and Coakley (in press) provide examples of youth involvement in training.

Response Availability and Conditions of Practice

Response availability and conditions of practice are strategies that promote availability of eliciting the appropriate response at the appropriate time, with the following suggestions:

1. Identify specific ILS training skills that can be practiced in the training and work environments. Practice the demonstration of real case scenarios (or as close to real as possible). Learners need the opportunity to demonstrate ILS training and not just discuss how to conduct the training. Create training scenarios that include both formal and informal opportunities within the life space to promote independent living skills.

2. Practice central independent skills to the level of automaticity. Some skills can be overlearned to the extent that a worker routinely employs them. For example, a worker may routinely discuss the importance of independent living skills during the first interview with a youth.

3. Help participants learn ILS information with its application in mind. Make cognitive connections between the learning and doing situations (this is similar to the identical elements principle). For example, ask a learner to adapt a role play to make it as similar as possible to a typical work situation. You may ask them to choose another role player that most reminds them of a coworker or youth in their work situation.

4. Use distributed practice with gradual removal of practice. Integrate the practice into the work environment. This may involve the use of trainers and coaches in team meetings, and so forth. Encourage supervisors and others within the work environment to promote ILS training through discussion in individual supervisory sessions and team meetings. Many of the articles within this issue focus on the supervisor in promoting transfer of learning (Antle, Barbee, & Sullivan, (in press); Estafan, Evans, & Lum, (in press); Hall & Coakley, (in press); Landsman & D'Aunno,(in press); Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Steinberg, (in press)).

5. Help participants plan for application of learning. In addition to increasing the transfer potential for those developing a plan, the sharing of application plans with others can help colearners recognize additional potential applications (Mueller, 1985; Tracey & Pecora, 1988). Dodd, Morse, and Mallon (in press) discuss the use of action plans to both promote and assess transfer of learning.

A Developmental Learning Approach: Levels of Competence

The state of the field in independent living training has made significant progress in the identification of areas of competence for those working with youth, for example, ability to assess youth's readiness for independent living and developing, coordinating, and implementing independent living plans for teens (Institute for Human Services & Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, 2008). However, there is also a need to think developmentally and identify the desired level of competence. The levels of competence model can be a useful framework for conceptualizing much of what we know about the progression of learning process from novice to expert in the field (Curry, 2001; Curry & Rybicki, 1995; Pike, 1989). This process involves competence and meta-competence (the ability to reflect upon, monitor, and guide one's practice). Progression through the levels involves varying rates of time, as well as individual and program activity. Listed below are the five levels followed by a discussion of their corresponding characteristics. The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program has adapted the model for areas such as human diversity training and describes levels as the listed in parentheses (Pennsylvania Child Welfare Competency-Based Training and Certification Program, 2001).

1. Unconscious incompetence (awareness).
2. Conscious incompetence (recognition).
3. Conscious competence (introduction of skills).
4. Unconscious competence (reinforcement and extension of skills).
5. Conscious unconscious competence (high integration with ability to teach others).

Unconscious Incompetence (Awareness)

This stage is characterized by workers who do not know what they do not know pertaining to ILS training. Workers do not perform adequately in a competency area. However, workers are not aware of their incompetence. These workers may not even be aware of the importance of ILS training. A goal in this stage is to

promote learning readiness by increasing awareness of the need for learning in this area. Providing information on the ILS training competencies can be one way to help workers become aware of the skills necessary to teach ILS in a classroom setting or within the youth's life space. Engaging workers to shadow highly competent workers in this area as they promote the development of ILS in youth is another strategy. Workers may obtain a better appreciation for how they can teach or support a youth's learning and application of ILS.

Conscious Incompetence (Recognition)

Workers in this stage are not yet competent in ILS competency areas. However, these workers are aware of their knowledge, attitude, or skill limitations. They may be motivated to increase competence in order to improve performance or attain other goals. Workers in this stage are most appropriate candidates for training, or some other educational/developmental and remedial intervention. Clarification of learning goals, roles, rules, and interpersonal expectations is an important task of this stage. Developing a learning contract between supervisor, worker, trainer, or other experts would be appropriate. Helping workers to identify how to apply learning can occur even prior to training. There are a variety of sources of information that can be included in a learning and application plan. The potential for learning is perhaps greatest with participants at this level.

Conscious Competence (Introduction of New Skills)

Workers at this level may be considered as having emerging competence. Workers in this stage have the knowledge and skill to perform a task, but the performance doesn't happen automatically. Workers may have to be reminded or cued by the supervisor or competent colleague to utilize the knowledge or skill already stored in long-term memory. Also, whenever workers perform the skill, it may not be fluid. Workers may have to think about it while performing.

Since short-term memory can contain only a limited amount of information, workers may have to rely on notes or cues from others (Miller, 1956). Successfully training in ILS necessitates that workers keep their learning goal, strategy, and information regarding the learning participants in active working memory. In addition, attending to what a participant is saying and doing as well as monitoring one's own trainer behavior as part of an interactional exchange may overtax one's cognitive processing abilities. For example, during an ILS training session, workers may lose sight of the training goal and may be unsure of their training techniques, sometimes not using the most appropriate response.

Anxiety can also limit the amount of information that can be maintained within short-term, active memory as well as the retrieval of information from long-term memory into active memory. Over reliance on notes or long pauses when teaching ILS and trying to remember what to do next may adversely affect workers' credibility with youth. The result is a less efficient and often less effective

interactional process when compared to the performance of a more experienced ILS instructor or practitioner.

In this stage, workers' understanding and performance in an ILS competency area begins the transition from a collection of relatively isolated information and facts to recognition of "if-then" procedures. Workers begin to recognize that certain situations require specific actions or reactions. Workers may apply learning without competently considering the context (e.g., not adapting a curriculum to the current needs expressed by the youth). As they transition to the next stage, however, the ILS trainers or workers begin to become context conscious (Hills, 1989). In addition, they begin to recognize the underlying patterns or structure of behavior rather than responding to surface features. For example, a youth that is talking with another youth while ILS information is being presented may be actively processing and sharing learning rather than being disrespectful as the surface behavior may indicate.

With practice, performance steps consolidate and begin to require less active short-term memory, characteristic of the next stage. In the next stage, workers become more context conscious and can more easily adapt instructional strategies to the ILS learning needs of the youth. More conscious memory is available to recognize context and better understand the current needs of youth in the moment. Strategies for promoting learning in this stage focus on providing opportunities for practice, correctional feedback, and practice during and after the training. Therefore, previous suggestions pertaining to response availability and conditions of practice are appropriate at this stage. Additional suggestions include the following:

1. Identify concrete ILS training situations so that skills can be practiced in the training and work environments.

2. Identify and practice key skills to the level of automaticity. Some skills should be overlearned to the extent that a worker routinely employs them with little conscious effort.

3. Provide prompts, cues, and learning and application aids until a skill is fluidly performed. These aids can be used both in the classroom setting and the application setting. Since the subject matter can still raise anxiety, the trainer should facilitate success by providing the additional needed supports.

4. Provide coaching, performance feedback, and emotional support until fluidly performed. Prepare workers for the possibility of the result's dip and provide support for continued use.

5. Increase the types of ILS practice scenarios to include increasingly ever-widening situations. This may involve the use of a variety of individuals and settings that workers encounter. Since the amount of time permitted in training is limited, a practice and participant feedback plan must be developed and implemented that extends beyond the training setting. For example, a supervisor could identify an increasingly complex case to assign the worker with supportive coaching from a more experienced ILS training colleague.

6. Use distributed practice with gradual removal of practice. Integrate the practice into the work environment. This may involve the use of trainers and coaches in team meetings, and so forth. Encourage supervisors and others within the work environment to promote practice through discussion, practice, and problem solving in team meetings.

7. Provide booster shot review and application sessions to help participants discuss opportunities and barriers to implementation.

Unconscious Competence (Reinforcement and Extension of Skills)

This phase is characterized by workers who have sufficient mastery of a competency area. In this stage, a competency is learned to a level where it can be performed relatively automatically. Steps to successful performance in a competency area are consolidated and now appear as a fluid, effortless activity. Workers use little active, short-term memory while conducting the skill. They no longer have to think about the skill while performing it. It has been learned to the level of automaticity. Therefore, more short-term memory is available and workers can consciously focus on other activities such as self-monitoring. Workers can become more context conscious.

Ironically, one of the characteristics of this stage is that a competency is learned so well that workers are no longer mindful of the process of how the activity is conducted (they do not have to be). Workers may intuitively recognize underlying patterns and structures of behavior and respond accordingly. However, they may not be able to articulate the why and how of their performance.

Workers at this stage should be encouraged to continue their competent ILS training performance but also prompted to continue to self-monitor their training as well as be reminded that learning and development is on ongoing process. Revisiting ILS training is still appropriate to help them learn in greater depth and better conceptualize their practice. These workers can also be used as role models and coaches for less experienced workers (those in levels 1 & 2) to shadow. Trying out these new roles may prompt them to continue to reflect upon, conceptualize, and articulate competent ILS training practice, helping them to move toward the next level.

Conscious Unconscious Competence (High Integration with Ability to Teach Others)

This fifth stage is characterized by workers who can not only perform at a proficient level, but are able to conceptualize and articulate the process involved in competent performance. These workers may be considered as reflective practitioners who can also communicate effective practice ILS training principles, strategies, and techniques to others.

With self-reflection and help from others (e.g., supervisor, trainer, coach, or colleague), workers recognize the underlying structure to certain situations rather than just the surface features. Workers in the previous stage have an intuitive grasp but cannot competently conceptualize and articulate these abstract concepts to others. In this stage, they are able to perform proficiently as well as conceptually understand and monitor the performance process. For example, workers' understanding of parallel process can be useful in communicating this understanding to other ILS training colleagues.

Workers in this stage have a high level of proficiency in the competency area as well as competent metacognitive skills. They are able to proficiently monitor their performance (learning and application). Metacognitive skills (meta-competence) facilitates the movement from level one (unconscious incompetence) to level five (conscious unconscious competence). At this level, workers are able to reflect in (while teaching or interacting with youth) as well as reflect on (later self-reflection or in supervision or consultation) their ILS training performance with supervisors or colleagues. They recognize the limitations of their knowledge and skill and the need for continual learning. They are simultaneously functioning in levels 2 and 5.

