TOOLKIT

for Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Partners

Overview and Implementation Guide

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share this toolkit for implementing the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's approach to improving outcomes for young people leaving foster care. This toolkit is a product of extensive labor by our staff, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and an array of professionals, volunteers, and young adults who know firsthand the daunting challenges of efforts to improve outcomes for young people leaving foster care and the systems meant to support them in the transition to adulthood. In this toolkit, you will find practical guidance and lessons learned from people all across the country, in all kinds of roles and situations, who have had the passion and commitment to undertake a complex set of strategies to improve the way communities and systems support young people. Contributors come from many perspectives: veterans of this effort who have spent years implementing the strategies; professionals just starting out in communities who have decided to accept the challenge; young people still in foster care, and those who view these issues in hindsight; and the myriad partners—banks, nonprofits, foundations, public agencies—who become the "champions" needed to lead the movement.

And it is a movement. Americans are deeply concerned about our young people, especially in the culture-changing wake of the Great Recession. We all worry about their educations, the dangers and temptations that lurk everywhere, and our ability to compete in the global economy. And we are especially concerned about those young people who do not have the essential ingredients to make successful transitions: an enduring family relationship, a relationship described as the kind "with no expiration date." But even a supportive family can fall short in today's complicated world, and the ability to achieve the social connections to opportunities to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in community life requires us to have a set of strategies that match the complexity of modern life.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative presents a Theory of Change that demands addressing—simultaneously—strategies to meaningfully engage youth and young adults in the decisions that shape their lives, increase their opportunities for economic success, develop partnerships and resources, build public will to improve the systems of support, and do the hard work of measuring, evaluating, and communicating among diverse people and institutions. And we must be clear about the outcomes we are trying to improve: permanent families, education, employment, housing, health, and personal and community engagement. For the past several years, we have been building the experience, the expertise, and the capacity of diverse communities to address these issues and pursue improvements in outcomes. Much remains to be done, to be learned, and that work continues.

This toolkit is meant to be a valuable resource for our many partners and provide a means of sharing the knowledge, experience, and lessons of people and communities who have struggled with these challenges and who have tasted just enough of the rewards of achievement to fuel their continued passion and commitment to make a difference for these young people.

We wish you well as you join this movement.

Gary J. Stangler
Executive Director
Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

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Overview and Implementation Guide

Introduction

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Inc. (the Initiative), was incorporated in 2001 as a private foundation formed by two of the leading foundations focused exclusively on child and family well-being: the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs. Jim Casey, the founder of United Parcel Service (UPS), not only helped revolutionize package delivery, but also improved the prospects of millions of America's children by founding several of the nation's leading child welfare–oriented foundations.

The Initiative was created from a common vision held by these two foundations: that every youth aging out of foster care should have access to the opportunities and supports needed for a successful transition to adulthood. The vision was bold, especially considering that many youth in foster care lacked the basic supports that are available to most young people. In most states, when youth in foster care turn 18, they are discharged from the agency that served as their parent and suddenly are on their own. To make the vision a reality, the Initiative committed itself to bringing together people and resources to help youth and young adults make the connections they need for permanence, education, employment, housing, health care, and supportive personal and community relationships. A brief history of the Initiative is found in Appendix A.

As a grant-making foundation, the Initiative determined that it would support community-based efforts that could create opportunities and build assets for youth leaving foster care. This support is provided via the core activities of grant making, technical assistance, and advocacy.

Promising Approach

Working with communities in ten[1] demonstration sites nationwide over a six-year period, the Initiative tested a Theory of Change and a set of core strategies. The partnership between the Initiative and these ten sites has produced innovations and successes that are ready to be sustained and broadened. Several of the sites have already made great strides in expanding beyond the original locations in which they tested the approach. They are successfully integrating the voices of youth and young adults, community partnerships, data-driven decision making, improvement in policies and practices, and creating a range of opportunities for young people—into the core work of state child welfare and other public agencies as well as additional strategic allies. Joint work by young people, advocates, and other partners is resulting in policies and practices that promote permanence, engage young people in decision making, extend Medicaid for youth leaving foster care to age 21, increase financial supports for post-secondary education, increase financial supports for daily living expenses, reinforce sibling rights and improve quality and frequency of visitation, and mandate that child welfare agencies provide legal documents to youth before they leave foster care.

Data from the demonstration sites reveal promising findings related to youth and young adults and systems outcomes. Appendix B, *What We Are Learning About Young People Transitioning from Foster Care*, shows some of these findings. Burgeoning confidence in this approach is bolstered by a growing evidence base, but we hesitate to draw broad-based conclusions until the results are sustained over time. The time is right to sustain and expand this approach to improving results for young people leaving foster care. Op-

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1   Atlanta, Connecticut, Denver, Des Moines, Maine, Michigan, Nashville, Rhode Island, San Diego, and Tampa

portunities afforded by the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Fostering Connections) are changing the landscape for older youth and young adults. Public interest in Individual Development Accounts (IDA) for young people is gaining momentum and triggering more inquiries about the Opportunity Passport™, a package of resources that includes an IDA. The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) will focus attention on transitioning youth and make states more accountable for improving outcomes for this population. NYTD requires states to report continuously on the number and characteristics of youth and young adults receiving independent living services and collect data on outcomes. Recently published studies on issues related to transitioning youth have provoked greater interest from states and media. The information has brought greater attention to risks faced by older youth in care and highlighted the need for effective strategies to improve their outcomes. After receiving this information and learning about the Initiative's approach, many states and communities have expressed interest in investing in the implementation of the core strategies in partnership with the Initiative.

Although much is yet to be learned, findings from the demonstration sites coupled with the above-described factors reveal this to be a good time to replicate and expand this approach. New sites are inquiring about the work, as are public child welfare jurisdictions, contract providers, and other foundations seeking to improve outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood from foster care. In order to take advantage of this interest and, most importantly, to improve outcomes for more youth exiting foster care, the Initiative has developed a co-investment approach that combines its knowledge and technical assistance with local resources. The Initiative's approach shows great promise in sustaining itself and impacting systems consistently and continuously over time. Over the next several years, the Initiative will continue to work with states and communities to improve opportunities for youth and young adults and gather evidence of this work's effectiveness.

About This Toolkit

The *Toolkit for Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Partners* is designed for people like you, who are interested in a partnership with the Initiative to implement strategies that improve life circumstances and opportunities for youth transitioning from foster care. The Initiative welcomes your interest and believes that this toolkit will provide you with a structure and process that can lead to improved results. The toolkit will help you glean a deeper understanding of the Initiative's core strategies and how to implement them, based primarily on the demonstration sites' experience. It explains the nature of the problem the Initiative is working to address; describes the Initiative's vision, mission, strategies, and outcomes; and provides information about how the Initiative will engage with interested sites and other investors in the future.

The *Toolkit for Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Partners* is comprised of six guides:

- Overview and Implementation Guide
- Youth Engagement Guide
- Partnerships and Resources Guide
- Research, Evaluation, and Communications Guide
- Public Will and Policy Guide
- Increased Opportunities Guide

It is best to read the Overview and Implementation Guide in its entirety to provide context and a framework for understanding the materials in other guides. Each of the remaining guides documents the demonstration sites' experience implementing one of the five core strategies. These guides will help you as you plan, implement, refine, integrate, sustain, and expand each of the strategies statewide. Important find-

ings that surround and cut across the core strategies are featured throughout the guides.

In addition to these guides, technical assistance is available and is described throughout the toolkit. Materials in the toolkit and on the website are available for you to use with a wide range of audiences: youth and young adults, parents/foster parents, key stakeholders, public and private agency representatives, members of the business community, and many more.

Acknowledgements

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative thanks the Center for the Study of Social Policy, our creative partners in developing this toolkit, as well as our valued partners in the demonstration sites that help young people make successful transitions to adulthood and provide us with advancements in practice and learning. Without their dedication, this work would not be possible. The Initiative is especially appreciative of the following partners, who generously contributed their time, effort, resources, and knowledge:

- The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
- Connected By 25 Initiative (Tampa, FL)
- Connecticut Department of Children and Families
- Michigan Department of Human Services
- Mile High United Way (Denver / Front Range, CO)
- Rhode Island Foster Parents Association
- San Diego County Office of Education (San Diego, CA)
- University of Southern Maine, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service
- Vanderbilt University Child and Family Policy Center (Nashville, TN)
- Youth Policy Institute of Iowa

"Youth leadership boards are a great way for us to come together to talk about the things we've gone through and the things we need. Because it is just us, we can feel free to really talk about what needs to be better. I think because we have adults helping us find a meeting space, help with rides, and other stuff, we have time to think about what is really important. They [adults] make sure our messages about our needs get to the right people. Our board also does service projects and fun stuff. I know that our youth board is making a difference."

—Youth Leadership Board member, 23

The State of Youth in Transition from Foster Care

Over the past decade, the number of youth aging out of foster care has continued to grow. Between 1999 and 2008, more than 230,000 young people have aged out of foster care.[2] In federal fiscal year 2008, more than 30,000[3] teenagers "aged out" of foster care. Many of these young people have not benefited from typical growing-up experiences that teach self-sufficiency skills, nor do they have family and community networks that help them make successful transitions to adulthood. When most young people are discharged from foster care, they are on their own; in most states, this occurs at age 18. As a result, many have difficulty with tasks like finding housing, finding and keeping a job, taking care of their health, and undertaking educational and training opportunities, and they often end up experiencing financial and legal trouble.

2   Freundlich, M. (2010). Chafee plus ten: A vision of the next decade. St. Louis, MO: Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.
3   www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report16.htm (January 29, 2010)

JIM CASEY YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE

Vision

All young people leaving foster care will make successful transitions to adulthood.

Desired Youth Outcomes

Permanence

Every young person has an adult to rely on for a lifetime and a supportive family network.

Education

Young people acquire education and training that enable them to obtain and retain steady employment.

Employment

Young people support themselves by obtaining and retaining steady employment.

Housing

Young people have safe, stable, and affordable housing and have access to transportation for work and school.

Physical and Mental Health

Young people have health insurance for both physical and mental health.

Personal and Community Engagement

Young people have supportive relationships in the community that help them achieve their personal goals.

Desired Systems Outcomes

Cross-Domain

Policies and practices promote timely permanence and increase opportunities available to young people in education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, and personal and community engagement, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Data indicate that young people who are transitioning from foster care experience very poor outcomes at a much higher rate than their peers in the general population. For example, youth transitioning from foster care suffer significantly higher rates of incarceration, homelessness, school drop-out, unemployment, unwanted pregnancy, and lack of access to health care. Studies have demonstrated that among youth making the transition:

- more than one in five will become homeless after age 18[4];
- merely 58 percent will graduate high school by age 19 (compared to 87 percent nationally)[5];
- fewer than 3 percent will earn a college degree by age 25 (compared to 28 percent nationally)[6]; and
- one in four will be incarcerated within two years of leaving the system.[7]

Federal and state efforts to strengthen child welfare systems have resulted in some progress and varying degrees of success with regard to policy and practice. States have consistently faced enormous challenges in meeting the needs of children in foster care and in obtaining good outcomes on their behalf. This is especially true of older youth who leave care without permanence. Unless trends reverse, young people who age out of the foster care system face bleak futures.

Most children and young people bear no responsibility for their own entry into foster care. Their parents or caretakers are not able to keep them safe; they

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4   Casey Family Programs. (1998). *Northwest foster care alumni study.* Seattle, WA. p. 37.
5   Courtney, M.E., and Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children. p. 22.
6   Pecora, P.J., Kessler, R.C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A.C., English, D., White, J., Hiripi, E., White, C.R., Wiggins, T., and Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest foster care alumni study.* Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. p. 1.
7   Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Terao, S., Bost, N., Cusick, G.R., Keller, T., and Havlicek, J. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children. p. 61.

have experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse at home; or their parents/guardians have died or are too sick to care for them. Young people who age out of foster care are extremely vulnerable to developmental and environmental risk factors because they lack the financial, emotional, educational, and protective support typically provided to young people in permanent or intact families.

Recent estimates[8] suggest that parents provide their young adult children with material assistance totaling approximately $38,000 between the ages of 18 and 34. In addition to financial support, young adults who have not experienced foster care generally have a home to return to during school breaks, a person to call when celebrating success or facing difficult challenges, and a source of health insurance while still in school. This stands in stark contrast to youth who leave the foster care system at 18 with nominal financial assets and no meaningful connections to community supports.

Appendix B, *What We Are Learning About Young People Transitioning from Foster Care*, provides some additional data on youth in transition from foster care.

Addressing the Need: The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

The Initiative was designed to combat the bleak outcomes described above and to ensure that youth transitioning out of foster care have access to the supports and services they need to succeed. At its heart, the Initiative's approach is a systems improvement effort, not a defined program or a set of services. The experience of the demonstration sites suggests that five core

strategies, working in concert, have the potential to dramatically improve the way in which communities and states respond to the needs of a particularly vulnerable group of youth and young adults. In addition, their experience suggests that public child welfare agencies can effectively use this approach to mobilize a wide variety of public and private partners and resources. In turn, state agencies, legislative bodies, and community groups can have the needed impetus and support to improve outcomes for youth in foster care and young adults who have transitioned out of care.

Vision

The Initiative's vision is for all young people leaving foster care to make successful transitions to adulthood.

Mission

As a national foundation, the Initiative has the mission of bringing together the people, systems, and resources necessary to assist young people leaving foster care in making successful transitions to adulthood.

Theory of Change

The Initiative is measuring success by gauging improved outcomes in the areas of permanence, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, and personal and community engagement. In order to improve these outcomes, a community needs to have certain conditions in place:

- Young people are decision makers and advocates for themselves and others.
- Partners in public and private systems provide the necessary resources and support.
- Stakeholders use data to drive decision making, communications, and the documentation of results.

8   National Poverty Center. (2004). *Family Support during the Transition to Adulthood, Policy brief #3*. Ann Arbor, MI. p. 2.

- Public will is galvanized by the need to improve outcomes, and policy is focused on the reforms necessary to improve outcomes.
- Young people have access to an array of opportunities that support them.

The Initiative has designed a set of core strategies and related activities to help create or support these conditions in communities. These conditions will maximize the impact of the community's work on public and private systems, leading to better supports and increased opportunities, which, when accessed by young people, will improve their life outcomes.

To test its Theory of Change, the Initiative formed partnerships with communities across the country to implement the core strategies and to track outcomes both in systems and among youth and young adults.

