



Utilization of Transitional Services in Wyoming

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Introduction

- This research project seeks to compare and contrast the transitional services that Department of Family Services (DFS) Social Workers and Independent Living Coordinators (ILC's) across the state of Wyoming utilize assist youth as they transition out of foster care.
- DFS workers roles include probation and child protective services.

Transitional Services

- Academic Support
- Post Secondary Education
- Special Education
- Career Preparation
- Employment Programs/Vocational Training
- Family Support/Healthy Marriage Education
- Health Education/Risk Prevention
- Housing Education/Home Management Training
- Independent Living Needs Assessment
- Supervised Independent Living
- Mentoring
- Education Financial Assistance
- Room & Board Financial Assistance
- Other Financial Assistance
- Budget & Financial Management

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 or The Chafee Act

- Passed by the Clinton Administration.
- Provisions to provide support services necessary for the success of youth exiting foster care.
- Federal Allotment is approximately 140 million dollars, which doubles the original 70 million dollars in previous years.
- Also extends Medicare until age 21.

Outcomes of Foster Youth

- Reilly interviewed 55 female and 45 male foster care children who had transitioned out within 3 years.
- Youth who have more foster placements, smaller support networks, and lesser education were more apt to experience negative outcomes such as:
 - 1) violence in relationships
 - 2) involvement with law enforcement
 - 3) homelessness
 - 4) pregnancies for females

Importance of the Study

- By collecting data on the utilization of youth transitional services across Wyoming among workers of different types we will find:
 - Which workers use which transitional services more frequently.
 - By comparing frequencies of use among workers we may find that certain services may be lacking across the state.
 - Ultimately this study could be used in formulating future training focus of workers in transitional services.

Methods

- **Objective:** To collect data from workers involved with children in foster care regarding frequency of use of each of the fifteen transitional services used as they transition out of care at age 18.
- **Participants Included:**
 - 40 DFS, Probation and child protective service workers
 - 7 Independent Living Coordinators.
 - Workers in Wyoming

Design/Instruments

- Online survey.
- Two demographic questions asked:
 - 1) Whether they are DFS Social Worker or Independent Living Coordinator, establishing the nature of their work with youth transitioning out of care.
 - 2) “In what Wyoming City do you work to provide transitional services” followed with a blank line for them to fill in.
- The following portion of the survey listed the fifteen transitional services and participants rated them using a Likert type scale on a continuum from:
 - (a) never use
 - (b) use $\frac{1}{4}$ of time
 - (c) use $\frac{1}{2}$ of time
 - (d) use $\frac{3}{4}$ of time
 - (e) always use.

Procedure

- After obtaining permission from DFS, participants were solicited via e-mail to participate in the survey.
- The e-mail contained a link to the survey:
 - Included Informed consent to ensure confidentiality.
 - Followed with yes/no prompt to survey.
- Seventeen question survey estimated to take less than 10 minutes

Survey Results

	Never use	Use 1/4 of Time	Use 1/2 of Time	Use 3/4 of Time	Always Use
1. Academic Support	8.33% (4)	27.08% (13)	6.25% (3)	16.67% (8)	41.67% (20)
2. Post Secondary Education	21.28% (10)	36.17% (17)	23.4% (11)	6.38% (3)	12.77% (6)
3. Special Education	10.2% (5)	34.69% (17)	28.57% (14)	12.24% (6)	14.29% (7)
4. Career Preparation	19.15% (9)	23.4% (11)	17.02% (8)	12.77% (6)	27.66% (13)
5. Employment Programs/Vocational Training	14.89% (7)	23.4% (11)	27.66% (13)	12.77% (6)	21.28% (10)
6. Family Support/Healthy Marriage Education	17.02% (8)	25.53% (12)	21.28% (10)	14.89% (7)	21.28% (10)
7. Health Education/Risk Prevention	8.51% (4)	34.04% (16)	21.28% (10)	19.15% (9)	17.02% (8)
8. Housing Education/Home Management Training	12.5% (6)	20.83% (10)	20.83% (10)	25% (12)	20.83% (10)
9. Independent Living Needs Assessment	20.83% (10)	10.42% (5)	10.42% (5)	8.33% (4)	50% (24)
10. Supervised Independent Living	46.67% (21)	15.56% (7)	15.56% (7)	13.33% (6)	8.89% (4)
11. Mentoring	10.64% (5)	27.66% (13)	25.53% (12)	17.02% (8)	19.15% (9)
12. Education Financial Assistance	14.89% (7)	34.04% (16)	21.28% (10)	12.77% (6)	17.02% (8)
13. Room & Board Financial Assistance	32.61% (15)	19.57% (9)	23.91% (11)	19.57% (9)	4.35% (2)
14. Other Financial Assistance	26.09% (12)	30.43% (14)	15.22% (7)	19.57% (9)	8.7% (4)
15. Budget & Financial Management	12.5% (6)	27.08% (13)	14.58% (7)	20.83% (10)	25% (12)

Discussion

- This research was inconclusive and did not present any statistically significant results, research was limited by:
- 1) Concerns about response rates of an e-mail with a posted link.
 - Pro: the questionnaire is brief questions could be answered in less than ten minutes.
 - Cons: Worker caseload and clients with high levels of need resulting in lack of time to complete the online questionnaire.
- 2) Concerns about an uneven ratio in the return of responses of social workers (40) to ILC's (7) across the state.
 - Skewed results regarding the overall use of the listed transitional services.
 - Difficulty in reporting our results, comparing a group of forty to a group of seven did not produce any significant statistical results.

Discussion, cont.

- 3) Concerns about the possibility that ILC's have more and consistent direct contact with youth, as opposed to the periodic contact by a DFS Social worker, who wholly depend on the foster parents to perform many of these independent living skill building functions.
- 4) A concern that differences in worker perceptions regarding each transitional service.
 - Some workers may place a higher priority on some services and not others.

Discussion, cont.

- Areas for further research:
 - 1) This survey did not take into consideration the level of need of individual clients this may be an area for future research.
 - 2) inclusion of foster youth who have exited and their opinions on transitional services received
 - 3) Use of questions that would have established:
 - Local availability of each of these services
 - How they felt they were trained in each of these transitional service areas.
 - Personal Reflection on how they felt about how these transitional services were or were not helpful to transitioning youth.

Conclusion

- The overall goal of workers with youth who are transitioning out of foster care is to send them out to be productive citizens.
- The research questions were too limited to assess local availability of transitional services and/or training that the differing workers received in each area, however, both areas are of concern in rural Wyoming.
- All foster youth need each and every one of the 15 transitional services in order to become productive citizens. Issues with delivery of these services is still of concern.

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