These workers make good candidates for sharing knowledge about ILS training. They should be encouraged to teach, train, and publish professionally.

Ecological Model for Promoting Application of Learning on the Job

Curry, Caplan, and Knuppel (1994) describe a basic but comprehensive model that can be used to guide individual, environmental, and training design transfer interventions (including low and high road approaches) into a comprehensive transfer plan. Broad and Newstrom (1992) and Wentz (2002) also advocate a similar approach. They emphasize that key persons (e.g., worker, coworker, supervisor, trainer) at key times (before, during, and after formal training) can help or hinder transfer effectiveness. See figure 1. They suggest the utilization of a transfer matrix for transfer assessment and intervention that can be applied to any training. Figure 1 provides a brief illustration of how the model could be applied to ILS training. Many additional before, during, and after transfer strategies that incorporate both low and high road approaches can be included to help a child and youth care training and development professional achieve training and transfer objectives. According to the model, the total number and strength of factors in each cell promoting (driving forces) and hindering transfer (restraining forces) determines the

amount of transfer of learning. The model can be used as a template to place over any existing training program to assess factors that affect transfer and develop an effective plan for transfer intervention and evaluation by increasing driving forces and decreasing restraining forces. Wentz (2002) also recommends using the model when things seem to go wrong in training, moving from blaming to learning. This approach involves a paradigm shift from viewing training as an event that occurs during the training session to an intervention influenced by context including key individuals before, during, and after training.

Person	Before	During	After
Learner	Identify relevant cases that pertain to ILS training.	Think about how you will recognize opportunities to teach ILS when you are on the job.	Meet with your supervisor to help you identify how you can use your new learning to promote ILS.
Trainer	Meet with various personnel to identify relevant case scenarios for later use in ILS training.	Help learners make cognitive connections from in-class discussion to real work situations by helping them identify youth and situations to apply newly learned ILS skills.	Send an e-mail reminding learners to meet with their supervisors to facilitate application. Meet with learners for a follow-up "booster shot" session to discuss application of learning and refresh skills.
Supervisor	Meet with worker to emphasize the importance of ILS training.	Attend the ILS training with the entire team.	Lead a discussion during a team meeting regarding ways that the ILS training can be incorporated into daily practice.

Figure 1: Independent Living Skills (ILS) Transfer Matrix

Adapted from: Curry and McCarragher, (2004). Training ethics: A moral compass for child welfare practice, *Protecting Children, 19*, 37–52.

Evaluating Transfer of Independent Living Skills Training

Although there is an increased recognition of the importance of training for transfer by most training and development professionals, many fail to effectively evaluate learning transfer to the job (Curry & Leake, 2004). The very act of evaluating brings increased attention by key players in the transfer process to the importance of transfer of learning, increasing the likelihood of greater transfer of learning. Thus, training evaluation becomes a transfer of learning intervention (Curry, 1997).

Several articles in this issue provide examples of strategies for evaluating independent living training. Lyon, DeSanti, and Bell (in press) emphasize that many training outcomes depend on the transfer of learning that occurs between supervisors and caseworkers they supervise. Lyon et al. (in press) indicate that four of the projects described in this issue rely on a model in which supervisors are trained on core principles and provide materials and activities to promote transfer. Addition-

ally, these authors provide a summary of project evaluation efforts including the assessment of transfer via follow-up telephone surveys, review of action plans, review of case files, qualitative interviews regarding barriers and facilitators. They describe how several of the projects evaluated transfer of learning. Other strategies described include using behavioral rating scales (Antle et al., in press), conducting learning circles to identify progress toward action plan objectives (Dodd et al., in press), and assessing changes at the department level via electronic surveys (Estafan et al., in press). As illustrated through the projects' evaluation efforts, it is important to assess the outcome includes the extent of transfer and what content is transferred, as well as the process, including factors that help or hinder transfer of learning.

Some Final Discussion

Based on the many lessons learned in the articles presented in this special issue and our role as youth work scholars and practitioners, we think that young adults who are navigating independent living will need these things for the future:

- Good situational judgment, especially critical decision-making skills;
- Capacity for entrepreneurial behavior, the ability to reconfigure limited resources into livable conditions with employment and healthy sustained relationships, and effective use of services from social programs;
- Maturing social skills that promote healthy interdependence, productive peer and work relationships, basic self-care and healthy intimate life, and a secure life at work and home.

Interwoven in these competencies are all of the dynamics of risk and resilience brought to bear in the independent living experience. It's important not only that the youth workers be trained in the content of these competencies and skills, but in full training transfer the youth workers are able to serve as role models for the youth in the ways they guide, lead, and generate the program. For example, independent living youth need increasing opportunities to make decisions and live with the realistic consequences within appropriately supported situations. Mirroring this same dynamic, youth workers should have the leadership training to make effective decisions. This potentially includes greater responsibility and situational control over the resources for running their own unit within a larger organization as well as maximum delegation of authority from the agency. In this way the workers can meet independent living youth where they are in their development. The purpose of role modeling and teaching independent living can be fulfilled only if the youth workers themselves are independent and do not have to check every decision with higher ups. Such a critical decision-making approach for training, youth engagement, and program management is especially important in independent living programs which have elements of youth self-governance as central to the developmental experience of the milieu.

As we look to the future of independent living programs, a powerful metric for the evaluation of training transfer might begin with the question, To what extent are youth and youth workers reciprocally capable of taking responsibility for critical decision making? It is also essential for success at the program level to provide youth workers with enriched training that emphasizes choice, team process, and other exercises that demonstrate how to navigate practice strategies with multiple correct answers. This is the same thing we expect from the youth in their growing independence.

Equally important to situational judgment and critical decision making in the transfer of knowledge is the capacity to be entrepreneurial. Like youth, staff should have the maximum opportunity to change the scope of the learning experience by reorganizing the training agenda to meet real-time needs and to incorporate found resources. For example, in addition to delivering structured training curriculum for the youth workers, the trainer might also prepare some units that are presented on the basis of an on-the-spot assessment of immediate needs. To emphasize critical choice and entrepreneurial spirit, youth workers can be encouraged to reach out through their own community-wide networks to incorporate local training resources into the process, which can in turn be traded or bartered with other organizations. Here the metric for the training transfer may be to evaluate the extent youth and youth workers are capable of taking reasonable and healthy risks. How do the youth workers and youth together reconfigure and incorporate successes and failures into lessons learned?

Most important are the social competencies and skills that independent living youth need to follow through. How many times can we hear and say, "What does it take to make sure that independent living youth follow through"! In the ecology, with the milieu as systems of support integral to community, youth depend powerfully on the youth workers to form the strong attachments necessary to make healthy relationships relatively late in finishing adolescence and moving to young adulthood. In independent living are we mentors, coaches, or sometime lifelong replacements for relatives? It is a major challenge to figure out how much intimacy young adults need especially if they experience failure by having multiple placements and being hurt by many of the adults in their lives. Training for youth workers should ideally include the competencies of communication and relationship building with an emphasis on understanding young adult learning and development. The way in which youth worker teams function with healthy interdependence and positive situational judgment role models on a daily basis the range of skills that independent living youth must internalize to succeed.

Perhaps more than in the other transitions across the continuum of care, the shift when older youth age out of care, requires mutuality and a reciprocal transfer of knowledge. Ideally in the case of independent living, youth workers serve as adult partners to older youth and they work together. Training transfer in the independent living of the future continues to carry with it the hope for generational change: The youth change us, and we change the youth. Training transfer,

therefore, needs to powerfully reflect optimal adult learning, healthy engagement in productive decision-making, and an entrepreneurial spirit for maturing social skills in building a system of support. The learning that goes on in the training room, if we are to expect it to have full impact after the fact, should reflect a team that functions in the same ways we expect youth to behave and learn. To achieve and sustain independence, we collaborate in constructing healthy relationships with the youth that develop all of us for the future.

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LEARNING THROUGH MISTAKES AND PRAYING THEY'RE NOT BIG ONES: ON THE JOB LEARNING FOR HOUSE PARENTS

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Over the years, much has been written about the importance of the role of youth workers (e.g., Krueger, 2004; Maier, 1987, 1995; Garfat, 2004), and considerable attention has been given to the competencies exhibited by workers across the nation. The youth work field is in a stage of rapid growth and transition, including adoption of national certification guidelines that have standardized competencies of practice (Mattingly, 2002; Thomas, 2002). With this growth comes an increasing need for education, training, and support of providers at all levels. Youth work is highly intuitive (VanderVen, K. 1992) and dependent on a person's ability to relate, communicate, and connect with youth in diverse contexts.

This article describes a study I conducted to investigate the role of house parents in group and residential care, and how they learn their practice. A comprehensive understanding of the professional knowledge that youth workers acquire, and how they transfer it into practice, is a timely necessity. Though funding for service is shrinking, the pressures to professionalize are increasing. Certainly the needs of youth remain high, and the societal issues they are facing are increasingly complex (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; Cammarota & Ginwright, 2002; Rose, 2008). It is imperative to their success that youth receive care from competent and caring workers, who often learn through their own volition and trial and error the best way to do their jobs.

It is widely recognized that with proper training, support, resources, and supervision, workers can in fact improve their capacity to form healthy relationships and promote the development of youth as they engage in their daily interactions. Unfortunately, several of factors, including low pay, inadequate program funding, and demanding and nebulous working conditions, make it difficult to recruit and retain staff while helping them reach their potential. Further, high rates of turnover create human impermanence in programs that often work with youth who have already experienced considerable abandonment, making it difficult for them to have consistent positive attachment and interactions. Work has been done to mitigate such problems in the field as the lack of applicable professional knowledge and training relevant to standardization and credentialing. Through those efforts, a number of characteristics, practices, and attitudes related to competence, longevity, commitment, and satisfaction in youth work have been identified (Anglin, Denholm, Ferguson, & Pence, 1990; Beker & Eisikovits, 1992; Knorth, Van Den Bergh, & Verheij, 2002; Krueger, 1996; Mattingly, 2002). Many of these efforts have been part of a sixty-year, worldwide effort to professionalize the field.