> "Youth need to make very clear to others that they do know what they are talking about—they should be informed and prepared and have good information."
>
> —Opportunity Passport™ participant, 23

Outcomes

Measuring outcomes provides important information about the validity of the Theory of Change and whether its strategies have a positive impact on the lives of young people. While the ultimate goal is to achieve better outcomes for young people, the Theory of Change states that systems of care are key partners that must conduct business differently in order to achieve improved youth outcomes. Therefore, the Initiative measures both system outcomes and youth outcomes in six different domains.

Sites' experiences have shown that the outcome areas are inextricably intertwined. Interventions targeting one outcome frequently affect others. Goal setting in these outcome areas is often concurrent, but permanence is a primary focus because it can facilitate success in all other outcome areas.

1. PERMANENCE

All young people, including those aging out of foster care, need strong, stable, and supportive relationships that promote a sense of identity, belonging, and normalcy. Young people typically do best when they are part of a family that provides physical and emotional security that meets their developmental needs. However, achieving timely permanence for older youth in foster care continues to be a challenge for child welfare agencies.

Permanency plans for older youth need to have realistic and achievable components that support the young person's preparation for adulthood. Casework planning may appropriately emphasize permanence, but it needs to be equally strong in other outcome areas that affect the young person's well-being.

The commitment to permanence is a principle around which state child welfare reforms across the country are designed. But even with advances in the knowledge base regarding permanence, child welfare agencies and adult service systems have not achieved significant increases in permanency rates and the overall well-being of older youth and young adults. While the primary focus is on permanent connections with caring adults, permanency reforms are also addressing relationships with birth parents and siblings, stability of school placement, and maintaining a connection to a child's community.

Family-centered casework is a valuable tool for achieving permanence for young people in state custody. This type of casework relies on family and youth engagement, strengths-based approaches, team decision making, and the use of relevant, structured, and functional assessments. Results from family-centered practice have dispelled long-standing and destructive myths that older youth and young adults are not adoptable or cannot be safely reunified with families facing serious challenges.

The concept of youth engagement is a relatively recent and significant advancement in family-centered

practice that directly affects older youth in care. Youth engagement has been defined as "involving young people in the creation of their own destinies" and "genuinely involving young people in case planning and encouraging them to advocate for themselves." In its most basic application, it modifies family-centered practice to emphasize the idea that an adolescent, or mature minor, should be at the center of his or her own planning and decision-making process. Jurisdictions use different mechanisms to infuse youth participation in planning and decision making at the policy level, but advanced practice suggests that in order to improve permanency outcomes, young people must have meaningful input into case planning and permanency decisions that affect their lives. The life experiences of young people can help reshape, redefine, and renew efforts to achieve permanence for youth.

2. EDUCATION

Young people in foster care frequently experience a host of risk factors associated with poor academic achievement. Educational challenges include issues with enrollment, excessive absences, transferred records, retention, inappropriate classroom assignments, overuse of in-house schools, overly restrictive special education placements, and unacceptably high rates of suspensions and expulsions. Moreover, it is not uncommon for children in state care to experience multiple placements and, concomitantly, multiple changes in school. These circumstances require young people to make difficult adjustments to new curricula, function in a different physical environment and school culture, advocate for the timely transfer of their school records, and monitor records to ensure that appropriate credits are awarded for work completed. If this is not handled well, it can lead to lower grades, higher retention, disaffection with the education system, dropping out, and vitiated goals for college matriculation and graduation.

It is critical to help young people achieve stability in their educational placement so they have an op-

portunity to acquire the education and training that enables them to obtain and retain employment. Moreover, young people need ongoing support and coaching that continues beyond matriculation in a post-secondary institution. Young people in pursuit of higher education goals continue to need help with basic necessities as well as relational supports that promote cognitive, emotional, and social development. A young person needs a place to stay during holidays and when dormitories close, but equally important is that he or she receive ongoing encouragement that continues through graduation and into early employment.

3. EMPLOYMENT

Young people need opportunities to experience and ultimately select employment and career paths. The foster care experience should not impede a smooth transition into the workforce. Young people who encounter difficulties getting their first job have difficulty catching up and often remain lower skilled and lower paid than cohorts who enter earlier.

In order for the American workforce to possess the skills to compete with the rest of the world, worthwhile job opportunities must exist for teens and young adults. The unemployment and underemployment of teens and young adults can lead to serious social problems for the country. Rewarding employment is a protective factor for young people and the communities in which they live. Young people who are gainfully employed are less likely to experience premature parenthood or engage in delinquent or criminal acts.

Competition for jobs that provide opportunities for young people continues to grow. Young people today need to be better prepared when they enter the workforce. Employers expect more, even from new employees. Young people may benefit from good job training programs, but supported employment services and ongoing supports have been shown to be especially valuable.

4. HOUSING

Too many young people in the foster care system experience instability in their living situations. This is especially a concern for young people who leave care without a supportive, permanent family connection. The lack of affordable housing in some areas is one factor that is further complicated when young people have underdeveloped skills to live on their own or have financial or credit challenges.

Young people in care typically do better when they live with families, preferably families that will be there for them on a permanent basis. In addition to the obvious advantage of having a place to stay through adolescence, a family also provides a housing safety net for young people who venture off to college or work. Young people from intact families often leave home to "make it on their own" more than once. For many, leaving home is a gradual, episodic process. They may unexpectedly return home for extended stays. The young person's room may have been given to a sibling or converted to a study, but he or she knows there is a safe place to stay while making the transition to another more stable living arrangement. A young person who leaves foster care without a permanent family often has to resort to desultory "couch surfing" with peers and acquaintances who themselves may be in unsafe situations.

Young people leaving care should have a continuum of housing options to consider. Young people need to find stable living situations that match their employment and educational circumstances while also accommodating their related transportation needs.

5. PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Young people in foster care need access to high quality and readily available health care. Compared with children from the same socioeconomic background, children and youth in foster care have higher rates of serious emotional and behavioral problems, chronic physical disabilities, birth defects, developmental delays, and poor school achievement. When medical problems go undiagnosed or untreated, treatable conditions can become long-term disabilities. Poor medical and behavioral health interferes with one's ability to succeed in life, interact socially, bond with family and peers, and progress in educational and work settings.

Quality care is necessary to address general prevention and developmentally specific health concerns associated with typical adolescent development and with the added exposure to trauma that is often associated with the circumstances of foster care. Health care must address physical and behavioral health, including, mental health, substance abuse, and matters related to particular disabilities that a young person may have. Young people who are "mature minors" need to have their health care privacy rights respected and be involved as primary decision makers about their health care. It is also important that young people receive gender-specific and gender-sensitive health care services.

A primary barrier to accessing health care for young people is a lack of health insurance. The federal Medicaid program covers most young people in foster care, but it is not available to young adults who age out of care in states that have not exercised the Medicaid option to extend coverage. Not only is it important to extend Medicaid coverage, it is important to provide young people with support to ensure they remain enrolled and know how to utilize the services.

6. PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Young people who experienced foster care in their adolescence and teenage years face significant challenges in meeting important developmental milestones that affect whether they become successful employees, students, and parents in society. Most young people have the benefit of a nurturing family to support them as they learn skills that are necessary for successful adult living. A supportive family

and social network allow a young person to safely test and experiment with new skills. This becomes an iterative process that allows a young person to learn from both successes and failures. However, a naturally occurring family and community context for developing social relationships may be missing for many young people in foster care. A young person in foster care may have social and family networks that have been compromised by the foster care experience and may need special attention and assistance to create such networks. Without supports, the iterative learning process that teaches young people how to use pro-social coping mechanisms to handle failures and successes is absent and may force a young person to prematurely test unrefined skills and suffer bad outcomes as a result. The ability to live independently, which is more accurately described as healthy interdependence, is more likely to be achieved when a young person has a network of supportive relationships than when he or she acquires simple skills.

Most young people in our society are able to achieve a level of education and training that permits some measure of economic success. They will develop the social and relational skills necessary for being part of and raising a family, including a web of connections with peers, colleagues, business associates, and friends. Conversely, young people who are disconnected from any community, school, and the labor force will likely experience episodic employment, protracted unemployment, and other negative outcomes.

A young person is more likely to be connected and positioned to achieve well-being and economic security when he or she has a family that reinforces the importance of education and training, opportunities to experience and ultimately select employment and career paths, social and civic engagement within the community, and a web of supportive relationships that give meaning to life. Young people need skills to attain important connections. These skills include the ability to establish relationships, including ro-

mantic relationships; education and employment skills relevant to the evolving labor force in increasingly global markets; and the ability to contribute to the well-being of others in neighborhoods and communities. Young people must learn how to provide leadership and community service and must also learn how to be strong advocates for their own needs.

Five Core Strategies

The strategies described below were designed to create the critical conditions in a community that are necessary to improve systems and outcomes for young people in transition. Because engaging young people and creating effective youth–adult partnerships are critical to improving results, each strategy includes an activity specifically designed to authentically engage youth and young adults. The Initiative has found that when young people are adequately supported and genuinely engaged in making decisions about the direction of the work, they help to produce some of the most powerful improvements in practice and policy.

For each strategy, this toolkit contains a guide that describes how to implement the strategy and related activities; what the Initiative has learned from demonstration sites' experiences; the Initiative's expectations of sites; and technical assistance available from the Initiative.

1. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Preparing young people to be meaningfully involved as decision makers and advocates

Youth engagement is essential to leveraging change in the child welfare, education, and workforce systems as well as other formal systems with which young people in transition interact. In order to create better outcomes, young people need to be engaged in planning for their futures. It is a top priority to support the active engagement of young people in developing the skills and leadership abilities they need.

Two activities contribute to this strategy:

- youth leadership boards; and
- young people as effective self-advocates.

Youth leadership boards are the primary means of engaging young people in community efforts. Through their participation in youth leadership boards, young people are empowered to become better advocates for systems improvement and designers of their own futures. With a unified purpose and shared strategic priorities, these boards attempt to improve access to resources and opportunities all for young people transitioning from foster care. Members are engaged in a multitude of ways, including developing written materials and videos to tell their stories; recruiting participants; hosting conferences, convenings, and summits; sponsoring sibling events; maintaining connections with other young people in transition; and participating in meetings with child welfare representatives and policy makers. Through these experiences, youth leadership board members are not only moving toward improving systems, but also experiencing personal growth, developing important peer relationships, and acquiring professional skills.

All young people should be full partners in making decisions affecting their own lives. Young people leaving care need a wide range of opportunities to prepare for and engage in advocacy for themselves, others, and systems improvement. Securing educational experiences, training, and support is only part of the preparation. It is equally important for these youth and young adults to have opportunities to put their new skills into action. They can do this by taking leadership in all matters concerning them, including team meetings, forums for systems improvement, and tracking and evaluating the implementation of the local initiative.

2. PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

Connecting to resources of public and private systems and philanthropy, expanding and deepening community support, and cultivating community champions for young people transitioning from care

The Initiative seeks to transform the way communities view young people in foster care to ensure that communities make a commitment to and take responsibility for helping those young people make a successful transition to adult life. The entire community must be involved in helping to create opportunities for young people leaving care. It is critical to sustain commitments made to young people in communities. These sustained commitments help young people to develop the safe, trusting, and enduring relationships with individuals and institutions that mark a transition to a successful adult life. Three activities contribute to this strategy:

- community partnership boards;
- resource development; and
- young people as partners.

A community partnership board brings together key local decision makers and young people who take responsibility for developing, implementing, assessing, and improving strategies to ensure a successful transition to adulthood for youth transitioning from foster care. The board's aspiration is to broaden the perspective of the community and young people and to engage those who will support successful transitions, including the private sector; faith-based and community-based organizations; child welfare, education, and workforce development agencies; local governments; and other relevant partners in the community.

Resource development focuses on expanding the type and amount of resources available for addressing key gaps in services, supports, and opportunities for reaching more youth and young adults in your target area. In order to expand and sustain your efforts, it is crucial that you leverage resources. Through a sustainability planning process, you will build the capacity to ensure that sufficient resources, fiscal and non-fiscal, are in place to fulfill your commitments.

JIM CASEY YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE SITE-LEVEL LOGIC MODEL

Vision: All young people leaving foster care will make successful transitions to adulthood.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

A set of strategies and activities will help create the conditions that are necessary in a community in order to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from foster care.

Youth Engagement
- Youth Leadership Boards
- Young People as Effective Self-Advocates

Partnerships & Resources
- Community Partnership Boards
- Resource Development
- Young People as Partners

Research, Evaluation, and Communications
- Self-Evaluation Team
- Communication
- Young People as Evaluators and Communicators

Public Will and Policy
- Agenda and Approach for Improving Public Policies and Systems
- Young People as Advocates for Improved Systems

Increased Opportunities
- Opportunity Passport™
- Door Openers
- Young People as Decision Makers for Increased Opportunities

IMPROVED POLICY AND PRACTICE

Improved policy and practice will promote timely permanence and increase opportunities available to young people, regardless of race or ethnicity:

A Permanent Family
- A family or committed, caring adult in his or her life when leaving care
- Subsidized legal guardianship and kinship care as options
- Placements in family settings rather than congregate care
- Opportunities for safely re-engaging birth parents or relatives
- Connections to siblings

A Stable Education
- Continuous schooling upon entering care and while in it
- Tuition waivers for post-secondary education
- Supports for post-secondary education (ETVs, housing, etc.)

Opportunities to Achieve Economic Success
- Developmentally appropriate IDAs
- Necessary personal documents (e.g., Social Security card, birth certificate, government-issued photo ID)
- Early and consistent work experience

A Place to Live
- Foster care available to 21
- Variety of living options from 18 to 21
- Priority access to safe housing options

Access to Health and Mental Health Care
- Medicaid to 21
- Comprehensive, coordinated health care when in care

Opportunities To Be Listened To, Informed, and Respected and To Exert Control Over Their Lives
- Youth-led case planning, including permanency and transition planning
- Leadership and community involvement opportunities
- Information on how all young people are doing after care (NYTD Plus)
- Data to identify and address racial disproportionality

IMPROVED YOUTH OUTCOMES

When systems are effectively supporting young people throughout their transition, they will have improved outcomes in the following areas.

Permanence
Every young person has an adult to rely on for a lifetime and a supportive family network.

Education
Young people acquire education and training that enable them to obtain and retain steady employment.

Employment
Young people support themselves by obtaining and retaining steady employment.

Housing
Young people have safe, stable, and affordable housing and have access to transportation for work and school.

Physical and Mental Health
Young people have health insurance for both physical and mental health.

Personal and Community Engagement
Young people have supportive relationships in the community that help them achieve their personal goals.

How do we know the strategies and activities are being implemented?