Missing from much of the literature is the understanding of how youth workers in specific roles acquire their professional knowledge and put it into practice. Progress will be made in the development and enhancement of curricula and methods of teaching and preparing people for employment in the field when we gain a better understanding of what various youth work positions are like in real, specific contemporary circumstances. This study addresses that need by focusing specifically on the functions of house parents who work and live in residential host homes. This is a branch of youth work that blends foster parenting and short-term residential care.

The lack of available research related to this particular youth work position, makes it necessary to obtain a detailed account of the day-to-day functions and the contexts in which the work is performed. To this aim, an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995; Zucker, 2001) was designed to provide an in-depth look at what it is to be house parents and how they learn the skills necessary for their occupation. Information was obtained from four principal sources: (a) agency documents, (b) administrative staff, (c) youth in care, and (d) house parents. Results of this study may inform education and preparation for youth workers in similar settings, because the case study itself provides insights that readers may be able to relate to and from them make their own generalizations (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2000).

Selecting the Case

The case in this instance is a specific set of house parents, James and Edan, who work in a host home located in a coastal university town in the state of Washington. With a population of roughly 70,000, the city is situated between two major metropolitan areas with populations of roughly 600,000—one 50 miles to the north and the other 85 miles to the south. The case was limited by a 12-week research timeline and by the physical host home itself. The home is administered by a nonprofit agency with a 30-year history of serving runaway and homeless youth through transitional housing, independent living programs, and counseling services. The agency also offers foster care services, a restorative justice program, family support, and education services.

The agency is adapting its services to fulfill its mission to serve homeless and runaway 12-17 year-old youth with ever-shrinking federal and local financial support—a challenge faced by many youth-serving organizations around the country. The host home model is a new approach for the agency and is considered by its administration to hold much promise for supporting youth in transition to fully independent living. The agency had just received its license to operate the host home at the time this study was being planned. James and Edan had been hired and were beginning to provide services after Edan participated in 30 hours of foster parent training to meet the basic minimum standards for licensure—which was the only mandatory training throughout their first year of service. The agency was eager to

serve as the site for this study because there was a desire to understand more about what the functions of house parents entail, how they should be trained, and how they should be supervised and supported. The host home opened 5 months before my first visit.

James had 2 years of prior experience working with teenage youth in a transitional living program. Additionally, he had gained experience working with youth in various field placements throughout his undergraduate education. Edan had limited prior experience working with youth, having served as a student-teacher for an alternative high school for roughly 9 months. James holds a BA degree in Human Services. Edan has an interdisciplinary BA degree in Art History. James and Edan had been married for five years, were 34 and 27 years old respectively, and had a 3-year-old daughter, Beatrice at the time of the study.

During the 3-months of the study, I conducted fieldwork at key times throughout each week, including observations during weekday evenings, when youth returned from school or other coordinated daytime activities such as day camps. This was a time when youth would transition to meals and free-time activities. Observations were also conducted during weekday mornings, when youth were waking up and preparing to go to school, as well as weekend mid-day and evenings, when youth were engaged in social and learning activities with James, Edan, and Beatrice. Additionally, James and Edan were observed at times when youth were not present, when they engaged in administrative functions and "behind the scenes trouble-shooting." Observing each of these significant parts of the days provided a well-rounded view of the workweek.

Results

Defining the Job

Throughout the study, there were discrepancies in the descriptions of the functions of house parents, depending on the source: agency documents, host-home administration, youth in care, house parents, and personal observation. This lack of consensus and clear awareness of what it truly means to be a house parent supports the initial purpose of the study: to shed light on a burgeoning field for a better, more complete understanding of the role and the preparation needed to succeed in the position.

To begin, the agency's official job description of a house parent is itself simple and generalized, not providing detail of what the position entails (Appendix A). The lack of detail regarding the functions of the job is not unique to this agency. Child and youth care work has historically been described in general terms. It is frequently described as service for children and youth in out-of-home and out-of-school care, or simply, as stated by Maier (1987), "being equal to, but unlike being a parent" (p. 187).

The position is dynamic, with a complex dispersion of activities and services performed on any given day. The house parents described the functions of their

work. From a long list of descriptors of the job, six main functions were identified, including meeting basic needs, providing emotional support, providing academic support, linking to the community, role modeling, and case management (Appendix 2). The functions and necessary skills are similar to those found in previous literature related to professional development needs of youth workers in general (Krueger et al., 1999; Stuart, 2001; Zeldin et al., 1995).

There are various educational backgrounds desirable for house parents, including human services, social work, youth and family work, education, and psychology. The consensus among the house parents and administrative staff is that a bachelor's degree granted by an accredited college or university would provide an essential base knowledge. However, the agency considers this desirable education but not required. These minimal requirements do not align with the extensive descriptions of necessary abilities shown in Appendix 2. James and Edan said that learning the various functions of their job occurs in both formal and informal settings, but they said that the learning from informal settings is more important than formal. While there is a perceived need to have academic experience in any of the wide range of education expressed above, James and Edan said an academic institution is not able to teach them how to do their work.

James said his human services degree prepared him for some of the general elements of the work and particularly in understanding the various systems he is now working within. Edan said that parts of the foster parent training had been helpful, especially such skills as behavior modification and handling conflict. However, they agreed that they have not received enough training, and that it is difficult to access due to scheduling. Even with the positive experiences James and Edan had in obtaining skills in formal education at the university and in continuing education workshops, they said that those skills are best learned through experience, use of reflection, and supportive supervision. When I asked how they learned to do their job James said, "Trial and error. Lots of error. We need to do the work and learn from it, you know?" Edan said, "Yeah and we do a lot of reflection and that really helps. We purposely take the time to dissect everything and think about and talk about different ways we could do things, you know?"

James also said, "Sometimes I think it would be so helpful to have something like a support group, where we could corroborate with other people who are experiencing this stuff, too, you know? I mean that's how you learn this stuff. You do it, you talk about it, you try out different approaches, and every kid is different, every day is different, so you need to be a mechanic one day and a psychologist the next. It's a variety for sure." Edan said, "Yeah, you know, it's even cathartic to just have these conversations with you, I mean it helps us get it out there and talk about our feelings and what is working or not working."

Regarding the significance of on-the-job training and learning by doing, they emphasized the significance of having a support mechanism in place, whether it is with a skilled supervisor who can give professional advice, or with peers who

are performing similar work. In both instances, James and Edan said they gained invaluable professional development through debriefing and reflection.

The notion of experiential learning, which James and Edan frequently referred to as useful for their learning, is not a new one. Indeed, there is an extensive literature base related to experiential knowledge dating back more than 100 years. The considerable work that has been done investigating transfer of learning through use of experiential practice lends credibility to the explanations from James and Edan that the most common method of acquiring applicable professional knowledge is by doing the work under the guidance of a supportive supervisor. The diverse range of work performed requires different skill-sets, characteristics, and abilities. With practice, ongoing reflection, and supportive supervision, the house parents said they were able to develop as professionals.

With such a variety of functions of house parents, there is a wide range of skills needed to perform them. While there are some general skill-sets that are vital to youth work, such as the ability to communicate well with a diverse population or engage in a variety of activities, there are others that are more specific to a particular function of their job, such as household budgeting and financial management. For the purpose of my study, in order to identify how James and Edan learned the necessary skills, it was helpful to distinguish different skill-sets. Which resulted in two categories: one related to case management and organizational skills and the other related to interpersonal and relational skills. This categorization of youth work has previously been referred to by Maier (1987) as "indirect or direct work with children" (p. 189).

Indirect Skills

An important aspect of the day-to-day functions of house parents includes indirect care through case management. Within this function of the job is the ability to do such things as write reports to administration or to current and potential funding sources, to manage and articulate outcomes of services, to create and manage an operational budget, and to communicate with outside systems and agencies. This includes monitoring and assuring that each youth is receiving needed outside services. Additionally, skills associated with maintaining accurate and up-to-date, confidential records are important, requiring a combination of writing and organizational skills. Much of the indirect care equates to preparation for direct service, such as planning a day's or week's events, scheduling household activities, and obtaining resources that will make it possible to engage directly with youth.

Maintaining a sense of order and organization in the home is important because numerous schedules are kept related to each resident's needs. Frequently each of the youth attends different schools and is involved in different nonschool-related activities and services. Each youth has different service needs, and visitation schedules with friends and family members are rarely in sync from one child to the next. This requires strict monitoring of schedules and close attention to transportation needs, as can be seen in the following excerpt from a discussion with James.

It was 6:45 AM, and the sounds of a blow dryer and girls talking could be heard from upstairs, where there were two female residents getting ready for school. James was quickly eating a bowl of cereal after giving the girls a fifteen minute warning:

> So now, like I need to drive one [of the girls] out to Mt. Barker, and then the other way out to Burlington. It's going to be like a two-hour round trip. No, more like two and a half, since there are no major roads connecting the two. I will be driving through farm country. I am trying to figure out the best way to do it, but there is no good way.
>
> I come home and try to get something done around here, but I only have about an hour and a half really before I need to go back out and pick them up. Well, at least I only need to pick up one of them today, but it's still a pain in the butt. But then, oh yeah, we have to get Amy to her counseling appointment by 3:15, Stacie has a Doctor's appointment at 4:00, and Edan was supposed to take Beatrice to a friend's house for a play-date at 5:00, but I don't know if that will happen.
>
> I have so much to do. I just don't know when I can get it done. When the kids go to bed, I guess. Oh, yeah [laughing], and I am supposed to have a meeting with [a case worker] in between, and somehow we need to get some groceries. Edan has to be here because we are supposed to get a new boy today, or maybe tomorrow. All in a day's work.

This excerpt sheds light on an often frenetic schedule. Keeping track of information about the house and its residents, the comings and goings of everyone, the organization's requirements and deadlines, and myriad other specific tasks and details requires the house parents to be highly skilled at planning and organizing. Without strong organizational skills it seems unlikely that the job could be done well. As a case worker, Julia, put it:

> You have to be very organized [to be a house parent]. But, yet you have to be flexible. I mean if you are a very organized, methodical person who can't deal with last minute change, it's not for you. You have to be able to focus with a lot of different people's schedules. You [may] have three kids at different schools, one has a probation meeting and one has track, and one has a counseling appointment. You have to be able to multi-task in many different ways in order to be able to do all those things at once. Yes, I guess it's an interesting mix of organized and being comfortable with chaos. Organized chaos, maybe.

Julia's perception from the outside, nearly mirrors James' perspective as someone performing the services.

Direct Skills

Many of the functions performed involve direct engagement with youth, which requires a variety of interpersonal skills. Direct engagement includes communicating with them and providing emotional support and care, role modeling or mentoring, and building relationships. The principal functions of house parents require the ability to understand, be comfortable with, and otherwise relate to youth from diverse backgrounds. The ability to communicate with diverse populations—from adults in positions of authority to youth in need of support—is an important requirement for the position. Like most youth work occupations, the capability to engage youth in activities is an important skill, which relates directly to the ability to connect interpersonally (Baizerman, 1996; Fewster 1990; Garfat, 1995; Krueger, 1998).

Skills associated with giving genuine care and support to youth, including use of appropriate touch and affection is imperative in creating and sustaining a nurturing environment in the home. Given the intimacy of the house, and the bond that occurs, it is important for them to have the skills necessary to balance emotions and set and maintain professional boundaries. There is often an emotional struggle occurring as they simultaneously provide genuine care and professional distance (Markiewicz, 2005; Mattingly, 2002). Indeed, the job is affecting, and requires people who have the skills necessary to understand and cope with their own and other people's emotions (Cottle, 2003; Deikman, 1982; Fewster, 1990; Garfat, 1991; Goffman, 1959; Krueger, 1995, 1998; Markiewicz, 2005; Rosenberg, 1979). The interpersonal skills associated with the position are of utmost importance, and as the house parents' supervisor stated, "The interpersonal skills are critical, and may be the ones that are the hardest to teach. You got it or you don't. Maybe you get better with time."

How Skills are Learned

The data related to how house parents learn their work revealed themes centering on a combination of three methods: (a) experiential learning and use of reflection, (b) supportive supervision and, (c) classroom instruction, or formal education, which was described as largely a "foundational knowledge-base." The experiential learning that takes place while on the job was considered to be the most prudent way James and Edan learned to be house parents. Supportive supervision was considered one area that has great potential for supporting learning. Formal workshops and classroom education were also considered useful, but only when among peers, and with immediate applicability.

Experience Based Learning and Reflection

The most apparent method for James and Edan to acquire knowledge was through practice itself. Time and time again the house parents discussed the significance of trial and error, of learning from mistakes, and the sense that, you just got to do the work "to get the hang of it." Considering the empirical support for the usefulness of experiential learning in the literature, together with my personal experience

learning while working in the youth work field, I was not at all surprised to find this method of learning emerge as a theme in this study. What struck me, however, was the adamancy with which experiential learning was advocated--nearly to the extent of discounting all other forms of learning. The data obtained consistently pointed to the significance of learning through a purposeful series of planning, acting, and reflecting. This mode of learning is in line with early notions of experiential and action-learning principals, including those of Kurt Lewin (1946), who suggested a learning process as, "a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action" (pp.34-35). Throughout my study, the house parents obtained what Lewin (1946) referred to as "fact-finding about the result of the action" through times of reflection.

Reflection is commonly considered an important aspect of experiential learning (Kenny, Ralph, & Brown, 2000; Magnuson & Burger, 2001), and linked to John Dewey (1933), who argued that "experience without reflection can just as well be miseducative as educative" (in Magnuson & Burger, 2001, p.14). Indeed, James and Edan considered their acts of reflecting as a formal extension of their workday. In other words, reflection was a purposeful method used to replay the happenings of their days, to work together to identify what did or did not work well, and to use that information to adapt plans for the following day. This reflection process began for them as a "therapeutic way to calm [their] nerves at the end of the day" when they first started working at the host home. They realized how much they benefited from this purposeful analysis of their daily happenings and implemented it as a regular part of their planning and evaluation. James and Edan spoke of reflection as a way to make sense of what they are doing and to articulate what they are experiencing, which seemed to support them in making adjustments to how they worked with individual youth, and managed the house as a whole (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Formal Education

The house parents and the administration staff all expressed the belief that continuing education workshops regarding adolescent behavior management and related topics are useful, when attended with people who work in similar situations and can relate to the work performed, and when the information is clearly applicable. This is consistent with findings from others who have investigated transfer of learning (Curry, 2001; Curry & Rybicki, 1995; Daley, 1999; Kagan, 1983; Zigler & Gordan, 1982). In particular, the findings from this study connect to the literature of Dale Curry and Henry Maier, relating to the transfer of learning from educational settings to the workplace and to the notion of first- and second-order change (Curry, 2001; Maier, 1986). Paralleling what has been stated by Curry (1997, 2001), Curry and Cardina (2003), and Maier (1986, 1987, 1995), this study has indicated a high degree of importance placed on achieving second-order change through experiential knowledge and immediate, measurable use in the host home.

Closing Thoughts

The purpose of my study has been to provide a better understanding of the work lives of house parents, and how they learn their profession. Similar detailed understanding of the functions and requirements of youth workers in different contexts is also needed. Furthermore, the results of these studies should be made available to youth workers and youth-serving organizations around the country. While this is a grand and long-range undertaking, the effort will assist the field in its goal of professionalizing and better understanding the specific occupations that it encompasses. For a field that is defining itself, it will be helpful to have a baseline understanding of the different specific functions it provides.

As the youth work field continues to develop, this study and others like it may be used to better understand the context of the range of services it provides, and how youth workers in each of these areas can best be taught and supported in their craft. When well-informed programs are being developed and run by well-prepared youth workers, youth will be well served. The benefits associated with better educated, qualified workers translate into better quality care for youth, and lends help to the current efforts to professionalize the field of youth work.

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APPENDIX 1, HOUSE PARENT JOB DESCRIPTION

Host Home Parents Job description

In general terms, host home parents are responsible for the care and supervision of safe home youth aged 12-17 who are placed in the home. They also are responsible for supporting the Safe Home Treatment Plan that has been developed by the youth and safe home therapist. It is also expected that host home parents will support and cooperate with transition and aftercare plans for youth as they leave the home. Host home parents are expected to know, understand, and adhere to program policies and to ask program staff (safe home therapist or program manager) for clarification when it is needed.

Qualifications:

1. Host home parents will complete the DCFS pre-service training and be willing to continue training on an ongoing basis as it is offered by program staff of the agency.

2. Host home parents will reside in a Washington State licensed foster home.

3. Host home parents will have an automobile, a current driver's license, adequate auto insurance, and enough working seatbelts for the youth in their care.

4. Host home parents will have an interest and ability to work with at-risk and challenging youth on a full-time basis. This will have been demonstrated by at least one year experience working with at-risk youth and families.

5. Host home parents will be employees of Northcoast Youth Support and as such will be eligible for all benefits applicable to that position.

Duties:

1. Participate in a minimum of 30 hours of training annually. Training required annually includes Child Protective Services Mandated Reporting, Suicide Prevention and Assessment, Cultural Diversity, Emergency Preparedness, Field Safety.

2. Provide basic care and supervision for up to four youth at a time who are in placement. This includes:

   - Room and Board–healthy, nutritious meals and snacks
   - Clear limits and house rules
   - Transportation as needed by youth
   - Medical, dental, and health care coordination as possible in a short-term stay
   - Clothing

3. Work as integral members of the safe home team to:

   - Provide a home atmosphere in which the youth may work on their treatment plan or process the family crisis that resulted in their placement in the host home.
   - Provide a sense of stability in the home in order to facilitate smooth transitions for youth moving in and out of placement.
   - Keep program staff, and especially the safe home therapist and the crisis and counseling program manager informed of all significant events and/or incidents as they occur with any of the youth in placement. This may need to take place on a daily basis, or at least as often as is deemed necessary.
   - Participate in formal and informal meetings with a youth and the safe home therapist regarding their treatment plan as deemed helpful by either the host home parent or the safe home therapist.
   - Participate in planning and following through with enhancement activities for youth in placement, such as swimming, basketball, art, community services, and any other appropriate activities.
   - Support youth in placement to participate in their current school programs.

Work with the Community:

1. Represent NYS in a professional manner and be willing to educate community providers about the Host Home program.

2. Foster and encourage community involvement for themselves as well as youth in placement.

3. Adhere to the confidentiality policy regarding youth in placement and their family.

I agree with the duties as outlined above. In addition, I understand that I may ask the NYS Licensor or safe home program staff if I have any questions regarding these duties.

_____

Host Home Parent(s)

_____

Date

APPENDIX 2

House Parent Functions, and How They Are Learned

Function	Examples/Skills Needed	Examples of How Skills Are Learned
Provide Shelter and Meet Basic Needs	• Nutritious Meals • Transportation • Household Management - Shopping - Cleaning - House Maintenance • Budgeting (Household) • General 'Parenting' • Entertainment - Social Events - Family Activities • Discipline Techniques • Administration of Meds.	• Experience and Practice • Trial and Error • Workshops • College Courses/Degree: - Psychology - Social Work - Human Development - Human Services - Nursing - Physical Education - Youth Work • Reflection • Consultation (Peers and Supervisors)
Provide Emotional Supportand Care	• Listening • Counseling • Affection • Communication	• College Courses/Degree: - Psychology - Social Work - Youth Work • Mentorship From Supervisor
Provide Academic Support	• Homework Support	• College Courses/Degree: - Education - Teaching
Advocate and Link to the Community	• Communication with: - Parents - Schools - Outside Agencies - Probation/Parole - Counselors - Medical Providers	• College Courses/Degree: - Psychology - Human Services - Youth Work - Social Work • Experience and Practice • Trial and Error
Role Model and Mentor	• Engaging with Family • Conflict Resolution • Anger Management • Decision Making • Healthy Relationships • Cultural Competence • Communication	• Experience and Practice • Trial and Error • College Courses/Degree: - Human Development - Human Services - Youth Work • Workshops
Provide Case Management	• Report Writing • Record Keeping • Budgeting (Program) • Planning & Coordination	• College Courses/Degree: - Social Work - Nonprofit Management • Workshops

Journal of Child and Youth Care Work

UNDERVALUED OR MISUNDERSTOOD? YOUTH WORK AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LIFELONG LEARNING

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Abstract: This paper discusses the relevance of informal educational experiences associated with youth work practice in Northern Ireland. It argues that youth work is distinctly educational and involves constructive interventions with young people and that its role and contribution are often undervalued or misunderstood. Youth work plays a vital role in supporting young people through the increasingly prolonged and complex transition from youth to adulthood. While youth work sits within a theoretical framework of informal education, its contribution to lifelong learning is perhaps of greater significance than has previously been recognized.