A Core Strategies Rubric is used to assess sites' implementation according to a set of cross-site performance measures.

How do we track improvements in policy and practice?

A Policy Matrix is used to assess sites' improvement according to a set of cross-site goals; communities can set additional priorities. The matrix summarizes relevant state policies and practices and provides a set of indicators to help the state determine how many young people are benefiting.

How do we track improvement in youth outcomes?

A series of indicators related to each outcome area is used to measure progress over time. The data are collected directly from young people twice a year via the Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey.

The ultimate way to determine success is to measure the progress of youth and young adults transitioning from care. The following indicators will help you gauge your successes and recognize areas that need additional attention.

Permanence

- Number and percent of young people who report that they have an adult in their life who will always be there to support them

Education

- For young people not attending high school, the number and percent of young people with a high school diploma or GED
- Of those with a high school diploma or GED, number and percent of young people who are enrolled in or have completed education or training beyond high school (i.e., military, Job Corps, vocational education, two- or four-year college, apprenticeships, Americorps, technical certification, and employer-sponsored training)

Employment

- Number and percent of young people who participate in one or more work-related learning/work experiences (e.g., field trip to work site, job shadowing, paid or volunteer work in the school or community)
- For those attending high school, number and percent of young people who obtain one or more part-time jobs (e.g., after school or summer) or participate in an internship
- For those not attending school, number and percent who worked full time for a duration of six months or more

Housing

- For young people in care, number and percent of young people who have a housing plan leading to safe, stable and affordable housing
- For young people out of care, number and percent of young people who report that their housing is: safe, stable (e.g., 6 months), and affordable
- Number and percent of young people who report that they have access to transportation for work or school

Physical and Mental Health

- For those out of care, number and percent of young people who have health insurance: for physical health only, with mental health benefits, and with dental benefits

Personal and Community Engagement

- Number and percent of young people that report there are enough people they can count on for emotional support or for job/school advice or guidance

If youth and young adults are to be full partners in guiding and supporting your overall work, they must be full members of your community partnership board and participate in decision making. This entails paying careful attention to building authentic youth–adult partnerships and making sure that both young people and adults participating in the board develop the skills and knowledge they need to put such partnerships into action. In addition to providing training and support on youth–adult partnerships, it is crucial to establish clear roles for young people, guidelines for working together, and clear expectations for both young people and adult participants. Taking these steps helps to avoid token participation by young people and to make sure the community partnership board is held accountable for developing authentic and effective partnerships.

3. RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Involving key stakeholders in the use of data to drive decision making and communications and to document results

Your implementation of the core strategies is expected to lead to improved outcomes for young people transitioning from care and for the systems that serve these young people. Research and evaluation enable you to measure your implementation, make course corrections, and assess outcomes. In short, they enable you to describe the results of your work. In order to make improvements in policy and practice, you need to communicate these results to a range of audiences, including practitioners, policy makers, the media, and the general public. Three activities contribute to this strategy:

- self-evaluation teams;
- communications; and
- young people as evaluators and communicators.

Using the tools and technical assistance provided by the Initiative or developed locally, your self-evalua-

tion team tracks your progress by obtaining sound and timely information on implementation and outcomes and makes this information available for use in local decision making. The self-evaluation team involves all key stakeholder groups in the community, including young people. Through this self-evaluation approach, local evaluation is wholly integrated with an ongoing strategic planning process.

The Initiative seeks to increase public awareness of the challenges faced by young people leaving foster care and to highlight the resilience they exhibit to overcome these challenges. Utilizing data to communicate is a key to conveying your message. Data document the hardships faced by young people in the areas of permanence, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health care, and personal and community engagement. It is essential, therefore, that you develop a comprehensive communications plan that challenges the community to take responsibility for this population and join together in creating access and opportunities that assist young people in moving from foster care to self-sufficiency.

Creating ways for the voices and experiences of young people to inform the self-evaluation is important. Moreover, providing young people with the skills, knowledge, and support that enables them to strategically share their stories and be effective communicators is genuinely empowering. Participating in the self-evaluation team is a great way for young people to become fully grounded in all aspects of the work. It both gives young people an opportunity to get comfortable with the data and allows young people to bring the data to life by having them explain what they think it is saying and how it applies to what they know.

4. PUBLIC WILL AND POLICY

Advancing policies and practices that improve outcomes for young people transitioning from foster care

> "I have become very wise with my finances, and I attribute that, in part, to the financial literacy training I attended as a part of Opportunity Passport™. I saved the book from the class and still reference it when I have questions about my finances. With the assistance of Opportunity Passport™, I was able to purchase a car with my matched savings account. I saved enough money to allow me to invest in a good car that has been safe and dependable. Owning a reliable vehicle has enabled me to spend more time with my siblings, get to work and school, and be self-sufficient. Without a car, I would rarely be able to see my siblings, as they live in a different town."
>
> —Opportunity Passport™ participant, 21

Advocating for state and county child welfare systems to be flexible and responsive to the needs of young people transitioning from foster care is critical to the mission of the Initiative and its partners. Systems improvement is one important way that you can expand opportunities and ensure the well-being of young people. Using data to understand the current environment, setting clear and measurable goals for influencing policy, and forming partnerships with an array of stakeholders are all essential to success. Two activities contribute to this strategy:

- an agenda and approach for improving public policies and systems; and
- young people as advocates for improved systems.

It is critical to establish a clear systems-improvement agenda that charts the ways in which public systems can be more effective in meeting the needs of young people transitioning from foster care. Young people need to be at the forefront of shaping this agenda and supported in forming productive partnerships

with adults toward that end. Engaging young people in shaping advocacy agendas helps ensure that the recommended changes in policies and systems result in more responsive and effective practices, services, and opportunities. Furthermore, by being advocates, young people gain valuable new skills and knowledge that help them in their personal and professional lives.

5. INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES

Creating an array of opportunities and helping young people gain entry to them

Savings and assets are key ingredients to success in society. Young people aging out of foster care often do not have the typical developmental experience of learning how to manage money and may leave care without even the basic financial and asset development skills that enable people to achieve economic success. Young people in foster care need opportunities to learn financial management; be connected to and obtain experience with the mainstream banking system; and save money for education, housing, health care, a vehicle that gets them to work and school, and other expenses. Furthermore, these young people need opportunities—"door openers"—that help them achieve their personal goals. Three activities contribute to this strategy:

- Opportunity Passport™;
- door openers; and
- young people as decision makers for increased opportunities.

The Opportunity Passport™ is a package of resources that helps young people make successful transitions to adulthood. This package includes:

- financial literacy training;
- an Individual Development Account (matched savings account); and
- a personal bank account.

Financial literacy training provides basic information to help young people understand financial institu-

LESSONS LEARNED FROM SITES: Achieving Permanence and Race Equity

Those working to improve results for young people need to understand and embrace efforts to achieve permanence for older youth in foster care and to reduce racial disparities in opportunities available to these youth and in their outcomes.

In 2001, when the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative began, its Theory of Change and strategies were predominantly focused on creating a concrete set of opportunities for youth transitioning from foster care and changing the way communities and public systems perceive, interact with, and support this population. Over time, however, the Initiative's work in every site and nationally revealed that the five core strategies must explicitly embrace two additional goals:

- achieving permanence for all youth in foster care; and
- reducing racial disparities in youth experiences and outcomes.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 underscored the importance of permanent connections for youth and imposed federal timelines for achieving permanence in theory but not in practice. Only recently has the large-scale failure to achieve permanence for older youth by most systems been publicly acknowledged. Concurrently, data showing inequities between the experiences and outcomes of African-American and Native American and other groups in foster care have become more widely understood. With strategies to deal with this problem still in their infancy across the country, the Initiative has been working with partners to learn more about how to address permanence for older youth and promote racial equity more effectively.

Permanence

Youth and young adults at multiple Initiative sites have spoken out about the need to increase connections with siblings, birth parents, and other relatives in order to promote permanence. Those working in sites have consistently stated that it has been important for them to link their work to other efforts to improve permanence. In 2009, the Initiative added permanence as an outcome area. Maine, Michigan, and Rhode Island are among the states that have been particularly active in attempting to make progress on this issue. Information on their progress is found in Appendix C.

Race Equity

Sites are beginning to offer practical ideas about how to begin to address racial disparities. However, like the field as a whole, each of the sites is challenged to move from understanding to action and has struggled to connect work on racial equity with the five core strategies. They have been working with the Initiative and with each other to develop recommendations to ensure that their efforts coordinate with and contribute to other efforts to achieve racial equity. These recommendations include finding and supporting leaders who are committed to achieving more equitable outcomes, connecting to agencies' agendas on racial equity to ensure that they focus on older youth, using youth voices and experiences to shape and communicate data about disparities, and providing youth leadership boards with support so that they can understand the data and the root causes of disparate outcomes for youth in care.

tions and money management. It provides a good foundation for young people and introduces them to the potential of a matched savings account. A matched savings account, Individual Development Account (IDA), helps the account holder establish a pattern of regular savings and accumulate assets. Approved assets related to education, vehicles, housing, investments, microenterprises, and health care can be matched dollar for dollar at an amount up to $1,000 per year that is based on the participant's savings. The personal bank account provides the account holder with a way to deposit cash for immediate use as well as a safe and accessible entrée into the mainstream-banking world.

Door openers provide educational, employment, housing, health, and personal opportunities that help young people achieve their personal goals. Expedited access to job training and adult education courses are examples of door openers. Door openers are co-created by your lead agency, community partners, and young people.

Empowering young people as decision makers is essential in guiding all aspects of the Opportunity Passport™ and door openers. Young people are more likely to avail themselves of door openers when they have been involved in identifying and creating these opportunities.

Site-Level Logic Model

The Initiative's Theory of Change is further delineated in a logic model—a graphic depiction of the Theory of Change (see page 11). A logic model answers the common-sense question: "Does it make sense, or is it logical to think that you can achieve the results you want through the strategies and activities that you plan to employ?"

LESSONS LEARNED FROM SITES: Sequencing Strategies

The sequence in which the core strategies are implemented is organic to each site and depends on the site's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

The Initiative's demonstration sites were most successful in responding to opportunities and addressing challenges when all five of the core strategies were used. But each site has a unique implementation story, and the sites all began at different points and had different strengths and challenges.

Leaders of the demonstration sites recall that environmental circumstances affected the sequencing of their implementation steps, and that the interaction of the five strategies with one another was important. For instance, the power of creating authentic partnerships with youth and young adults was a key ingredient in the success of the public will and policy strat-

egy. Effective policy advocacy, use of research, evaluation findings, and communications strategies helped facilitate the building of partnerships and the leveraging of resources. Efforts to build partnerships and resources often led to innovative approaches for increasing the services and supports available to young people.

The site leaders also observed that the Initiative's Theory of Change was helpful in developing concrete plans to address complex systems-improvement issues and in illuminating the roles different partners could play to change the way states and communities support older youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Site-Level Logic Model summarizes the Initiative's approach—it shows how the core strategies and activities help create the conditions for improved policies and practices, which lead to better results for young people in transition. The logic model is another tool for results-based decision making; it helps to ensure that planning and implementation efforts are explicitly linked to the results you want to achieve.

Core Strategies Rubric

Multiple activities are essential to carrying out each of the five core strategies and achieving the associated objectives. The Core Strategies Rubric, Appendix C, defines the essential criteria for each stage of each activity and provides guidance in implementing the activities. The rubric is based on experience in the demonstration sites. It is considered an authentic assessment tool because it explicitly describes the criteria that are used to gauge how well the strategies and activities are being implemented. This tool will help you plan your work, assess your implementation and progress, and identify your technical assistance needs. It may be a useful tool for reporting on progress to funders and partners.

The above-described approach is ready to be broadened and sustained in communities and states beyond the Initiative's demonstration sites. Toward that end, the Initiative is developing relationships with new sites where local investors are interested in supporting the implementation of the approach.

A Partnership with the Initiative

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative team is delighted that you are interested in improving youth outcomes in your community. The process of implementing the Initiative's strategies began with the first contact you made with the Initiative and will contin-

ue as the team gathers information about your organization and your current environment and provides you with an overview of the complex, multi-strategy approach. The Initiative will work with your site to clarify what it means for you to implement the core strategies and to identify the resources you will need in order to assess your needs and readiness, plan your work, and implement your activities. This process helps to assess your site's level of interest in engaging with the Initiative and in improving the outcomes for youth leaving foster care.

You have probably already begun to identify the capacity, needs, and opportunities that exist in your site. The Initiative will identify a liaison to work with you to further conduct an Environmental Scan and prepare a three-year comprehensive plan for implementing the core strategies. The specific steps involved in developing this plan are discussed later in this guide.

Implementing the five core strategies in your community involves you and the Initiative co-investing in the work to improve outcomes for youth and young adults in transition. This partnership calls on each site to have sufficient public and private resources for implementing and sustaining the core strategies and on the Initiative to contribute technical assistance, advocacy support, and data collection tools and training.

The goals of this partnership are:

1. for young people:

- each to have a caring adult to rely on for a lifetime and a supportive family network;
- to acquire education and training that enable them to obtain and retain steady employment;
- to support themselves by obtaining and retaining employment;
- to have safe, stable, and affordable housing and have access to transportation for work and school;

- to have health insurance for both physical and mental health; and
- to have supportive relationships in the community that help them achieve their personal goals.

and

2. for policies and practices to:

- increase the opportunities available to young people for permanence, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, and personal and community engagement regardless of race and ethnicity.

Co-Investment Partnership

Because experience shows that all strategies are necessary to maximize impact, the Initiative forms partnerships with sites that agree to implement all strategies and activities of the Theory of Change.

The site's role in the co-investment partnership is to:

- respond to the issues facing young people ages 14 to 24 who are in the public child welfare foster care system or were in the system at age 14 or older;
- dedicate sufficient resources, both financial and human, to effectively implement, expand, and sustain the core strategies;
- develop a comprehensive three-year Implementation Plan and an annual plan thereafter and secure resources for at least three years of full implementation;
- designate a lead agency/partner with the capacity and relationships needed to manage the work of multiple partners, oversee the implementation of the five core strategies, and plan for the expansion and sustainability of the work;
- ensure that the state or county child welfare agency demonstrates a commitment to being a key partner in planning and implementing the local initiative;

- allow each Opportunity Passport™ participant to spend matched funds only on the following assets:
  - a housing down payment or rent deposit;
  - medical and dental insurance and care;
  - education and vocational training;
  - a vehicle (including purchase, down payment, and title and license fees);
  - microenterprises (entrepreneurial ventures); and
  - investments (e.g., stocks, IRAs, CDs, savings bonds).
- provide financial resources that are directly managed and distributed by the youth leadership board;
- provide financial resources for the community partnership board's provision of incentives to Opportunity Passport™ participants (the amounts and number of participants are negotiable);
- compensate Opportunity Passport™ participants for their contributions (e.g., attending conferences, participating in the youth leadership board, fulfilling speaking engagements);
- use the Initiative's data collection tools and methods to produce the data and information required for the site's self-evaluation and for the Initiative on an on-going basis;
- provide information and data to the Initiative for further analysis and learning; and
- sustain the five core strategies and related activities and expand their implementation statewide.