The Nature and Purpose of Youth Work

The roots of youth work as a method of informal education have their origins in the mid-19th century (Milburn et al., 2003). While it is difficult to say exactly when the term youth work became prevalent, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), set up in 1844, has been identified as the first dedicated youth organization (Smith, 2002). Other significant factors in the emergence of youth work were increasing public interest in youth as a distinct category with specific needs and a more scientific theorizing of the term adolescence by psychologists such as Hall (1904).

Despite its history, the concept of youth work can be difficult to define and therefore has produced competing views as to its fundamental purposes and nature (Tucker, 1994; Harland, Morgan, & Muldoon, 2005). While Smith (1988, p.51) argues that it is helpful to think of there being "different forms of youth work rather than a single youth work with commonly agreed characteristics," Jeffs and Smith (1999, p.48, 2010, p.3) identify several distinctive characteristics that have been present to differing degrees in youth work practice since the early 1900's:

- Youth work is directed towards young people.
- Youth work has an educational purpose.
- Youth work is a commitment to association--joining together in companionship to undertake some task, and the educative power of playing one's part in a group or association.

- The personality or character of the worker is of fundamental importance.
- The relationship between a youth worker and a young person is voluntary.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of youth is problematic when deciding on intervention. For example, the youth service in Northern Ireland is charged with young people between the age of 4 and 25. Agreeing on what constitutes youth is an important part of the current discussion in Northern Ireland in terms of what should be offered by the youth service. Some practitioners have suggested that those under 10 should be offered play work, and that only those between ages 12 and 18 should be dealt with by youth service. The main point is that although youth workers categorically work with young people, there is no agreed definition of the concept of youth.

Underlying Youth Work Principles

Jeffs (2001) has commented that it is the voluntary principle that has distinguished youth work from most other services to youth people. Participation and group association is not compulsory, and therefore, a young person retains the right to freely enter into relationships with youth workers and other young people and to end these relationships when they choose. This contrasts with problem-based interventions and deficit models which have been so dominant within social policy directed at young people (Davis, 2005). Increasingly deficit models have orientated youth work towards supporting vulnerable, excluded, or at-risk young people in negotiating more successful youth to adult transitions (Mizen, 2003; Jeffs & Smith, 2006; Spence, 2007). This is an important consideration as youth to adult transitions have become more prolonged and complex and characterized by greater risk and uncertainty (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2007).

Smith (1982, p.24) states that youth work is the "conscious attempt to help young people gain for themselves, the knowledge, feelings, and skills necessary to meet their own and others developmental needs." Williamson (1995) argues that there is a developmental process in all youth work practice, beginning with a focus on the individual, developing into group formation, consolidation, and growth. This is reinforced by Spence, Devanney, & Noonan (2006) who assert that youth work processes begin with informal, person-centered approaches that develop into planned structured interventions as a means to achieve predetermined outcomes. Research has shown that young people on youth work programs learn more effectively in settings where they feel safe, valued, supported, and involved in decision-making processes about issues that affect their lives (Harland, 2001; Harland, Morgan, & Muldoon, 2005).

Young (1999, p.61) states the view that "youth work engages young people in the process of moral philosophizing as a function of their identity development and responsibility as social beings in a social world." She further asserts that the

uniqueness of youth work is not found in its methods, curriculum content, or targets groups, but through its ability to support and enable young people to explore fundamental questions about their own identity—principles that are also present in much of the literature around lifelong learning.

Like formal education, youth work is essentially part of a lifelong learning educational process (*Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice*, 2003). One key difference, however, is that youth work occurs in nonformal settings as opposed to formal structures within schools, colleges, and universities. The notion of the learning environment is given serious consideration within youth work. Mahoney (2005) suggests that youth workers can be identified as informal educators through the unique way in which they engage in the daily lives of young people in a range of informal settings. Mahoney argues that being conscious about how and where youth workers engage young people, contributes to the development of youth work practice. Youth workers seek to work in ways which encourage young people to use their experiences of everyday living as opportunities for learning about themselves and others (Crosby, 2005, p.54). Spence et al. (2006) state that youth work practice is inextricably linked to the realities of young peoples' lives and is affected by local culture and the relationships that young people have with other people and institutions such as the family, school, and police. These authors state that "these realities are given conceptual cohesion in the language of informal education, which encapsulates both the informal, relational aspects of the work and its intentions towards constructive learning and development" (Spence et al., 2006, p.134). Importantly, however, these authors argue that while youth work sits within the theoretical framework of informal education, the language of youth work has not been fully developed.

Youth Service in Northern Ireland

The social and political troubles, which began in 1969, significantly altered the shape and direction of youth work in Northern Ireland. In the early 1970s youth workers were increasingly employed to deliver diversionary programs aimed at keeping young people, particularly young men, off the streets and away from violence. Subsequently youth work in Northern Ireland took a different direction from youth work in the rest of the UK and Ireland. In 1973, as part of local Government reorganization, Education and Library Boards were established that were responsible for the statutory provision of youth services in Northern Ireland.

The Youth Service (NI) Order 1989, which succeeded the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1973 and the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 Article 37, stated that youth service could be provided either directly by Education Boards themselves or through assisting, both financially and nonfinancially, other youth service providers in the organization of activities. This evolved into the creation of three distinct statutory, voluntary, and community youth sectors. The statutory sector consists of youth clubs, area projects, and residential centres. The voluntary and community sectors are made up of a greater variety of community

groups, organizations, including church based, uniformed, headquarter, and umbrella groups. Since the late 1960s youth work has also been significantly shaped by the fact that young people have grown up in a deeply divided and contested society. Sectarianism and the effects of the social and political troubles have been shown to have a significant influence upon young people growing up in Northern Ireland (Bell, 1990; Harland, Morgan, & Muldoon, 2005). Connolly and Maginn (1999, p.97) found that sectarianism amongst children in Northern Ireland was rooted in their day-to-day experiences, and by the age of three, children had not only developed an understanding of the categories of "Protestant" and "Catholic," but were able to apply negative characteristics each to the other.

The Youth Service in Northern Ireland encompasses a broad diversity of provision that includes services for children less than 10 years of age, services for young people aged 10-16 years old, and services to young adults. The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Work 2005-2008 states its vision is to promote the development, well-being, rights, and participation of young people by ensuring all young people in Northern Ireland the following:

- They are able to enjoy themselves, realise their potential, and participate as active citizens in a secure and peaceful society.
- They know their rights and responsibilities and have these rights protected and promoted.
- They feel valued, understood, and feel safe and supported.

In order to understand the underpinning philosophical and ideological concepts of youth work in Northern Ireland, it is important to take cognisance of the core principles of the Department of Education (2003, p.11) permeating youth work: "a commitment to preparing young people for participation, the promotion of acceptance and understanding of others, and testing values and beliefs." These affirm the personal and social development of young people and ideally should be reflected in all youth work.

Northern Ireland is a society emerging from a period of prolonged violence, and reflection on any aspect of life must be considered in the context of the conflict that has been prevalent since 1969. Contemporary youth work takes place within the context of "a legacy of violence and communal strife, alongside other issues that affect modern society" (Department of Education, 2003, p.16). Providing support to young people, often at the forefront of community and sectarian violence, has been a major aspect of youth work practice in Northern Ireland for over three decades (Harland, Morgan, & Muldoon, 2005).

One of the most powerful influences in encouraging young people in a contested and divided society is to engage in reconciliation work. Youth workers have potential to be valuable role models and by their example can encourage acceptance and understanding of others, which are an important aspect of youth work curricu-

lum seen within broader principles of equity, diversity, and interdependence. These principles promote appreciation of the difference between, and interdependence of, people within society, and builds upon community relations practice developed in response to the Northern Ireland conflict since 1969.

Youth Work and Employment.

Youth work has a role in the development of social capital while increasingly being drawn into the debate about human and economic capital. One of the challenges for youth work has, and will continue to be, the role played in training for employment. The transition from school presupposes the belief that school has prepared young people for the world of work or indeed civic society. Pohl and Walther (2007) refer to a process of activation, i.e., the transition of disadvantaged young people from school to work, by asking the following question: "[If it is] possible to specify whether activation implies adaptation to mechanisms of selection in education, training and the labour market, or whether it increases young people's potential to take action in shaping their own biographies (i.e. through participation and lifelong learning)." (p.533)

While policies driven by education, training, and the needs of the labor market are extremely influential they often miss those young people on the margins of society. Shildrick and MacDonald (2007, p.591) state that the most damaging problem with the "transition debate" is that it has tended to take young people out of the youth equation by treating young people as troubled victims of economic and social restructuring without enough recourse to the active ways in which young people negotiate such circumstances in the course of their everyday lives.

This is a sentiment and goal that youth work practice attempts to redress. In Northern Ireland youth work programs are designed in response to the issues that young people consider important. Examples of this include informal education programs focusing on sexual health, sexuality, mental health, violence, community relations, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol awareness, sport, peer education, leadership (Harland, Morgan, & Muldoon, 2005). Youth work occurs in many informal settings ranging from youth centers, community centers, schools, street work, churches, residential centers, and hired accommodation. Crucially, however, these environments are secondary to the nature and purpose of youth work. Conversations between youth workers and young people can occur anywhere. It is this informal aspect of youth work that has been misunderstood or undervalued in analysis of lifelong learning. In particular the role that youth work plays in rebalancing the lives of marginalised young people towards more realistic, rather than idealistic youth to adult transitions (Morgan et al, 2000).

The Role of Youth Work

In Northern Ireland youth workers increasingly find themselves attempting to redress the disadvantage experienced by young people due to extraneous factors such

as low academic achievement, peer pressure, drug use, alcohol abuse, trends in mental health and suicide, relationships, community expectations, racism, violence, sexuality, ethnicity, sectarianism, religion, and antisocial behaviour. Shildrick and MacDonald (2007, p.589) suggest that the linear movement from youth to adult, focuses narrowly on educational and employment, prioritizes normative and policy-focused assumptions, and often de-prioritises the actual lived experiences of young people.