The Initiative's role in the co-investment partnership is to:

- authorize a liaison to support the site's efforts;
- provide technical assistance, access to data collection tools, and advocacy to aid in implementation of the core strategies (desired results, delivery method(s), and financing are negotiated and determined in collaboration with site partners);

- support the building of capacity required for expansion and sustainability of the strategies at the site; and
- consider limited grants for planning purposes or other discrete pieces of work that contribute to local efforts.

Initiative's Support for Site Work

The Initiative supports each site's efforts to create opportunities for youth leaving foster care with technical assistance, advocacy, and grant making.

PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Initiative provides access to the ideas, people, skills, tools, effective examples, and learning opportunities that sites need in order to expand opportunities for young people. The Initiative provides customized technical assistance based on your needs and available resources and brings sites together for convenings, workshops, and training sessions that are specifically focused on improving implementation of the site-level strategies.

The Initiative has developed and refined an assortment of training workshops and technical assistance approaches that build state and local capacity and enhance implementation activities. The information provided is practical, specialized, and relevant to child welfare performance and outcome goals. Depending on circumstances, technical assistance may occur onsite or offsite. Some offerings rely heavily on peer providers and may be connected to larger conference gatherings. Some offerings are site specific, and others apply to all sites. Evidence-based and promising practices are gleaned from technical assistance activities and shared among the sites and with the broader field.

Technical assistance by itself will not help you achieve the challenging goals you have set for yourself. However, technical assistance that is results driven and

> "Youth from all over our state came together to come up with most important issues we face while in foster care. We took those issues and gave them to social workers and other adults; they liked all of our ideas and they asked us to come talk to them about how services could be better. It is so cool to see our suggestions actually taking effect! It's like they [adults] really want to hear what we have to say."
>
> —Opportunity Passport™ participant, 19

matched to the needs of your site can provide the ideas, people, skills, effective examples, and learning opportunities that you need in order to create more opportunities for young people. The new learning, enhanced skills, and strengthened relationships that result from high-quality technical assistance can lead you to develop good strategies, leverage additional resources, and take informed and thoughtful action.

The way in which technical assistance is delivered also matters. The most helpful technical assistance is delivered in a way that is consistent with good practice and is well aligned with the values and premises of the Initiative. Drawing from what has proven to be effective in other community efforts to improve outcomes for families and young people, the Initiative concluded that technical assistance is more likely to make a difference in your ability to take action when it is provided according to the design and delivery principles described in the Technical Assistance Framework (www.jimcaseyyouth.org). An overview of the technical assistance process and available tools and supports can be found in the Technical Assistance at a Glance chart at www.jimcaseyyouth.org.

Specific technical assistance activities, data collection and other tools, and supports are described throughout this guide, and further details are available from your Initiative liaison (see below).

AUTHORIZED INITIATIVE LIAISON

The Initiative will authorize a liaison who will provide guidance, direction, and technical assistance for the full scope of activities related to implementing and sustaining the core strategies. The liaison will ensure that you have the benefit of what has been learned in the demonstration sites and that appropriate technical assistance is made available to you along your journey.

The Initiative liaison will assist you with developing your site's specific strategies and activities and fulfilling the co-investment partnership responsibilities. Your Initiative liaison will provide and/or broker technical assistance for your site, provide access to all data collection tools, connect you with available resources, and keep the Initiative informed about the work in your site. All Initiative-supported technical assistance, training, and tools are accessed through your Initiative liaison.

ADVOCATING FOR IMPROVED POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The Initiative advocates for improved policies and practices that impact youth leaving foster care. As a national leader, the Initiative raises awareness of the issue of young people leaving foster care by building coalitions, making presentations, and sponsoring events. The Initiative also informs policy makers and practitioners about relevant issues by publishing and widely distributing topical briefs and other materials, creating national press attention, conducting communications and public relations events that influence public will and create a climate conducive to systems improvement, and building partnerships with key stakeholders from state and local entities to support advocacy efforts that affect federal policies.

MAKING GRANTS

The Initiative may make limited grant dollars available to sites for planning purposes and may solicit grant proposals from sites for specific and discrete pieces of work that contribute to the local effort. The Initiative also makes grants to national organizations that seek to impact the transitioning youth foster care population. Through these grants, the Initiative creates national partnerships that work to improve policies and practices at the state and federal levels and to provide youth advocacy and technical assistance that are critical to communities.

Getting Started

The vision of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is relatively simple and straightforward—to create the set of opportunities that will lead youth and young adults who are or have been in the child welfare system to better results. However, achieving that vision requires enormous change in the way communities and states perceive the needs of and interact with this population of young people. The experience of the Initiative's demonstration sites suggests that five components are particularly important in tackling such a large challenge:

- broad and deep partnerships;
- a clear role for the state child welfare agency in implementation;
- expanding and sustaining the work;
- the ability to interpret the environment in which the work is occurring in order to mobilize public and political will; and
- the capacity to use all five of the core strategies together to strategically respond to opportunities and challenges that arise.

The amount of time it takes to plan and launch the strategies and activities varies based on the site's current environment. For example, if a group of young people is already functioning as a youth leadership board, it may not take as long to build the capacity of this board as it would to start a new one. Or if there is a strong history of youth engagement, building partners' capacity to engage the voices of youth

and young adults may not take as long as it would otherwise. Finally, the amount of time it takes to start a site depends on which activities you start with and the assets already in place in your community.

All individuals working to implement the five core strategies need to understand and embrace the connections between the Initiative's goals and emerging state and local efforts to achieve permanence for older youth and address inequities in outcomes for young people of different races. Prior to planning, you might want to review and consider Appendix E, which shares important lessons from the demonstration sites concerning themes that surround and cut across the core strategies.

Lead Agency

It is extremely important that an agency or organization that has the capacity and interest to successfully engage multiple stakeholders lead the work in your site. The lead agency plays multiple roles as a leader in planning, implementing, and evaluating to ensure positive outcomes. It is crucial that the lead agency and its staff have the standing and skills to coordinate strategies and partnerships and to manage operations in ways that sustain the work over time. That said, the organization or agency that leads during your planning effort may not end up being the lead agency that implements the core strategies in the long term. Regardless, any lead agency needs to be a good collaborator and have strong relationships with potential funders of the work, the public child welfare agency, and other community organizations.

The lead agency must:

- be recognized as a natural collaborator in the community;
- have a strong relationship with the child welfare agency (if it is not the child welfare agency);
- have the capacity to engage youth and young adults transitioning from foster care;

"Being a part of a statewide advisory task force, with other youth and adults, I was able to talk directly to the people who were making decisions about services for youth in foster care. Because I received some of the services they were discussing, I was able to give them first-hand knowledge about what was helpful and where I needed more support. I like being asked for my opinion."

—Opportunity Passport™ participant, 22

- be well positioned to influence public policy, practice, and funding directed at youth aging out of foster care;
- be able to build on existing opportunities and turn crises into new opportunities; and
- have proven experience with successful community-based efforts.

Your planning process should lead you to identify the entity that is best suited to lead implementation. This lead agency could be the public child welfare agency; a community-based organization; an agency with a statewide focus; or some other non-profit, educational, or governmental organization. It will provide the operational structure for managing the local implementation of the five core strategies on behalf of a site, which involves carrying out the Implementation Plan, assessing progress, and directing course corrections as needed.

The lead agency ensures that:

- a clear vision for your work is shared among key partners and stakeholders;
- all agreements among partners are transparent;
- youth and young adults are engaged as key decision makers in site governance and as key advocates for improving policy and practice;
- a variety of financing strategies are identified, utilized, and leveraged, and funding partners are providing the financial resources needed to support the site;

- a well-defined team of staff, advisory or governance group members, volunteers, and others are prepared, appropriately deployed, and fulfilling their responsibilities;
- public-private partnerships are built to leverage private-sector funding, create leadership, and garner technical expertise in support of the work;
- communication among partners, key stakeholders, media, funders, and others is user-friendly, timely, and based on data;
- a broad range of key senior decision makers who can influence sustainability are engaged at the community and state levels;
- strong internal systems and fiscal processes allow leaders to stay informed on the site's financial status and alerted to emerging financing concerns;

> "When I was asked to be a part of a self-evaluation team, I thought it would be really boring, even though I like math. It was actually interesting. I learned that the Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey was one of the most important things I could do to help people understand what I needed. After our first meeting, I made sure I told everybody to take their survey."
>
> —Former Opportunity Passport™ participant, 24

- all accountability functions are fully met; and
- local efforts are positioned to take advantage of Initiative assistance.

Planning

Unless a planning team for the site is already in place, the next step after selecting a lead agency is to form such a team. The planning team is comprised of young people, lead agency representatives, and key partners. This team takes charge of three key planning activities, described below, with the aid of sev-

eral tools from the Initiative, also described below.

CONDUCTING AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Through the Environmental Scan (www.jimcaseyyouth.org), the planning team comprehensively assesses the environment in which the five core strategies will be implemented and the systems that will influence the six key outcome areas. Conducting this scan may include a range of activities, including conducting focus groups with young people transitioning from care, foster parents, service providers, public agency representatives, and others; collecting and analyzing data; and reviewing information with key stakeholders including youth and young adults. While you should strive to collect all of the data indicated in the Environmental Scan, you may need to form a data development strategy so that you can collect data over time that are initially inaccessible or difficult to obtain. These data:

- provide baseline information on the factors or circumstances your site needs to improve outcomes;
- help you to develop your site's specific strategies; and
- are updated annually.

While conducting the Environmental Scan, you will secure the financial and human resources required to support your site's activities (see the Finding Resources for the Work section for guidance).

The Environmental Scan is an important step that should not be rushed. Following this step, the planning team should avail itself of technical assistance (see Planning Tools, below) to create the Implementation Plan described below.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The next step is to prepare a comprehensive three-year Implementation Plan based on the findings from the Environmental Scan, deeper knowledge gained from training and technical assistance (see Planning

Tools, below), and input from others. This plan describes how you will use the five core strategies to provide opportunities and resources that assist young people in making successful transitions to adulthood.

The format for this plan is found at www.jimcasey youth.org. The plan describes the results you expect to achieve, each partner's level of investment, steps for putting all of the strategies in place, and plans for providing resources for the work. It also includes information on the lead agency and its relationship with the community as well as a description of its capacity to lead the implementation process.

After you provide a draft of this plan to your Initiative liaison, representatives from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative will review the plan and provide timely feedback to you relative to a co-investment partnership.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Upon finalization of the Implementation Plan, your site and the Initiative will enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU). A sample can be viewed at www.jimcaseyyouth.org. The MOU describes the partners' agreement to facilitate implementation of the core strategies. Once the MOU is finalized, the Initiative will certify your site as a Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative site.

PLANNING RESOURCES

In addition to the *Toolkit for Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Partners* and the targeted technical assistance provided by your Initiative liaison, you have the opportunity to access other training and resources from the Initiative. These resources are important in developing core competencies and ensuring a solid foundation of learning and understanding at your site. Technical assistance may range from consultative phone calls, workshops, training sessions, convenings, on-site support, peer-to-peer support, resources and materials, advocacy, and resource

development. Technical assistance results, delivery methods, and financing will be negotiated and determined among the partners. To access this technical assistance, contact your Initiative liaison.

The resources available during your planning phase include the following:

Increased Opportunities and Opportunity Passport™ Training

The training equips you with the materials and tools needed to implement all components of the Opportunity PassportTM and door openers.

Initiative Notes

This electronic update informs sites about Initiative activities, policy and staff updates, and other pertinent information.

Peer Learning Discussion List

The Peer Learning Discussion List allows representatives from sites to ask questions and share information with one another during planning and on into implementation. Unlike a listserv, which is a one-way tool, the Peer Learning Discussion List allows all recipients to see all questions and answers.

Implementing the Core Strategies

After the MOU is signed, your site is a full partner with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. You may already have started some of your implementation activities, such as building and strengthening your youth leadership board or community partnership board, hiring or reallocating staff, reaching agreement with your banking partner, preparing policies and procedures for the Opportunity Passport™, and creating and establishing door openers. The Initiative's expectation is that activities supporting all five strategies be implemented during your

first year. A series of technical assistance and training sessions is available to help you with implementation.

Implementation Tools

You accessed some of the Initiative's workshops and training sessions, tools, products, and customized assistance during the planning process. During implementation, your site gains access to a different set of supports, including customized support and cross-site convenings.

CORE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, TRAINING, AND TOOLS

The following resources become available to you as your site begins to launch strategies and activities. More specific information on each of these opportunities is found in the other guides in this toolkit.

Opportunity Passport™

The Initiative will issue you a license to use the trademarked Opportunity Passport™. The trademark distinguishes the uniqueness of this resource and underscores the necessity that all strategies operate together. Using the trademark requires adherence to the five core strategies.

Policy Matrix

The Policy Matrix is a tool that enables the site to summarize state policies and practices that are related to outcomes. The matrix provides a set of systems indicators to help states determine how many young people are benefiting from these policies and practices. Initially, your site uses this tool to document baseline data. Later, it is used to track changes, build a policy agenda, and record efforts to improve policies and practices. It may also be a useful tool for reporting on progress to funders and partners. Refer to the Public Will and Policy Guide in this toolkit for more information.

Financial Literacy Train-the-Trainers Workshop

This workshop prepares your site to conduct financial literacy training for Opportunity Passport™ participants and to expand your site's capacity by conducting train-the-trainer sessions.

Management Information System for Individual Development Accounts (MISIDA) Training

This training introduces site leaders to MISIDA, the software program commonly used in the IDA field, and provides information and materials to help you set up IDAs and manage related data. This Internet-based system is the primary source of data related to the IDA. It is a "three-in-one" tool used for account management, project administration, and evaluation, and it is the key to supporting and tracking the Opportunity Passport™. MISIDA is a comprehensive and up-to-date data collection and reporting system.

Self-Evaluation Training

This training is an initial introduction to self-evaluation. It is designed for key lead staff, community partnership board members, youth leadership board members, the data analyst, and the self-evaluation team coach. The training introduces your site to the Initiative's self-evaluation framework and equips participants with the knowledge and materials to initiate self-evaluation in your community.

Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey (OPPS) Training

This training for those engaged in self-evaluation is provided during the self-evaluation training. It provides the tools and information needed to set up and administer the OPPS. OPPS is an Internet-based survey that captures self-reported data on youth outcomes as well as demographic information from Opportunity Passport™ participants. Participants complete surveys via the Internet when they enroll in the Opportunity Passport™ and twice annually in April and October.

Youth Engagement and Youth Leadership Board Development Training

These trainings introduce participants to the Initiative's approach to engaging young people in all relevant aspects of the work and provides materials to support the development of youth leadership boards. Participants should include young people and adults who are working to prepare young people to be meaningfully involved as decision makers and advocates.

Self-Evaluation Discussion List

The Self-Evaluation Discussion List is for self-evaluation coaches and site coordinators. It provides a venue for sharing and seeking information among self-evaluation peers in all sites. Unlike a listserv, which is a one-way tool, the Self-Evaluation Discussion List allows all recipients to see all questions and answers.

TARGETED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING

Once a foundation of learning is in place, you may find that you need specific, issue-focused training and technical assistance to address challenges you face in implementing or finding opportunities to advance the work. In this case, the Initiative can provide or broker training sessions and technical assistance and share the costs of this support.

CROSS-SITE CONVENINGS

The Initiative sponsors thematic convenings, annual gatherings of all sites with national experts to help advance the work at the local level. In addition to providing access to national experts, cross-site convenings provide an invaluable opportunity for peer learning and sharing. The Initiative generally assumes the cost of site teams' attendance at these convenings.

SHORT-TERM BROKERED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Your Initiative liaison is well informed and possesses expertise about the implementation of the core strategies. In some cases, relevant issues falling outside the Initiative liaison's areas of expertise arise. In those instances, the Initiative liaison serves as a broker for short-term technical assistance and brings in resources from other staff and consultants.

In those rare circumstances in which a relevant request for technical assistance requires expertise or resources outside the Initiative consultant pool, the Initiative works with you to refine the request and explore resource options. After you determine the scope of work, you may need to contract individually with a vendor for the technical assistance. The Initiative may be able to recommend a technical assistance provider or help you screen potential providers.

FACILITATED LEARNING AND PEER NETWORKING

The Initiative encourages and supports communication and information sharing among sites. Practitioners who have been successful in doing what others are attempting to do are best able to provide helpful advice and counsel. When a good resource is discovered or created for one site that could potentially help many, the Initiative informs all sites. The Initiative also provides co-investment sites with:

- special web site access;
- position papers, policy briefs, and other reports;
- assistance in developing planning documents and reports; and
- access to specialized site learnings through Initiative liaisons.

Finding Resources for the Work

Overview

When locating resources for your work, you will want to factor in a range of financial and human resources. Demonstration sites discovered that the amount and sources of financial support available depend on the partnerships you form; how resources are leveraged, shifted, reallocated, and maximized; and whether in-kind resources are obtained. When assessing your human resources, make sure you have people with the right skills, knowledge, and experience to carry out the unique elements of the core strategies.

Staffing

The experiences of demonstration sites suggest you will need the equivalent of two to three full-time positions. A team of personnel with expertise or skills in a range of areas may be most useful in implementing the strategies at your site. Assigned roles may include:

- coordinating the work on behalf of the lead agency and partners;
- organizing the youth engagement and community partnership efforts;
- supporting self-evaluation by providing data analysis, team leadership, and assistance in developing evaluation reports;
- administering the Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey and managing MISIDA data entry, integrity, and reports;
- supporting the communications, public policy, fiscal, and resource development work; and
- guiding the implementation of the Opportunity Passport™ and door openers.

Successful coordinators have a thorough understanding of child welfare issues and successful experience with collaboration. Launching a new initiative re-quires working with local representatives to implement a set of strategies in the public sector, in the private sectors, and, most importantly, among young people. In order to succeed, staff must be able to manage multiple tasks; maneuver in various political environments; build and sustain relationships with many people, organizations, and agencies; be creative and flexible yet clear about expectations; know and apply best practices; and be good models for young people.

Information and lessons relating to human resources for each strategy are found in the respective guide in this toolkit.

Cost and Leverage

Data from demonstration sites suggest that the financial commitment required to run a site is $300,000–$400,000 per year, including cash and in-kind resources. A number of sites began with more than that, and evidence suggests that the initial infusion of additional resources accelerates implementation of strategies.

It is difficult to itemize up-front expenses, because in the past, each site leveraged resources in different ways. But at a minimum, your site should plan to raise funds for:

- local staff;
- incentives and stipends for youth leadership activities ($35–$100, depending on whether the activity is a few hours or a full day);
- $100 per participant to seed an IDA following financial literacy training;
- an IDA match of 1:1 up to $1,000 per year per participant;
- meeting space; food and refreshments; transportation to meetings, trainings, and events; and child care;
- financial literacy trainers and materials for marketing and tracking of door openers;

- convening trainings, technical assistance, and printed materials;
- stipends of $40 per participant per Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey completed (surveys are taken twice a year); and
- $10,000 per year (typically) for Youth Leadership Boards to manage and distribute.

Strategies are implemented by a wide range of partners, and often this affects the site's access to financial resources. In the past, lead agencies have included an advocacy organization, state agencies, policy institutes, a community foundation, private foster care providers, a United Way, and a university. A study examining leveraged resources found[9] that Initiative demonstration sites with different needs, histories, skills, connections, strengths, and networks pursued different means of implementing and financing the core strategies. Those with histories in the private sector tended to focus first on private sources for fundraising, while those used to promoting policy advocacy pursued public funds first. Financial support came from United Ways, local foundations, individual donors, state and local governments, Chafee and other federal funds, corporations, and a wide range of private agencies.

It is important to examine the rules and regulations of potential funding sources to ensure your site's eligibility, to gauge reliability over time, and to identify funds for specific age groups or types of assets purchased using the Opportunity Passport™.

Sustaining and Expanding

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's mission is based on the belief that all young people in or leaving foster care will benefit from embedding the core strategies in policy and practice, and expanding the reach of the core strategies across states. For this reason, every site is expected to:

- implement all five core strategies and ensure that these strategies reach all eligible youth and young adults across the state; and
- sustain the strategies and activities, thereby increasing opportunities for youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

The core strategies provide a frame and blueprint for the full process of planning, implementing, and evaluating efforts that lead to positive outcomes for young people. You may decide to aim for a statewide purview during your initial planning or move to that goal after starting in a smaller geographic area.

Sustaining and expanding the core strategies require an ongoing process that ensures that sufficient resources, fiscal and non-fiscal, are in place both to implement and to sustain ongoing operation and improvement in youth outcomes. Sustainability depends on developing a clear plan that includes expanding the reach across the state and securing adequate funding, partnerships, data, technology, and other resources required for continued success.

A wide variety of factors will influence your approach to statewide implementation and sustainability, and you will face unique challenges and opportunities. Demonstration sites that began to plan for the sustainability of the core strategies by the end of year two found that they had a fully developed sustainability plan at the end of year three, and this served as the basis for continued partnership. To those sites demonstrating strong potential for sustaining the work, the Initiative is likely to offer the opportunity for continued partnership beyond the third year of implementation.

9   Cornerstone Consulting Group. (2008). *Assessing leverage: lessons from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative*. St. Louis, MO. p. 5.

Sustainability Planning

Assistance is available to help guide your site in a planning process that is strategic and tailored to the uniqueness of your site. The sustainability planning process[10] used by Initiative sites consists of five modules. It helps you identify ways in which your site can identify and access resources to sustain the core strategies. The planning process culminates in a document that communicates the plan to boards, other organizations, and funders. The Initiative can connect you with training, technical assistance, and tools to facilitate the creation of a sustainability plan.

Sustainability planning can be effective and efficient only if certain basic organizational capacities and experiences are in place. These are described in Readiness for Sustainability Planning[11] (www.jimcasey youth.org). A description of the planning modules can be found at www.jimcaseyyouth.org.

SITE'S ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Your Environmental Scan, which identifies the strengths, gaps, and barriers facing young people at your site who are leaving care, is updated annually to define local resources. The providers of these resources serve as partners and/or funders for components of the work, helping to build capacity and local infrastructure so that the core strategies are integrated and sustained at the site.

Your sustainability planning will most likely begin during the second year of implementation, and a fully developed plan will emerge in the third year. To facilitate the development and use of your plan, you will need to:

- engage in a sustainability planning process as described in your annual Implementation Plan;
- complete a written plan for sustainability at the end of the third year of implementation;

- cover all costs for technical assistance for the development of a sustainability plan;
- participate in sustainability training;
- engage the community partnership board and youth leadership board in sustainability planning and implementation;
- begin implementing the sustainability plan at the start of the fourth year of implementation; and
- review, monitor, and amend the sustainability plan as needed to achieve defined results.

INITIATIVE'S ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Sustainability planning is critical to activities that improve results for young people in transition, the communities they live in, and the systems that serve them. Young people in and leaving foster care deserve a system that focuses on results, accountability, and continuous quality improvement in order to ensure positive outcomes. The Initiative supports sustainability planning by:

- offering direction to sites on the planning process and the plan,
- providing tools and products that can guide and enhance planning and implementation, and
- identifying and facilitating access to technical assistance.

The Initiative does not assume costs related to sustainability planning.

Expanding Across the State

You may have begun your work with a statewide focus and thus have already mapped out how you are expanding your reach. If not, the sustainability planning process is the ideal opportunity to chart a course across your state. An *expansion site* is a new geographic area or set of areas within your state where you are embedding the five core strategies.

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10   Adapted from The Finance Project's Sustainability Training Institute resources: www.financeproject.org
11   Ibid.

Your site's activities and strategies may need to be implemented in unique ways during statewide expansion. For example, a community or set of communities may have a single youth leadership board or community partnership board. Yet boards in multiple communities statewide—as well as young people who may not be on any board—will need to be called on for the work of improving policies and practices statewide. Galvanizing public will may require connecting with young people, policy makers, advocates, private providers, and key champions from across the state. Self-evaluation teams statewide may generate and disseminate evaluation information. The Opportunity Passport™ and door openers, however, are likely to be most effective when implemented within a community or set of communities.

Communities are urged to launch strategies in one or two sites before expanding them to additional sites. For the Initiative's demonstration sites, this provided the opportunity to learn how best to engage young people and partners, gauge resource availability, and learn what works best in the community.

This toolkit is a primary resource for helping sites plan, implement, and evaluate the core strategies. Additional technical assistance provides the help sites need in order to expand. During expansion, you will want to monitor and make course corrections through the regular collection, review, and analysis of appropriate data. Evaluation for expansion sites is locally based. However, specific information and data on your expansion sites may be requested by the Initiative to increase our knowledge and understanding for the purpose of supporting other sites. All Initiative data collection tools are available for use in expansion.

CO-INVESTMENT SITE'S ROLE IN EXPANSION

Co-investment sites:

- plan for expansion across the state during sustainability planning and ensure that expansion has resources and occurs;
- negotiate with the Initiative the number of young people to be enrolled as Opportunity Passport™ participants and set a goal of reaching all eligible young people;
- provide funds for the youth leadership board to manage and distribute;
- finance incentives the community partnership board provides to Opportunity Passport™ participants;
- ensure that Opportunity Passport™ participants are recognized and compensated for all their contributions;
- use the Initiative's data collections tools to gather data from expansion sites; and
- provide or broker technical assistance and training to expansion sites as appropriate.

INITIATIVE'S ROLE IN EXPANSION

The Initiative:

- supports expansion sites only through the co-investment site,
- provides technical assistance to implement the core strategies through the co-investment site,
- makes all data collection tools available to expansion sites,
- continues to authorize an Initiative liaison to support the expansion, and
- supports building co-investment sites' capacity to expand geographically.

Summary

This guide has provided an overview of the Initiative, its history, and the Theory of Change it has developed in order to improve the poor outcomes of young people leaving foster care. The guide has outlined the structure and processes supporting the core strategies and activities that are essential to improving outcomes for these young people. In addition, it has shared some valuable lessons from the Initiative's demonstration sites. Together, this information should help you form a clear understanding of how the strategies operate together in effecting change, which will be critical as you move into planning and implementation.

As you turn to the other guides in this toolkit for more detailed information on each of the core strategies, keep in mind that the processes and activities required for each strategy are not linear but interconnected. You may start with one strategy or activity, but successful implementation will call all strategies into play, and it is essential to consider all strategies as you plan and begin to stage your implementation.

Addressing the enormous challenges involved in meeting the needs of young people in and leaving foster care—and improving outcomes for them—is an important responsibility for our communities and states. This work may prove to be challenging and complex at times, but it is very necessary. The work is beginning to gain traction in local, state, and federal arenas. What was once a bold vision—that increased opportunities, permanent connections, and community involvement could predict better outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood—is becoming reality.

Toolkit for Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Partners

Appendices

Appendix A

History of Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

In April 2001, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative formed a planning team consisting of Initiative staff, staff from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs, foster care alumni, and other experts. This team was supported by researchers from the Chapin Hall Center for Children and faculty from the University of North Carolina and the University of Southern Maine. They worked together to define a Theory of Change for improving youth outcomes that would be implemented through grant making, technical assistance, and advocacy activities. This theory details a specific set of strategies and provides a solid framework for efforts that have local, state, and national impact.

The newly formed Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative posited that four[1] critical community conditions, when present together, would impact public and private systems in such a way as to create and support the expansion of opportunities for young people. These new and expanded opportunities would, in turn, enable young people who access them to achieve improved outcomes. The critical conditions were stated as: (1) young people are actively engaged, (2) systems partners are actively involved, (3) research and communications are directed at documenting and disseminating results, and (4) public will and policy are galvanized and focused on necessary reforms. Improved outcomes would be mea-

sured in five areas: education, employment, housing, health care, and supportive personal and community engagement.[2]

The Initiative used a matrix of screening factors to determine promising locations to test this approach. A few selected communities began implementing the approach in 2003, and over time, the Initiative formed partnerships with ten communities and states to test this innovative design for strategies and activities.

In early 2004, after some experience and early work in demonstration sites, the Initiative identified a set of initial measures for implementing the Theory of Change uniformly across the sites. At the same time, the organization began the work of integrating technical assistance, sustainability planning, and self-evaluation. With these pieces in place, a logic model was created to serve as a graphical depiction of the theory behind the approach.