Many youth workers would agree with Shildrick and MacDonald's sentiments because they work alongside young people as they navigate themselves through a complex set of societal domains. Youth workers have had to become a sort of "community entrepreneur" in terms of redirecting time and resources to redress these complex issues in young people's lives. This has also had a considerable impact on shaping the delivery of youth work, particularly with marginalized young people.

A study by Harland et al. (2005) found that youth workers had difficulty articulating outcomes from their practice. Many illustrated their understanding of youth work as a process rather than a product. Youth workers spoke of outcomes in terms of raising self-esteem, building confidence, and challenging negative attitudes—what they termed "bite-size" results. While these are important outcomes, youth workers struggled to demonstrate outcomes more grounded in a language associated with current policy demands. In addition they were concerned that youth work was moving away from its historical and core objectives in order to meet the demands and language of ever changing funding bodies and government youth policies. This has been particularly evident in Northern Ireland throughout the peace process as European Peace and Reconciliation funding mechanisms have increasingly demanded more robust outcomes as an expression of value for money.

Measurement of tangible outcomes through the concept of capital is a move towards meaningful understanding in this regard. In *Social Capital: Key Ideas* (2003), Field describes the theory of social capital as "at heart, most straightforward--its central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationships matter." Field says that maintaining these relationships over time individuals can achieve more than they would have expected if they did not have this strong relationship. If we agree that youth work offers young people, particularly marginalized young people, social capital in the form of relationships and support, then the movement of this form of capital into useful, human/economic capital could be useful as a vehicle for moving youth to adulthood. However, there are acute differences in regard to how formal and informal education supports young people through this transitional phase of their lives. "The young and disadvantaged now face a series of revolving doors, unstable, non-progressive youth transitions in which chronologically arranged government labor market programmes are central components." (Shildrick & MacDonald 2007, p.597) Pohl and Walther (2007, p.535) discuss "yo-yo" transitions in which young people experience aspects of youth and adulthood simultaneously and feel stuck somewhere in between.

Youth work, if it is to continue as an informal educational activity outside the formal system (schools and higher education) may, according to Field (2002), have to start using the language of markets and competition. He says that if this is the case, then there may be negative unintended consequences: "output-related funding, rather than improving performances of service-delivery agencies such as colleges, *youth service* (authors' italics), has often distorted their behavior." (p.209)

Field (2002, p.210) warns that the fuzzy nature of soft outcomes will create problems if they are used by Government to achieve certain political objectives. Field adds, however, that it is unlikely ministers or civil servants will feel confident in their capacity to develop clear criteria for judging success or failure. This is important to youth work in that many of its outcomes are perceived as soft and by nature difficult to quantify. Governments fund programs that can offer transparency, measurable outcomes and quantifiable outputs. Field says that governments will only offer small amounts of finance partly because of the difficulties they face in establishing whether the results offer value for money. For Field (2002, p.211) intangible factors invariably present policy makers with measurement problems. He says that pursuing soft objectives through partnerships with nongovernmental actors also lays government open to the charge of throwing money away.

Field and Schuller (2002, p.86) discuss the pursuit and development of adequate measures for assessing the accumulation or erosion of social capital. They suggest that rather than think of alternatives or competing sets of measures, a concept of nested sets may be useful: "from the narrowest qualifications-focused to the broadest set of social indicators, each fulfilling different roles." (p.86) They acknowledge the importance of both social and human capital which at times may mean "a trade-off between specificity and focus on the one hand, and contextualisation and scope on the other." (p.86) They argue that building such a nested structure should help avoid, "the quantitative spuriousness of the human capital approach on the one hand and the over-inclusive vagueness of social capital on the other." (p.86)

Irrespective of the rationale for funding programs that offer soft outcomes, Field and Schuller (1998) suggest that there is a correlation between social capital and participation in lifelong learning and a direct relationship between future study and low educational achievement. Indeed Field (2003b) goes much further when he suggests that most people in Northern Ireland think that their school did not help them prepare for learning in adult life. When asked specifically if school taught them the skills and knowledge they needed later in life, 70% of women and 71% of men said no. Asked if school opened people's minds and made them want to learn, 74% of women and 79% of men said no. Field's conclusions appear to be positive for those that avail of it in terms of the contribution that education can make to people's lives. In Northern Ireland the standards at "A" levels are exceptionally high as is, interestingly, the percentage of young people leaving school with no qualifications. Paradoxically, many people are not convinced that school provides an adequate preparation for learning in adult life (Harland, 2000; Field, 2003).

The Contribution of Youth Work to Lifelong Learning

Whereas formal education focuses primarily on qualifications (product driven human capital), youth work focuses heavily on personal and social issues (process driven social capital). The informal nature of youth work also enables youth workers to address many issues with young people that are not covered within a formal educational curriculum. Undoubtedly this position conflicts with the types of hard outcomes that are identifiable in higher education. However, there should be greater recognition of the potential for youth work to complement formal education and underpin personal development and the acquisition of social skills and knowledge among young people.

No single profession or discipline can claim to meet all the needs of young people in any society, and there are many potential benefits to young people through professional collaboration and multidisciplinary approaches. Youth work supports and encourages a young person to pursue personal interests and address their everyday lived experiences. In contrast formal education operates within a much more structured and less flexible curriculum. This is perhaps where opportunity and creativity for links between formal education and informal youth work best lie.

One possible starting point for developing links between formal and informal education has been identified by (Morgan et al., 2007). This research examined the role of youth work in schools supporting disengaged young people. One finding was that youth work principles were somewhat incongruent in the formal school setting, and on occasions youth workers believed that they had to compromise key youth work principles. For example, the emphasis on relationship building within youth work was not always fully understood by teachers. Other more latent principles underpinning youth work also conflicted, that is, the voluntary nature of the relationship between young people and adults, flexibility with learning due to the lack of a prescribed curriculum, and an emphasis on personal development. Dress code, time tables, and young people's form of address for adults were also identified as difficult areas for youth workers and teachers to agree upon. This study noted many benefits and opportunities of schools employing youth workers to work with disaffected or disruptive young people. It also acknowledged that when youth workers moved outside their learning environments, it was more difficult for them to deliver what they considered "real youth work." Youth work will need to take cognizance of a school ideology and what a school expects from a pupil. There are many opportunities for new thinking and creativity in the development of strategies that can combine formal and informal approaches in order to meet the educational needs of young people that link school, work, and lifelong learning. Youth workers are undoubtedly skilled in working with young people who may not comply with expected norms. Loughlin et al. (2005) outline a multidisciplinary approach within education that draws upon the skills and knowledge of youth workers. Morgan et al. (2007) argue that initial teacher training should incorporate youth work processes in order to enhance the widest educational experience of new teachers.

While more research is needed in this area, there is no doubt that there could be many benefits from developing a broader educational framework for working with disengaged young people in schools.

This paper proposes that there are many untapped opportunities for combining formal and informal educational approaches. This may necessitate a change in how education and learning are perceived and how it is linked to human capital with little cognizance taken of the personal developmental aspect of social capital for marginalized youth. What is needed, says Goodwin and O'Connor (2007, p.570) is more creative thinking that does not seek answers in past patterns of transitions between youth to adulthood that relate only to an economic imperative. They also observe, "Although in the past the outcomes of transitions were seen as largely predictable...it is possible that the young workers subjective experiences were neither predictable, uniform, nor unproblematic." (p.570)

This sentiment suggests three things. a) Youth work needs to continue to work closely with young people to find answers to complex social issues. b) Looking for answers in the past may have limited value. c) We cannot ignore how important it is for young adults to be engaged in a process of switching them "on" and not "off" to lifelong learning. Stokes and Wyn (2007) claim that "forcing normative patterns to become universal would automatically ensure universal success, seriously hampers the development of educational processes that could more effectively support young people by facilitating flexible education-work trajectories." (p.499)

Young people need assistance to navigate the complex social world of work and survival through projects that address the need for building knowledge, skills, understanding, and subsequent resilience to cope with the compounded difficulties of marginalization. Stokes and Wyn (2007) take this a step further by suggesting that school should be shaped to facilitate the employment needs of young people while they are still in education because they recognise the importance of work-based learning for future careers. This provides opportunities to work with young people, particularly young people who may be struggling academically, in more creative and realistic ways that better meet their vocational aspirations.

Educationalists may not be ready for concepts such as linking part-time work with the school curriculum even though both engage young people simultaneously. Stokes and Wyn (2007, p.508) argue that adult and youth practices often blur the boundaries of youth, adult, student, and worker. There is no doubt that young people involved in part-time work appear to understand learning within this context, primarily as a means of preparing for, and securing advantage, within the labor market as well as financial gain (Brooks, 2006, p.287). In a rapidly changing world, new and more creative thinking is needed, in regard to how educationalists meet the diverse needs of young people. Part of this creativity must lie in the establishment of more effective partnerships between those whose primary responsibility is the development and education of young people, that is, youth work, schools, and training. This necessitates a holistic approach

to learning and recognition that no one profession has the capacity to meet the needs of all young people.

Concluding Comments

At the heart of youth work is the unique relationship between youth workers and young people. Youth work is a distinctly educational process and involves constructive interventions with young people. Its delivery is inclusive and holistic, and facilitates the personal, social, and educational development of young people leading ultimately to adulthood and employment.

Crucially, however, young people's abilities and contribution to society continue to be measured primarily through their experience of formal education. Those who focus on human capital related learning often fail to recognise and appreciate the diverse talents and skills of young people who are not necessarily academic but nevertheless of extreme importance. The fact that youth work places enormous value on social capital, through relationship building, is perhaps a key reason why it does not have the credibility within formal education. Professions such as social work, probation, youth justice, and schools are increasingly seeking the skills and knowledge of youth workers and recognizing how youth work's holistic approach complements and enhances other educational interventions that aim to re-engage marginalized young people.

Despite its history, youth work appears to be undervalued and misunderstood in a wider educational context. This may be in part due to youth work's primary focus on person centered relationships which contrast and conflicts with the problem centered focus of many youth policies. Other contributory factors include youth work's underdeveloped language within a theoretical framework of informal education and the fact that outcomes cannot always be predetermined. These are some of the fundamental reasons that have contributed to youth work being undervalued and misunderstood. They may also be instrumental in determining why youth work has, to date, been conspicuously absent from critical debate within lifelong learning literature.