A distinguishing feature of the Initiative is its strong focus on data collection and data-based decision making through an active self-evaluation process in each community. Each site has a self-evaluation team made up of youth and young adults, representatives of public and private agencies, and other stakeholders who review data regularly, make recommendations for improvement, and communicate findings to the broader community. The public child welfare agency is an essential partner in planning, implementing, and sustaining the strategies. This partnership allows the site to develop not only shared goals for improved outcomes for young people leaving foster care but also the forms of access, processes, and products that ensure success. To be successful, the sites need a type of community participation that is always broadening and is responsive to young people who are in foster care or exiting the system.

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1 A fifth condition was added in 2010: young people have access to an array of opportunities to support them.

2 A sixth outcome area, permanence, was added in 2008.

The Initiative intends for the core strategies and activities to be sustained. Therefore, sustainability planning is coordinated with each site to ensure that a viable plan and needed resources are available to continue the work. Each site develops a written sustainability plan that outlines the strategies and activities that are to be institutionalized and supported in the community in order to ensure better outcomes for young people leaving foster care. Each site has a sustainability plan that is based on declining funding and technical assistance from the Initiative. It is anticipated that public and private community organizations and businesses will provide the resources necessary to continue this work.

The Initiative and national partners have encouraged scrutiny of the current system by producing a documentary, *Aging Out*, and publishing a book, *On Their Own*, that examine the real lives of young adults. Both issue a call to action and raise hopes by revealing new solutions and opportunities to ensure success and economic viability for young people in foster care or exiting the system. The national release of these resources spurred key stakeholders and champions who work with young people to spearhead improvements to the systems that are serving them. Improvements are occurring in communities, courts, public agencies, private businesses, community organizations, and neighborhoods in all demonstration sites.

National partners including the American Public Human Services Association, the National Governors Association, the Child Welfare League of America, and others have invested in this approach through training, information sharing, and potential policy and practice changes. The national Youth Transition Funders Group contributed to the work of the Initiative via the participation of major foundations in its Foster Care Work Group. The Initiative believes that work in each of the sites will expand and deepen and that communities will come to sustain the strategies and activities, for which communities, states, and the nation will provide the needed resources. Each site is planning to move to statewide implementation and to strengthen supports for all young people transitioning out of foster care. The data and information from all sites will provide direction and support that will help realize the Initiative's Theory of Change. There will be widespread calls for the national policy, practice, and fiscal resources needed to take the work to full scale and scope. Youth engagement, involvement, and development will be valued and seen as essential components of leadership in community planning, implementation, and evaluation. National and local communication will focus on successful outcomes for youth and young adults, and youth voices will demand effective national policy and practice.

The Initiative's initial work has been intense, and many lessons have been learned about implementing a complex approach in multiple sites in order to reach the scale and scope necessary for systemic transformation that improves outcomes for young people in or exiting foster care. This work is now gaining traction in local, state, and federal arenas, realizing the bold vision that the core strategies related to youth engagement; partnerships and resources; research, evaluation and communications; public will and policy; and increased opportunities can contribute to improved outcomes for young people transitioning to adulthood.

As news of success travels, new jurisdictions are expressing interest in becoming partners with the Initiative to implement the Theory of Change. Even though the Initiative no longer provides seed money as it did during demonstration, potential co-investment partners seek partnership in order to gain access to tools, training, technical assistance, and other consultative resources from the Initiative.

Appendix B

What We Are Learning About Young People Transitioning From Care

The Number of Young People Aging Out of Foster Care Continues to Rise

While the total number of children in foster care nationally has decreased every year for more than a decade, the number of youth aging out of foster care has continued to grow. More than 230,000 young people have aged out of care since 1999, ranging from 19,000 young people in 1999 to nearly 30,000 in 2008.[1]

…and They Face Poor Outcomes

Research shows that, when compared with their peers, young people aging out of care are, on average:[2]

- less likely to have a high school diploma;
- less likely to be pursuing higher education;
- more likely to have experienced economic hardships;
- less likely to be earning a living wage;
- more likely to have had a child without being married; and
- more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative: Improving the Lives of Young People Aging Out of Care and the Systems That Serve Them

The Initiative forms partnerships with communities nationwide to help young people leaving foster care become successful, productive adults by helping improve the systems that support them. These sites implement a set of five core strategies and track both systems and youth outcomes.

FINDINGS FOR SIX YOUTH OUTCOMES

Over the past few years, data reported by young people[3] have revealed the following trends:

Permanence
- Consistently high percentages of young people have a permanent connection with an adult (89%), though differences exist by age (95% of 14-to-18-year-olds report having a permanent connection, compared to 85% of 19-to-23-year-olds)

- Among young people with family permanence, better outcomes in the areas of housing, health insurance, and personal and community engagement[4]

Education
- Increases in the percent of young people out of school with a high school diploma or GED (74% at first survey to 84% at most recent survey)

Employment
- Increases in the percent of high school students with a part-time job or internship (36% at first survey to 46% at most recent survey)

Housing
- Consistently low percentages of young people out of care who have safe, stable, and affordable housing (60% at last survey)

Physical and Mental Health
- Decreases in the percent of young people out of care who have health insurance (70% at first survey to 63% at most recent survey)

Personal and Community Engagement
- Consistently high percentages of young people report having someone to count on for emotional support and job/school advice (77% at most recent survey)
- Young people who face additional challenges, such as homelessness, parenthood, or no permanent connection to an adult, are less likely to report having someone to count on (69%, 67%, and 39% respectively)

KEY POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

In order to improve outcomes in the areas described above, improvements in the policies and practices that support these young people are crucial. The following are among the improvements achieved by sites:

A permanent family
- Permanency efforts have been embedded in legislation and policy: Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, and Michigan
- Sibling visitation rights have been codified: Colorado, Iowa, and Maine

A stable education
- Tuition waivers and expanded supports for young people ages 18–21 have been added: Florida, Iowa, and Maine

Access to health and mental health care
- Medicaid has been expanded to 21: Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, and Michigan
- Efforts to implement Federal Fostering Connections legislation are underway in all sites. Key provisions include expansion of foster care to 21, subsidized guardianship, school stability, sibling visitation rights, coordination of health care, and permanency planning.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Sites offer young people the Opportunity Passport™, the primary component of which is an Individual Development Account (IDA) or a matched savings account.[5] A matched savings account can help young people aging out of foster care learn financial management, obtain experience with the mainstream banking system, and save money for assets, putting them on a path towards being a productive, successful adult.

Young people transitioning from foster care are saving and buying assets.

- When sites began their work, it was not clear whether young people aging out of foster care would and could take advantage of an IDA, but the sites' experience shows that they can and will.

Opportunity Passport™ participants are purchasing assets at rates similar to American Dream Demonstration (ADD) participants.[6]

- Opportunity Passport™ participants are saving and buying assets at rates comparable to participants in the American Dream Demonstration, the forerunner of IDAs in the United States.

- Participants are achieving this despite being an average age of 18, compared to the average age of 36 for ADD participants.

Data show early links between purchase of assets and better outcomes.

- In particular, asset purchasers are more likely than those who do not purchase assets to report being employed and having safe, stable, and affordable housing, and they experience greater rates of improvement over time.

1   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2009). *The AFCARS report: Preliminary FY 2008 estimates as of January 2008 (#16)*. Retrieved February 1, 2010 from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report16.htm.

2   Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Cusick, G.R., Keller, T., Havlicek, J., Perez, A., Terao, S., and Bost, N. (2007). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 21*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children.

3   Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey (OPPS) data as of October 31, 2008. OPPS is an Internet-based survey that captures self-reported youth indicator data, as well as demographic characteristics from Opportunity Passport™ participants. Participants complete surveys at the time of enrollment and twice annually thereafter.

4   *Family permanence* refers to young people who report that a family member (birth parent, adoptive parent, legal guardian, spouse, adult sibling, or extended family member) is their permanent connection. *Non-family permanence* refers to those who report that a non-family member is their permanent connection. *Without permanence* refers those who report no permanence.

5   For a discussion of findings on increasing opportunities for economic success, see: *Building assets for youth aging out of foster care: Findings from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative*. (2009). St. Louis, MO: Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

6   Demonstration site data as of December 31, 2008. ADD data are from: Schreiner, M., Clancy, M., and Sherraden, M. (2002). *Final report: Saving performance in the American Dream Demonstration—A national demonstration of Individual Development Accounts*. St. Louis, MO: Washington University, Center for Social Development.
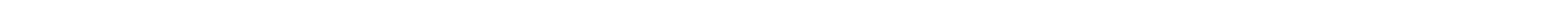
Appendix C

Core Strategies Rubric

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
Activity 1: Youth Leadership Boards

PREPARATION	APPLICATION	REFINEMENT	OPTIMIZATION
The site prepares for the development of a youth leadership board. Essential criteria are: ■ Recruitment strategies are designed to engage a cross-section of young people in the board. ■ Training is arranged that will support new board members in developing the board's agenda, setting benchmarks and policy goals, and establishing preliminary guidelines. ■ Sufficient funds are available for board member stipends. ■ Discretionary funds are available for youth leadership board members to manage and distribute. ■ Procedures are in place for providing stipends, transportation, and other logistical supports. ■ Adult staff who will support the youth leadership board and apply the principles of youth-adult partnership have been designated.	The site has a formally established youth leadership board. Essential criteria are: ■ The board has guidelines or bylaws that govern its functioning. ■ The board members develop important peer relationships and acquire professional skills by working together on tangible projects, such as deciding how to spend board funds, making grants, and developing written resources for young people in care. ■ The board is working with the community partnership board to implement the five core strategies; this includes setting board agendas, benchmarks, and policy goals. ■ Opportunity Passport™ participants are on the board and help guide implementation of the Opportunity Passport™ and development of door openers. ■ The board receives public attention for its work and contributions to child welfare policy and practice.	The site has practices in place to support an ongoing youth leadership board. Essential criteria are: ■ A plan is in place for involving younger youth in the board and providing them with training to ensure continuity of leadership as other members move on to college, employment, and successful adulthood. ■ The board is involved in developing and evaluating practices and policies affecting young people in foster care and transitioning out of care.	The site has in place a youth leadership board that is a partner in developing and evaluating practices and policies that affect them. The essential criterion is: ■ The board's work and recommendations improve policies practices in public and private agencies.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
Activity 2: Young People as Effective Self-Advocates

PREPARATION

Developmentally appropriate self-advocacy training and supports for young people are developed or identified. Essential criteria are:

- The training and supports will help young people:
  - understand their strengths and needs;
  - identify personal goals;
  - know their legal rights and responsibilities; and
  - know how best to communicate these to others.
- The training and supports will help the public child welfare agency and other systems act as partners with and support young people as they advocate for themselves.
- Young people are involved in developing or identifying the training and supports.

APPLICATION

Young people are receiving training and supports to help them become effective self-advocates. Essential criteria are:

- Self-advocacy training and supports are provided to help young people:
  - understand their strengths and needs;
  - identify personal goals;
  - know their legal rights and responsibilities; and
  - know how best to communicate these to others.
- Young people are facilitating and/or co-facilitating self-advocacy training.
- Advocacy strategies that involve adults and young people working together are implemented.
- Resources are available to support self-advocacy training.

REFINEMENT

Young people are involved in the process of making decisions about their own lives. Essential criteria are:

- The public child welfare agency and other systems that serve young people consistently provide opportunities for young people to make decisions about their own lives.
- Self-advocacy training and supports are provided on an ongoing basis to an increasing number of young people.

OPTIMIZATION

Young people are leading the process of making decisions about their own lives. Essential criteria are:

- In multiple public and private systems, young people are leading the process of making decisions about their futures.
- Systems have committed funds to providing young people with ongoing self-advocacy training and supports.

PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES
Activity 1: Community Partnership Boards

PREPARATION

The site engages a diverse cross-section of community members when forming its community partnership board. Essential criteria are:

- Young people transitioning from foster care, key leaders from the child welfare agency, community stakeholders, and potential funders are included.
- Influential public and private partners from education, labor, housing, physical and mental health agencies, and banking are included.

APPLICATION

The community partnership board is active in implementing the five core strategies. Essential criteria are:

- The community partnership board has guidelines that govern its functioning.
- Working with the youth leadership board, the community partnership board sets board agendas, benchmarks, and policy goals.
- The board uses the self-evaluation process to refine and improve implementation of the strategies.

REFINEMENT

The community partnership board includes leaders of the public and private sector who understand the needs of young people transitioning from foster care. Essential criteria are:

- The board works to improve state and local systems.
- Public and private partners have begun to integrate some aspects of the five core strategies into their ongoing work.

OPTIMIZATION

Community partnership board leaders have embedded the core strategies into philanthropic, private, and public systems. Essential criteria are:

- The five core strategies are aligned with and integrated into the work of the child welfare agency and the education, labor, housing, and physical and mental health departments.
- Private partners support the five core strategies and use them to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from foster care.

PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES
Activity 2: Resource Development

PREPARATION

The site identifies resources for implementing core strategies within its geographic area. Essential criteria are:

- The community partnership board is comprised of members that can help garner both private and public resources.
- Funding to support the first three years of implementation is obtained, including, but not limited to, funding for:
  - youth leadership board stipends;
  - discretionary funding for youth leadership board to manage and distribute;
  - the IDA match;
  - financial literacy training; and
  - staff positions that are crucial in implementing and supporting the core strategies.

APPLICATION

The site leverages additional resources in the community to support young people leaving foster care. Essential criteria are:

- The community board and youth leadership board identify gaps in services and support and begin seeking resources to fill them.
- Sustainability planning with key decision makers, including young people, has begun.
- Funding is in place for consistent, ongoing leadership and advocacy training for young adults and adult partners.

REFINEMENT

The site expands the reach of the core strategies and finds resources to fill gaps in services and support. Essential criteria are:

- A sustainability plan is being implemented by key decision makers and young people.
- Resources are identified to fill service gaps and to expand supports to the majority of young people in the site's geographic area.

OPTIMIZATION

The site has secured diverse and sufficient public and private resources for expanding and sustaining the strategies for all young people within its geographic area.

PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES
Activity 3: Engaging Youth as Partners

PREPARATION

The site acknowledges and accepts the principles and values of the youth-adult partnership. Essential criteria are:

- Applicable training and supports are developed and/or accessed.
- Young people and adults are working together to establish the community partnership board and begin to identify policy goals for young people transitioning from foster care.

APPLICATION

The site incorporates the principles of youth-adult partnership into its operations. Essential criteria are:

- Youth-adult partnership training and supports are provided to adults and young people.
- Guidelines are established for working together that will lead to effective youth-adult partnerships.
- Work plans are developed jointly by young people and adults to ensure ownership of and progress towards identified benchmarks and goals.
- Community partnership board meetings occur at times when young people can attend.
- Community partnership board policies and practices ensure that young people have defined roles and are involved in making decisions.

REFINEMENT

Young people are in leadership positions on the site's community partnership board and its partner organizations. Essential criteria are:

- Board policies and practices place young people in leadership roles that help guide all aspects of the work.
- The principles of youth-adult partnerships begin to be accepted by key public and private partners, as evidenced by young people's leadership roles within their organizations.

OPTIMIZATION

The site successfully embeds youth-adult partnerships in its partner organizations and agencies. The essential criterion is:

- The child welfare agency and other public and private partners have adopted the principles and values of youth-adult partnership, as evidenced by young people's leadership roles in guiding and directing all services to young people transitioning from foster care.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND COMMUNICATIONS
Activity 1: Self-Evaluation Team[1]

PREPARATION

The site has a commitment from key stakeholders to support and participate in ongoing self-evaluation activities. Essential criteria are:

- Young people and the child welfare agency are involved in establishing the self-evaluation team.

- The self-evaluation plan includes strategies for data collection, maintenance, and analysis; data collection tools, resources needed, and established roles of stakeholders are identified.

- Key staff are trained in using Initiative-supported data collection tools such as MISIDA and OPPS and the expectations for their use. Partners are familiar with these tools.

- Benchmarks are established for recruiting, retaining and supporting Opportunity Passport™ participants.

- An Environmental Scan and a Policy Matrix are completed and used to determine baseline for policies and to begin to set benchmarks.

- Resources are secured to support ongoing self-evaluation work.

APPLICATION

The site is reliably using local and Initiative data collection tools, and stakeholders are reviewing progress towards benchmarks. Essential criteria are:

- Data are regularly updated and "cleaned" in MISIDA.

- Practices and procedures are in place to achieve a response rate of at least 75 percent on the semiannual OPPS.

- Local and Initiative data collection tools are being used as needed.

- Baselines are established for youth outcomes.

- Opportunity Passport™ recruitment, retention, and support benchmarks are being achieved and refined as needed.

- Benchmarks are established for:
  - policy goals;
  - communications goals;
  - Opportunity Passport™ asset purchases and savings;
  - door opener development and use; and
  - resource leverage.

- Analysis of data is occurring on a regular basis, is being shared and discussed with stakeholders, and is being used to drive decision making.

- Data are being used to begin sustainability planning.

REFINEMENT

The site has engaged key stakeholders in ongoing evaluation of implementation and outcome data from multiple sources and regularly uses data to drive decision making. Essential criteria are:

- Practices and procedures are in place to achieve a response rate of at least 80 percent on the semiannual OPPS.

- Stakeholders, including the youth leadership board and community partnership board, are examining and updating local data collection tools and benchmarks as needed.

- The child welfare agency and other stakeholders are using data to inform improvements in policy and practice.

- Youth and systems data are being shared broadly, in and outside of the site team.

- Resources are available to support ongoing self-evaluation.

- Data are being used to guide the implementation of the sustainability plan.

OPTIMIZATION

The site is using data routinely to drive decision making with respect to all of the core strategies. Essential criteria are:

- Youth and systems data are regularly reviewed to gauge improvements in policy and practice.

- Progress is documented with respect to all youth and systems outcomes.

- Best practices and lessons learned are being communicated broadly.

- Data are being used to support and focus efforts to make the site's work sustainable.

- Resources for ongoing self-evaluation have been integrated into the operations of the public and private partners.

1 The self-evaluation effort may not always be defined as a "team" locally, but the work must fulfill the purpose and functions outlined in this guide.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND COMMUNICATIONS
Activity 2: Communicating with Multiple Audiences

PREPARATION	APPLICATION	REFINEMENT	OPTIMIZATION
The site has formulated its key messages and identified primary internal and external audiences. Essential criteria are: ■ Measurable communications goals and action steps are set. ■ Mechanisms for disseminating information have been explored.	The site has regular communication mechanisms among internal audiences, and external communications begin. Essential criteria are: ■ Regular, identifiable communication occurs among community partners, for example, via e-mail updates, newsletters, and presentations. ■ As self-evaluation data are available, they are incorporated into communications to external audiences and are used to refine communications goals. ■ The site has set benchmarks to measure progress toward its communications goals.	The site is assessing and documenting progress towards communications goals. Essential criteria are: ■ Regular, identifiable communications occur to internal and external audiences. ■ Communications goals and action steps have been updated as needed. ■ Achievement of or progress towards communications goals can be documented.	The site has consistent communications activities for multiple audiences that are aligned with all five core strategies. Essential criteria are: ■ Communications goals are regularly refined as needed and consistently reach multiple audiences. ■ Achievement of or progress towards communications goals can be documented and helps support work in all core strategies.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND COMMUNICATIONS
Activity 3: Young People as Evaluators and Communicators

PREPARATION	APPLICATION	REFINEMENT	OPTIMIZATION
The site has established meaningful roles for young people in self-evaluation and communications. Essential criteria are: ■ Young people have been identified to participate in self-evaluation and communications activities. ■ Young people have input into developing communications goals and the self-evaluation plan. ■ Supports for young people are in place to ensure that their involvement is meaningful and that they are appropriately compensated for their time and contributions.	The site has engaged young people in self-evaluation and communications activities. Essential criteria are: ■ Young people contribute to analysis and interpretation of data in partnership with adults. ■ Young people are trained and supported in telling their own stories (strategic sharing). ■ Young people are trained and supported in making presentations on behalf of young people in foster care.	The site regularly recruits and supports new young people to partner with adults in self-evaluation and communications activities. Essential criteria are: ■ Young people incorporate data in advocacy for policy and practice improvements. ■ Young people take leadership roles in communications efforts, for example, in developing advocacy documents and websites.	The site has ongoing opportunities for young people to be involved in evaluation and communications activities and provides high-level training and support to ensure that these experiences are positive and meaningful. Essential criteria are: ■ Young people have state-level and, in some cases, national opportunities to act as spokespeople on foster care issues. ■ Young people are helping to lead communications efforts.

PUBLIC WILL AND POLICY

Activity 1: Agenda & Approach for Improving Public Policies & Systems

PREPARATION

The site develops baseline data in key policy areas. The essential criterion is:

- An Environmental Scan and a Policy Matrix are completed and are used to set baselines for policies and to begin to set benchmarks.

APPLICATION

The site analyzes policy and practice issues and engages in strategic advocacy efforts. Essential criteria are:

- Annual policy goals are developed with related advocacy strategies and benchmarks.

- Relationships are developed with child welfare agency staff, elected officials, community stakeholders, and key decision makers in multiple institutions and disciplines.

- Multiple partners, including young people, are engaged in the advocacy efforts.

- Quantitative and qualitative data are gathered using Initiative tools such as the Environmental Scan, OPPS, MISIDA, and Core Strategies Rubric as well as stories from young people, and these data are used to develop and promote the policy agenda.

- The site's advocacy efforts extend to effective implementation of targeted policies.

REFINEMENT

The site uses data to measure progress toward policy goals and to develop new policy goals. Essential criteria are:

- The Policy Matrix is updated and used to monitor progress towards benchmarks and refine benchmarks as needed.

- Policy agendas are established that are increasingly in-depth and ambitious and focus on broad systems improvement efforts, including youth permanence and race equity.

- The public policy agenda is expanded to include local, state, and some federal-level issues.

- Site leaders and partners, including young people and key decision makers, are sought out for input and advice on issues affecting young people transitioning from foster care.

OPTIMIZATION

The site has transformed how young people transitioning from foster care are engaged, perceived, and treated, as evidenced by the presence of developmentally appropriate practices, procedures, and policies across disciplines and departments. Essential criteria are:

- Issues affecting these young people are continuously monitored and reassessed to ensure that outcomes are improving.

- Written protocols such as memoranda of understanding and letters of agreement are in place among agencies to ensure coordinated and holistic approaches.

- Policy and practice decisions are not made without input from young people.

- Policies are more effectively implemented due to improved delivery of services and supports for young people.

- Improved policies are institutionalized in law, rule, custom, and practice.

PUBLIC WILL AND POLICY
Activity 2: Young People As Advocates

PREPARATION

The site solicits early and consistent input from young people in developing the policy agenda. Essential criteria are:

- Young people are identified and supported as resources prior to the formation of a youth leadership board.
- Training and community supports are identified or developed to help young people become effective advocates.

APPLICATION

The site develops practices, protocols, and mechanisms that ensure meaningful input from young people is consistently provided and considered on policy issues. Essential criteria are:

- Young people are recruited, trained, and retained as advocates.
- The site's advocacy strategies involve adults and young people working together.
- Young people develop their own policy goals and related messages.
- Within the child welfare system, young people serve on boards and committees that make decisions about young people in and formerly in foster care.
- Resources are available to support young people serving as advocates.

REFINEMENT

The site evaluates and refines practices, protocols, and mechanisms for bringing youth voices to bear in public policy. Essential criteria are:

- Young people are recruited for leadership opportunities in a broad and ongoing fashion.
- Adults are trained to support and partner with young people on an ongoing basis.
- Resources are available to support increasingly more young people as advocates.
- Young people understand and use data in their advocacy efforts.
- The public child welfare agency and other systems that serve young people recognize the value of youth input and routinely invite young people to serve on committees, make presentations, and comment on practices and policies affecting them.

OPTIMIZATION

The site makes no policy decision affecting young people without the involvement of young people. Essential criteria are:

- In all public and private systems, young people are recognized as experts on issues related to young people transitioning from foster care and are influential in making decisions.
- Youth advocacy training and support is widely acknowledged as a necessary resource for improving systems.
- Systems have committed financial resources to provide ongoing training and support.

INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES
Activity 1: Opportunity Passport™

PREPARATION

The site prepares to deliver the Opportunity Passport™. Essential criteria are:

- IDA matched funds are secured.
- Strategies for recruiting, retaining, and supporting Opportunity Passport™ participants are determined and related benchmarks are set.
- Banking support is secured and a formal agreement is finalized with the banking partner to provide each Opportunity Passport™ participant with an IDA and personal bank account.
- A written plan is completed for financial literacy training and asset-specific training, which includes such items as customizing the curriculum, identifying trainers, and setting a preliminary schedule.

APPLICATION

The site enrolls young people in the Opportunity Passport™ and provides them with needed support. Essential criteria are:

- Benchmarks for recruitment and retention are being achieved and refined as needed.
- Benchmarks for asset purchase and savings are established.
- IDA matched funds are secured to expand enrollment to an increasing number of young people.
- Financial literacy training and asset-specific training are delivered on a regular basis and are continually assessed and refined.
- Data are consistently updated and cleaned in MISIDA.
- Young people are provided with ongoing support with regard to their IDAs and personal bank accounts, such as help with setting savings goals and maintaining two accounts.
- The banking partner provides Opportunity Passport™ participants with IDAs and personal bank accounts in a supportive environment.

REFINEMENT

The site increases the capacity of the Opportunity Passport™ and the efficiency of administering it. Essential criteria are:

- The Opportunity Passport™ is offered to more young people in the site's geographic area, and IDA matched funds are secured for the expansion.
- Barriers to participation are identified and addressed; for example, participation is not restricted based on placement type or special needs.
- Policies and procedures are refined or adapted as needed to address changing conditions and new issues.
- The banking partner works with young people transitioning from care to refine the services and supports that it provides to them.

OPTIMIZATION

The site has embedded the Opportunity Passport™ in the ongoing delivery of services and supports. Essential criteria are:

- Reliable long-term funding is secured for:
  - matched funds for expansion;
  - replenishing matched funds on an on-going basis; and
  - support and infrastructure.
- Participants represent the demographics of the overall population of young people in transition within the site's geographic area.
- The banking partner has adopted principles and values that support young people transitioning from care.

INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES
Activity 2: Door Openers

PREPARATION

The site generates ideas and assigns responsibility for creation of door openers in all outcome areas (permanence, education, employment, housing, health—physical and mental, and personal and community engagement). Essential criteria are:

- Young people and the community partnership board participate in identifying areas in which door openers will be created by reviewing the Environmental Scan, which identifies existing resources and gaps.

- The infrastructure for door openers is created, including methods to communicate to young people about Door Openers.

- A process for determining whether door openers are effective and are being used by young people is developed.

APPLICATION

The site creates accessible door openers in all outcome areas and monitors their use. Essential criteria are:

- The youth leadership board and community partnership board are involved in creating door openers in all outcome areas.

- Communications vehicles are used to inform young people about door openers.

- Benchmarks are set and progress is monitored to ensure that the door openers are effective and being used by young people.

REFINEMENT

The site increases the number of young people accessing door openers in each outcome area. Essential criteria are:

- Multiple, effective door openers are available in each outcome area, and they are being used by young people.

- Door opener benchmarks are refined as needed, and benchmarks are consistently being achieved.

OPTIMIZATION

The site offers a wide range of door openers in all outcome areas and ensures access for all youth and young people in its geographic area. The essential criterion is:

- Multiple, effective door openers are consistently available and used in each outcome area.

INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES
Activity 3: Young People as Decision Makers for Increased Opportunities

PREPARATION

The site engages young people in developing the Opportunity Passport™ and door openers. Essential criteria are:

- Youth and young people are involved in setting policies and procedures for the Opportunity Passport™.

- Young people are using the Environmental Scan to identify gaps in services and supports.

- Young people are helping to set up door openers.

APPLICATION

The site engages young people in implementing the Opportunity Passport™ and door openers. Essential criteria are:

- Young people are trained in financial literacy and are helping to conduct the training.

- Young people are involved in identifying and monitoring door openers to ensure that they are being accessed by and meeting the needs of young people.

- Young people are helping to develop the communications activities related to the Opportunity Passport™ and door openers.

REFINEMENT

The site engages young people in leading the efforts to expand the reach of the Opportunity Passport™ and ensure that door openers are available in all outcome areas. Essential criteria are:

- Young people are actively engaged in recruiting participants in the Opportunity Passport™.

- Young people play a leadership role in developing and assessing door openers in all outcome areas.

OPTIMIZATION

The site fully engages young people in all decisions concerning the Opportunity Passport™ and door openers, including expanding the reach of these opportunities to all young people in the site's geographic area.