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Journal of Child and Youth Care Work

RECOGNIZING THE FUTURE: CURRENT TRENDS IN YOUTH WORK & EDUCATION

A Pilot Study Interviewing National Youth Development Leaders

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ABSTRACT: This article represents a new feature in The Journal where each volume will invite youth workers and their youth work professors to submit projects that are developed as a part of core child and youth care courses being offered in universities across the country. This article reports the pilot and exploratory research on trends in youth work and education conducted by ten students working towards their bachelor's degree in applied development with a concentration in child and youth care work. Sixteen national leaders in youth work were interviewed, and data was analyzed by the faculty and students together to provide an apprenticeship in evidenced-based practice scholarship. Structured using pilot and exploratory qualitative procedures and techniques, this study reports on challenges for the future of the youth work profession, opportunities for change, and the potential role for youth work to ensure educational success and lifelong learning.

Key words: youth work and education; trends; opportunities and risks for the future of the profession

INTRODUCTION

This article reports results from a pilot study conducted by the faculty and the youth work students at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education. The Pitt School of Education has a concentration in child and youth care work with bachelors and masters degrees in applied development. A central feature for the concentration is an intensive course, *The Core of Child and Youth Care Work*, which features evidence-based practices organized around the core competencies for child and youth care (Mattingly, Stuart, & Vander Ven, 2002). The course was originally founded by Professor Karen Vander Ven. Under the leadership of Professor Vander Ven and Professor Emerita Martha Mattingly, the youth work program at Pitt has played a central role in the development of the field; this includes producing the

Conference-Research Sequence (Vander Ven, Mattingly, Morris, Peters, & Kelly, 1982) and, most recently, contributing significantly to the development of the competencies. The core course, now taught by Professor Schneider-Muñoz, offers an interactive apprenticeship around direct care and applied research techniques and skills for the youth work practitioner-scholar.

METHODS

As a part of the course, ten youth care students developed a survey based on their own discussion of trends in the field. It was administered to sixteen leaders in the field of child and youth care work. These leaders were drawn from a sample of convenience, based on their professional speaking and writing contributions during regional and national conferences, as well as their track record for leading large-scale, national youth development organizations, impacting a thousand children and youth or more. An attempt was made to draw leaders from the four regions of the country as well as to balance the interview pool with representatives from a range of youth work settings, including child welfare, juvenile justice, after-school, community youth services, service learning, and others.

The data collected in the interviews was reported and analyzed through course discussions focusing on training qualitative data analysis skills, including noticing trends in the data, clustering concepts, and establishing taxonomy for key ideas cutting through the interviews. The data analysis conducted as a part of the course was exploratory for the purposes of mapping the trends that were elicited from the interview participants. Together as a practice research team, the course members identified the suppositions, propositions, and theories found in the interview data question by question (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Subsequently, Professor Schneider-Muñoz and undergraduate research assistant, Matt Fasano, conducted a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Based on the patterns coded and trends identified—for this moment in our professional development as the field of youth work—the students, Schneider-Muñoz, and Fasano labeled four key themes:

Theme (1) Education, economics, and technology as risks and opportunities

Theme (2) Challenges for the future of the youth work profession

Theme (3) Corresponding opportunities for change among youth workers and youth

Theme (4) Advocating for youth as a shared national responsibility

Education, Economic, and Technology as Risks and Opportunities

Youth work at its strongest utilizes the relationships and activities of everyday life to promote change in the skills and competencies that youth need to navigate life. Youth work goes where the youth are and does what the youth need. Therefore, our profession is often the first to adapt to changes in societal norms and conditions that influence the trajectory of healthy social growth for children and youth. Interestingly, the leaders interviewed in our pilot study saw education as both a major risk and major opportunity for the children of this country. Recently, schooling has been sorely tested by rising dropout rates, the controversy over teacher preparation, dwindling resources, and the question of what constitutes adequate preparation of youth across the lifespan for eventual gainful employment. There is a huge overlay in this country today between minority experience and socioeconomic status (SES). Could it be that simple—a good school can ensure life long success and a bad school can result in life long insurmountable risk, even when it comes to sustenance? Youth workers offer tremendous opportunity to partner with educators in strengthening schools.

The school reform movement has confronted the crisis of low achievement head-on by boosting hours of instruction, increasing accountability in measurable performance, and adding hours of extra homework. These strategies have reaffirmed in the public mind that children and youth should be getting the basics, but the constant drilling, teaching to the test, and focusing on huge amounts of material may be producing students who can repeat the lessons as taught but can neither explain what they have learned nor integrate their learning into everyday life. As the last bastion of democracy, public schooling is of utmost importance to all those concerned with the well-being of children and society. If we accept that all of this accountability has, to an extent, improved student performance, we must also agree that it has not been enough to fully restore graduation rates or to provide enough learning so that our children and youth are prepared for jobs and leadership roles in the world.

Complementing academic curriculum, the agenda to ensure social competency for youth as well as their ability to become life-long learners is often called "social and emotional learning." Youth development in general and the tools of youth work in particular provide tremendous opportunity for the future in providing for social and emotional learning in the school setting. Youth workers know how to build relationships in a way that connects everyday life skill to learning. The activities organized by youth workers could be instrumental in taking what the teachers teach and putting it to good use. An article by Pat Wingert in *Newsweek*, "The Black Board Jungle" (March, 2010), pointed out that new teachers, while understanding a variety of ways to teach their students, have struggled with managing their classrooms. Youth workers as partners with teachers in the school setting can be masters at shared productive discipline, honoring both the learning process as well as youth voice.

Not all students, however, find themselves subject to this kind of institutionalized risk. One leader pointed out that the decline in educational achievement relative to many other countries is "due largely to the poor quality of education for most of our lower-income population, and primarily for children and youth living in large urban areas. Our wealthier populations continue to do quite well. I believe this educational quality differential is our real achievement gap." Following suit, other leaders, unsurprisingly, identified poverty as another primary risk factor affecting the children and youth of this country. "The economic problems of the past five years, in particular, have placed many families in severely difficult situations, leading to more family stress, substance abuse, depression, and other challenges, all of which filter down to the children."The struggles experienced by families in poverty affect all domains of the youths' development. Adequate nutrition, for instance, becomes increasingly more difficult to provide, as "natural and organic" foods become luxury items. The youth workers' task of promoting positive social and emotional growth is made ever more difficult as the bodies of the young people they serve are denied the essential nutrients necessary to allow for optimal learning. Impoverished children and youth are not only more likely to suffer insult to their physical development, but also tend to live in communities stricken by dangerous environmental circumstances that can inhibit various aspects of social and emotional growth. For the poorest families in this country the threat of drug addiction, violence, and crime may be a daily reality. Healthy parental attachment and supervision, conditions that contribute significantly to the resilience of such high-risk youth, are also jeopardized because caretakers struggle to work long, irregular hours in attempts to provide as best they can for their families. Sadly, the adults responsible for supporting positive youth development have in some cases fallen victim to the same ecological risk factors that plague the children in their care.

Unfortunately poverty affects more than individual family dynamics. "Disappearing resources and the lack of funding for social services in the United Sates is causing many small non-profits to go out of business…so now the kinds of programs kids need are no longer available to them…"It is this kind diverse community programming, the leaders suggest, that is one of the most powerful ways to protect children and youth against the dangers of poverty and poor quality education. "Tutoring and/or mentoring experiences, high quality after-school programming as well as community service opportunities…" can provide youth with consistency, the chance to engage with authentic caring adults, and the means for developing a sense of self-worth. Therefore, current as well as future youth work must be as much of an endeavor to promote social growth and community efficacy as it is an effort to ensure life long educational success of individual children.

Fascinatingly, interviewees suggest that in the face of such risk, access to technology, particularly the Internet, can open worlds to previously confined populations of children and youth. The World Wide Web, the largest and most accessible social network on the planet, provides, *when utilized appropriately*, the virtual context

in which young persons may be exposed to the great cultural and intellectual diversity of the human race. Children who may never have had the opportunity to travel outside of their immediate community can be digitally transported to any place of their choosing with the simple click of a button. Minds are sparked, dreams are planted, and hope is fostered through the access to technology. "Young people that have access to the Internet can then have motivation and create their own positive developmental opportunities." Our profession would be wise to embrace and utilize the tools of the modern technological age as new avenues for reaching those children and youth most at risk and therefore most in need of what we as child and youth workers can provide.

Challenges for the Future of the Youth Work Profession

If we are to provide the best for the children and youth entrusted to our care, we as youth workers must be prepared for the task. No one comes to this work with all of the knowledge necessary to truly optimize youth development; we as professionals need and deserve formal training. The Association for Child & Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) outlines the core competencies that should be a part of all child and youth workers education: professionalism, cultural and human diversity, applied human development, relationship and communication, and developmental practice methods (Mattingly, Stuart, & Vander Ven, 2002). Sadly, high quality trainings that are easily transferable to one's direct care practice are not the norm. Even more unfortunate, as one leader indicated, in an economic climate where "so many agencies are stretched [for funds], one of the first things cut is training…" Though a kind heart and charitable attitude are of course essential to our work, the ACYCP indicates that child and youth care is most effective when rooted in a knowledge base of developmental science and best practice methods. Currently only a handful of universities and colleges offer formal programs of study that prepare individuals to enter the field of child and youth work.

In addition to the need for robust training transfer, the leaders interviewed also commented about the fragmentation of the field; "we lack a unified vision for the field—I think we have too many factions that believe that each area is unique and there is little place for commonality." Until most recently when the competencies for youth work were developed and shared across settings, youth workers in juvenile justice often thought of themselves as completely different from, for example, youth workers in after-school programs. The competencies now provide a set of developmental tools and strategies that are equally effective across settings and open the opportunity for shared vision in the future. Youth workers also suffer from the lack of professional identity. The more society questions whether or not it is worth meeting the needs of high-risk youth, the greater the potential that youth workers become as marginalized in their profession as the youth in their care are marginalized from society. There continues to be a great societal lack of understanding, as one leader put it, "there's a lack of communication… as a society, folks don't under-

stand what child and youth care workers do so there no value placed on [the field as legitimately professional] and very little support."Lack of positive public image and, therefore, professional esteem can, in some cases, become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Several leaders proposed solutions that include expanding opportunities for mentoring novice youth workers and significantly increasing the amount of direct practice research. One leader commented,"[There is a] lack of more experienced people in the field really giving back in the form of research, internships, and mentoring… there is more than direct practice—we aren't nurturing the next generation of youth care workers."Youth workers need to be provided with the tools with which to do their jobs—raw compassion and empathy are not enough."When you only have a hammer everything becomes a nail."Helpful relationships between experienced and novice youth workers will foster reciprocal learning and teaching."

Precisely at the moment when the field of child and youth care is being sorely tested by a lack of public support and limited resources, the contributions of individual youth workers are needed more than ever before. The field is experiencing tremendous growth in its professional and academic maturity. New university programs are opening, distance education is flourishing, and youth workers are sought after for their high degree of adaptability and their capacity to get the job done even in a times of crisis and change. For example, new core courses in child and youth care are being offered at Palm Beach State College, Indiana University is opening a new master degree in youth work and leadership, and for the first time in a generation more than thirty doctoral dissertations are underway in the field of youth development. As one leader proposed,"The proliferation of evidence-based practice is a major strength. Before, we relied heavily on conventional wisdom… now with the publication of the *CYC Journal* we're getting a body of knowledge; we're finding out for a fact what is and isn't true and using that to influence direct care and direct service. We have lots of resources available to us now. Utilizing research to inform our practice is a challenge the can be viewed positively, in the sense that if we invest the time, we can develop more tools for ourselves and therefore return to our work refreshed and with new perspectives."

Corresponding Opportunities for Change Among Youth Workers and Youth

Corresponding to youth worker experiences around technology, children and youth also have a far greater access to learning through the media when used wisely. One leader suggested that,"with technology, with the social media, with emailing, and with the Internet, kids have a lot more of a chance to be exposed to a wider variety of things" such as,"Internet-based engagement-type opportunities that are political, social, environmental in nature."Youth also have tremendous opportunities in gaining social skills and competencies from the social programs that youth workers are launching to supplement what they are learning in schools, including whole new nationwide service learning programs, community wide mentoring efforts, and the development of block-by-block neighborhood after-school activity

programs. "For young people, who are in communities that have these programs with youth workers, that is the best possible opportunity because those programs focus on young people's development. They also connect them with the community so they meet other young people who they wouldn't normally interact with; they get to interact with other adults and care about them." The best practices in service learning, mentoring, and after-school are as much an outcome of the practice research conducted in universities, as they are a product of the strategies that arise from full engagement of the youth workers with the youth.

Advocating for Youth as a Shared National Resoponsibility

Responding to the question, "Who, in your opinion, is America's top advocate for children and youth?" one quarter of the interviewees cited First Lady Michelle Obama, who has, as one leader pointed out, "Stepped up as a voice and is holding up the power of great and attentive parenting to raise healthy kids." In her three years in the White House she has continued the new tradition for a First Lady to galvanize action around a top national need. In her work with children she has launched a national campaign to improve nutrition through healthy eating and exercise, personally participated in direct community service volunteer days, and launched a website to network volunteers, *Community To Community*, and has forcefully represented the needs of the children of the military in developing government policies and programs.

It was interesting, however, that a significant portion of the respondents saw no one individual as the top advocate for children but instead suggested that the responsibility should be shared. One leader responded that "for [her], the top advocates for children and youth are a) immediate and extended family, b) educators and school administrators, c) community organizations and human service professionals… This includes local, state, and federal government and all human service/social work organizations and professionals including child and youth care workers." Another leader agreed: "I would say parents and citizens who consistently show their needs/interests/concerns for children and youth through national polls, and when trained as community organizers are powerful advocates for policy change. They desire safe after-school opportunities for youth, more quality time with their children, etc." Still, others felt that it is the youth themselves who can be the most powerful advocates for their own needs: "It is the young people themselves. The young people, as their voices are expressed in the youth media movement, for example. Not one person, but young people themselves are the top advocates because they are finding avenues to get their voices out, finding avenues to talk about the reality of their life, they are using media in very creative ways."

Youth Work and Success in Education

As we look to the future, youth work can play a vital role that strengthens the relationships for learning and creates the conditions for success in school.

"Youth work has historically focused on marginalized (those in urban areas, in low-income families, and students with behavioral issues). It has also historically focused on a wide range of outcomes beyond academics—behavioral, cognitive, emotional, social, and civic. Schools desperately need expertise in these domains in order to address current challenges, including the rapidly shifting demographics of school children, the complex demands faced by families, and the attention to academic test results."Youth work can powerfully complement school services and transfer knowledge invaluable to parents, teachers, and school leaders.

Another leader interviewed proposed that youth workers must advocate for parental engagement in learning and work together with parents and teachers to build a positive relationship-based school climate. "Academic quality is only half of success. The degree to which the supportive, hospitable bonds empower and enhance the impact of positive relationships also promotes success. We need to rally a passion, create opportunities for teachers to celebrate the positive impact on children's lives."

Most leaders pointed out that there are two major factors that promote educational success. These are healthy development and the quality of educational opportunity. By becoming near-peer mentors and tutors for children "who are off track" in their academic subjects, youth workers can "make a tremendous difference in the achievement outcomes of the children. The children more likely can trust them."Youth workers are willing to listen and respond in a caring approach and provide highly enriched activities to demonstrate the content that needs to be learned.

The leaders went on to say:"Youth work can be extremely important in its impact on student success in school and by extension success in the greater community:

1. Youth workers can partner with students, educators, and families by carefully understanding what the individual needs, goals of each, and what common interests and goals they may share.

2. Youth workers can support individual students in word and deed. That means youth workers can listen to and offer both direct and indirect guidance to students.

3. They can support educators and families by reinforcing the values, expectations, and outcomes that educators and families may have for students. They can assist students in specific strategies for success in academic life but also help students to identify strengths and interests outside of academics that they can be encouraged to develop and pursue.

4. They can acknowledge and reward student success as well as help others to identify and acknowledge success both inside and outside of the classroom.

5. They can partner with community groups and organizations to engage students in community activities that will provide positive outlets for youth as well as offer an opportunity for youth to be seen in positive ways and as having made contributions to the community.

6. Youth workers can serve as models for behavior, interpersonal skills, decision making, and taking responsibility for choices and consequences.

7. Youth workers can engage in personal hands-on activities with youth as well as develop programs and services both inside and outside of the school environment that can contribute to student success.

8. They can serve as advocates for students inside and outside of the school environment. There are so many things that youth workers can be a part of in contributing to student success."

It is significant that policy makers, educational thinkers, and parents are debating extending the school day. Should after-school youth work be more like school, or should it continue to provide enriched activities that are supportive to and reinforcing of learning? It may be that youth work in the educational milieu can provide a bridge to achieve both goals which are worthy. We not only want our youth to be accountable for learning, we want the youth to become lifelong learners. The four themes interwoven in these interviews demonstrate the powerful bridge that youth work can provide in school and after school for delivering success in learning. The challenges facing both youth and youth workers can be navigated through the interactivity of positive developmental relationships, hands-on learning, and technology. It has become a shared national responsibility to effectively advocate for high quality learning that engages the youth and will motivate the next generation for success in learning. Not only the high dropout rate but the high rates of youth worker and teacher turnover is clarion call to solve problems by collaborating. Youth work can provide the skills and competencies for this necessary partnership among youth educators and parents.

Additional Reading–Selected Publications from the Leaders

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BOX I: RESEARCH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL:	
1.	What are three problems facing children and youth? (In rank order)
2.	What are three positive opportunities available to youth? (In rank order)
3.	Aside from the obvious issues of low salary and a high burnout rate, what are the top three problems for youth workers today? (In rank order)
4.	What are three beneficial opportunities available to youth workers?
5.	Who is America's top advocate for youth today and why?
6.	How can youth work ensure success for students in our schools?
7.	Open ended: Students created their own question.

BOX II: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS:	
Penny Bailer	*City Year Detroit, Detroit, MI, http://www.cityyear.org/*
Peter Benson	*Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN, http://www.search-institute.org*
Jean Carpenter-Williams	*The University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Services, Tulsa, OK, http://www.nrcys.ou.edu*
Sandra Chavez	*Milwaukee Area Technical College Human Services, Milwaukee WI, http://matc.edu/matcmain.html*
Dale Curry	*Department of Human Development and Family Studies, School of Lifespan Development and Educational Sciences, Kent State University, http://www.kent.edu/ehhs/hdfs/index.cfm*
Frank Eckles	*The Academy for Competent Youth Work, College Station, TX, http://www.youthworkacademy.org/index.html*
Michael Gaffley	*Nova Southeastern University Fischler School of Education & Human Services, North Miami Beach, FL, http://www.schoolofed.nova.edu/oceda/ocedahome.html*
Carl Johnson	*University of Pittsburgh Psychology in Education, Pittsburgh, PA, http://www.education.pitt.edu/psyed*
Keith Kozerski	*St. Joseph's Home for Children, Minneapolis, MN, http://www.ccspm.org/stjoescontact.aspx*
Holly Kreider	*Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, MA, http://www.hfrp.org*
Martha Mattingly	*University of Pittsburgh Psychology in Education, Pittsburgh, PA, http://www.education.pitt.edu/psyed/*
Michael Mitchell	*Wisconsin Association of Child and Youth Care Professionals, Inc., Madison, WI, http://www.wacycp.org*
Mike Nakkula	*University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, Philadelphia, PA, http://www.gse.upenn.edu*
Judy Nee	*National AfterSchool Association, McLean, VA, http://www.naaweb.org*
Ben Webman	*EdSource, Mountain View, CA, http://www.edsource.org*
Wendy Wheeler	*Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development, Takoma Park, MD, http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/home*
Stephanie Wu	*City Year, Boston, MA, http://www.cityyear.org*

BOX III: STUDENT INTERVIEWERS:
Kathleen Buffa
Christopher Carter
Patricia Christian
Celeste Clifford
Marcia Del Papa
Matthew Fasano
Angela Holeczy
Angie Kryser
Donna Lynn
Danielle O'Neill

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