Appendix D

Site Examples of Permanency Efforts

Demonstration sites have found that helping young people establish lifelong connections—to siblings, relatives, permanent caregivers, and other committed adults—is critical to young people's future success. Some worked at the programmatic level by developing targeted and enhanced permanency reviews and teen-specific mentoring programs, while others collaborated with organizations and agencies to develop concrete plans for improving permanency outcomes for older youth. Below are some examples and ideas gleaned from the demonstration sites' analysis of their work in this area.

Sites learned that the voice of youth and young adults is helpful in understanding and addressing the problem. The very word "permanence" was perceived by some young people as system jargon. Youth and young adults in many demonstration sites expressed a need to move beyond the legal definition of permanence and agree on a working definition of what permanence means for older youth and young adults who may have already exited the system or aged out of care. Many had their own definitions. To one young adult, permanence was "where you feel at home, where you feel your support network is, and where you feel most comfortable." The critical importance of connection to siblings was emphasized. Youth and young adults felt that valuing their individual definitions of permanence would be critical to the future of the work.

Sites consistently stated the importance of being persistent about linking their work to other efforts to improve permanency outcomes. Maine, Michigan, and Rhode Island are among the states that have been particularly active in attempting to make progress on this issue.

Maine Permanency Summit

Maine's Permanency Summit brought together ten district teams comprised of nearly 200 youth and adults from across the state. The purpose of the summit was to develop practical strategies to increase permanent connections for young people in transition from foster care. Emphasis was placed on using the Breakthrough Series model, originally developed by Casey Family Programs, which focuses on identifying small steps that immediately can make a difference for young people. At the end of the summit, a panel that included Maine's first lady, the state's attorney general, the director of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Office of Child and Family Services, some of the state's guardians ad litem, and adoptive and foster families heard recommendations from each team. Since the summit, teams have been working on projects such as developing permanence-related questions to be discussed by young people and their caseworkers during their monthly contact and making permanence a regular topic at DHHS staff meetings. They are also addressing the broader goal of creating more meaningful involvement of young people in planning for permanence.

Michigan National Governors Association (NGA) Policy Academy

In 2006, Michigan's Interdepartmental Task Force on Youth Transitioning to Adulthood released a report on issues identified by young people, staff, and community members. The report served as the action plan for Michigan's NGA Policy Academy Team. The action plan includes the Initiative's outcome areas;

clearly defines goals, actions, and timelines; and identifies the individuals who will take the lead for each action step. Michigan has developed and is training staff to use a team-based model that focuses on permanence and the involvement of young people in addition to safety and well-being. The model calls for quarterly youth-driven teaming meetings beginning at age 14. In 2007, in the midst of a state government freeze on staff travel that extended to training, the Michigan Court Administrative Office received a grant to host two statewide conferences to train child welfare and court staff on the permanency needs of young people transitioning from foster care.

Real Connections in Rhode Island

In response to the growing crisis facing young people in care and their increasingly poor permanency outcomes, a group of public- and private-sector community partners and young people in care from across Rhode Island came together to design a way to expand all aspects of youth development statewide. The Rhode Island Foster Parents Association, as the lead agency, called this effort ASPIRE (Aligning Savings, Permanency, Information, and Resources for Empowerment). Through its Real Connections program, ASPIRE works in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families to identify adult connections and lifelong supports for young people in care. The Rhode Island Foster Parents Association plays a unique role in supporting foster families (through which more than 75 percent of adoptions take place) and working with foster families to support biological families in successful reunification. Real Connections works with young people and their families at every step along the continuum toward permanence. Early data indicate that these young people are achieving emotional permanence and increasingly achieving legal permanence.

Appendix E

Site Examples of Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to success. The Initiative worked with a variety of different partners in the demonstration sites. Notwithstanding the unique perspectives of these local partners, common themes and lessons emerged.

Lesson: Strong partnerships are critical to maximizing the impact of the core strategies.

By involving strong local partners, demonstration sites have brought about positive changes in policy, practice, and funding that have, in turn, improved outcomes for youth and young adults. No single organization or agency has the capacity, resources, reach, or influence to successfully implement all five strategies. Success resulted from having the right people do the right work at the right time and having them all work toward the same results.

Demonstration sites developed keen insights as to the qualities that any new site should look for in partners. They reported that it was important to select a natural collaborator, look at the potential partner's mission to make sure it aligned with the core strategies, consider sustainability, and involve youth and young adults in selecting partners when possible.

1. INVOLVE A NATURAL COLLABORATOR— AN ORGANIZATION THAT HAS A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH STATE GOVERNMENT AND THE CAPACITY TO ENGAGE A WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

The ability to implement the core strategies is greatly enhanced when one of the partners has relationships with key actors and is experienced in bringing different groups together to achieve a shared goal. This partner does not necessarily need to lead the work, but it is critical that this partner have the credibility and long-standing relationships to bring the right partners to the table.

The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII), the lead agency in the Des Moines demonstration site, is an example of an organization that is well respected in its community and has a long history of collaborating with others to promote policy and practice change. As a partner, it brought immediate credibility to the work and made it possible for the site to attract and maintain essential public and private partners. YPII, a non-profit organization, has a long history of assisting state and local community agencies in all aspects of developing and implementing positive youth development policies and programs and, thus, was a natural candidate for assuming a leadership role. YPII strategically used the good relationships and partnerships it had established in the past to maximize the impact of the approach. This was particularly important in promoting the expansion of the strategies throughout the state and in leading community advocacy to support legislation to expand the child welfare agency's support for young people ages 18 to 21. Because of its relationships and capacity, YPII was successful in spearheading statewide expansion of the strategies by building on the existing governmental infrastructure created by the Community Partnership for Protection of Children (CPPC) model. CPPC's work connecting community partners with the child welfare system paved the way for youth leadership boards and the implementation of the other four strategies in communities across the state.

YPII's relationships have also helped to secure funding to assist in statewide expansion. Five sites across

the state have received small grants from two state agencies: three CPPC sites received funding from the Iowa Department of Human Services, and two communities received funds from the state's Shared Youth Vision grant, which is managed by the Iowa Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning. YPII has worked with state agencies to set the expectations for these local efforts using the core strategies and provides technical assistance to the local areas. YPII also provided seed funding and technical assistance to launch the Opportunity Passport™ in new sites.

Prior to becoming the lead entity in the Maine demonstration site, the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Policy had a longstanding relationship with state government and with the state child welfare agency, which it used to mobilize public support for the state's efforts to support young people transitioning from care. In a partnership with the Maine Department of Human Services, the Muskie School already supported a youth leadership structure for youth in care and young adults who had transitioned out of care. Over time, the Muskie School brought in additional community partners from the public and private sectors, creating a powerful collaboration focused on improving outcomes for this population.

Sites also reported the benefits of having organizations at the table whose operational missions were aligned with the core strategies. A partner that has a history of providing direct service to older youth transitioning out of foster care has a great advantage in implementing hands-on strategies like the Opportunity Passport™. Conversely, many demonstration sites that did not have partners with day-to-day contact with the target population struggled to keep young people engaged. As noted above, natural collaborators have inherent advantages in forming strategic partnerships to implement and spread the core strategies.

2. THINK ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY WHEN IDENTIFYING AND ENLISTING PARTNERS.

Having partners with a diversity of expertise is not enough to ensure success. Partners must also be strategically positioned to sustain the work. Sites that experienced the most success had either leaders or partners who brought influence or capacity related to sustainability. In Michigan, for example, having the Michigan Department of Human Services (MDHS) as the lead agency enabled the work to be embedded in state policy and practice and to expand the direct work with young adults to additional communities across the state. MDHS is in the midst of a federal lawsuit settlement requiring a significant increase in the number of foster care workers, thus limiting the department's ability to create new positions that do not carry caseloads. However, because of its commitment to expanding and sustaining its work to improve results for older youth and young adults, the department continues to identify in-house resources to support five key local positions that have been previously supported by Initiative grant funds. The department has also created five new central office positions to staff its new Transitioning Youth Unit— a significant investment, given extreme fiscal challenges and the lawsuit's requirement to dramatically reduce caseloads. Michigan has also been able to leverage the settlement agreement in other ways that stand to contribute to sustainability. For instance, the settlement calls for the creation of new positions throughout the state to help young people plan for their education, and these positions are based largely on the education planner position that the Northern Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative site put in place. In addition, the state has committed to increasing the involvement of young people in making decisions about their service plans and to connecting young people with the services related to physical and mental health, education, financial literacy,

life skills, and employment that they need to become successful adults.

Connecticut Voices for Children, the initial lead agency in Connecticut, understood that the site was more likely to be sustained and be able to expand if it formed a close partnership with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. Therefore, the agency transferred its lead role to the state.

Sustainability in Iowa was enhanced when partner networks that already had a connection with young people and served youth and young adults took on some of the site activities. The networks have sustainable funding streams, which help provide an array of services for young people. In Iowa, activities such as the Opportunity Passport™ have been integrated into the array of supports and services that pre-existed the site, resulting in greater likelihood of long-term sustainability beyond the Initiative's funding.

The Muskie School in Maine took a similar approach by moving the work of the Opportunity Passport™ to Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG), a non-profit statewide educational organization with a history of serving vulnerable youth in middle and high school. Through this new partnership, JMG will expand its focus to serve young adults up to age 24.

3. INVOLVE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN SELECTING PARTNERS.

The voice of youth and young adults guides all of the work of implementing the core strategies. In every site, youth and young adults, who have been engaged in youth leadership boards and empowered by training that develops their leadership skills, have become effective leaders and promoters of the core strategies. It is, therefore, critical that all partners accept the importance of young people and learn how to be partners with them, and it is natural that young people influence the identification and selection of partners.

As noted above, the Muskie School was a good choice to be its site's lead agency because of its experience creating partnerships and influencing statewide action. However, the Muskie School realized that it needed the expertise of a direct service organization to effectively implement the Opportunity Passport™. In selecting that organization, the Muskie School sought input from Opportunity Passport™ participants, who helped them choose Jobs for Maine's Graduates. Several other sites involved young people in selecting banking partners, knowing they would be more successful if they chose a partner with whom young people identified and believed they could work.

Lesson: Public child welfare agencies are critical to expanding the five core strategies statewide and to sustaining the efforts that partners make on behalf of youth and young adults.

Although the role of the public child welfare agency varied from one demonstration site to the next (and in some sites changed over time), sites found that successful implementation of the core strategies and the ability to expand and sustain the strategies were greatly influenced by the participation of the child welfare agency. The public child welfare agency does not necessarily need to be the site's first partner or the leader, but its eventual engagement is necessary for expansion and sustainability. Sites' success in reaching out to, involving, and successfully collaborating with public child welfare agencies has varied. In those places that have been most successful, strong and committed leaders of the public agency have seen that the core strategies relate to their mandate to improve outcomes for young people in their

care with respect to permanence and well-being. This was the case in Maine, Connecticut, and Michigan. Leaders in those sites have played a critical role in leveraging the Initiative's resources, promoting and expanding the reach of the core strategies, helping to sustain the approach by providing in-kind support, providing state funding, and changing state policies and practices concerning older youth.

MAINE

The Maine Youth Transition Collaborative (MYTC) is the lead entity of the site. The child welfare agency is thoroughly committed to MYTC's work and is a strong and influential partner. With the child welfare agency as a partner, MYTC has gained increased capacity to sustain the strategies. The agency has improved its capacity to connect with the community and provide better services for young people transitioning out of foster care. The director of the Maine Office of Child and Family Services (MOCFS) sits on the advisory board of MYTC. Through a memorandum of understanding, MOCFS committed to providing substantial state funding in the 2008–2009 fiscal year. The Chafee life skills manager employed by MOCFS is also part of MYTC's advisory board and executive committee.

Maine is also an example of how child welfare partners can bring key in-kind resources to this work, most importantly, staff time, office and meeting space, and equipment and supplies. MYTC site coordinators are housed in Maine Department of Health and Human Services offices across the state so that they may work more closely with MOCFS life skills and adolescent workers. This substantial in-kind contribution from MOCFS provides free meeting, training, and office space, supplies, materials, and equipment. MOCFS central office staff support MYTC by collecting and entering data. MOCFS also provides caseworkers and life skills workers to refer and support young people

involved in the site, deliver financial literacy training, and transport young people to meetings.

The relationship benefits the child welfare agency as well. Child welfare agencies nationwide struggle to connect with community members. But MOCFS has been able to improve and enhance its connections with the community through its close partnership with MYTC. MOCFS is now developing community networks that will provide a variety of additional opportunities for young people. These are being implemented in each of the MYTC sites statewide and will enhance permanency resources for youth in transition. These neighborhood networks work as partners with residents, the faith community, employers, and community-based organizations to provide mentoring, coaching, socializing, employment-related activities, and community service.

CONNECTICUT

In Connecticut, site partners have been particularly successful in bringing together funding streams from multiple state agencies to support their work. Community and business partners outside of public systems often struggle to understand the complexities of state budgetary processes and cannot always be expected to know about the availability of state funds to support a shared goal. As Connecticut expanded from demonstrating the core strategies in a limited number of communities to implementing them throughout the state, the state child welfare agency became a key leader by securing and maintaining blended funding from relevant public agencies. The Connecticut Department of Children and Families is now the lead agency.

Connecticut has been successful in blending funding from the Connecticut Department of Children and Families' Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Bureaus,

the Connecticut Office for Workforce Competitiveness, and the Connecticut Court Support Services Division to support the core strategies. As a result:

- the New Haven prototype is fully funded using state dollars;
- the Waterbury Work-to-Learn site is fully funded using state dollars; and
- the Connecticut Court Support Services Division has purchased several employment slots at Work-to-Learn sites for young people involved in the juvenile justice system in both the demonstration and expansion sites.

The partnership with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families also resulted in the addition of support staff and allowed for hiring a children's service consultant to assist the program director in overseeing and managing implementation of the five core strategies.

MICHIGAN

The Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) has achieved impressive gains in policy, practice, and funding for young people transitioning out of foster care. Michigan is the only demonstration site at which a state agency was the lead entity from the start. The combination of strong and committed leadership from the state agency, bolstered by an active youth leadership board, and effective business and community partners has led to major departmental policy accomplishments for youth and young adults currently and formerly in foster care, including:

- leveraging federal Chafee funds with Initiative funds and state funds to provide MYOI coordinators, educational specialists, and peer educators to assist young people about to leave foster care;

- almost doubling the number of Chafee Educational Training Vouchers (ETV) awarded from 127 in 2004 to 226 in 2005 and 550 in 2008;
- changing practices in ways that increase the number of youth and young adults with access to critical documents for their success as adults, such as birth certificates and social security cards;
- developing a model of performance-based contracts that focuses on permanency outcomes for young people in foster care; and
- collaborating with the Michigan Department of Community Health to make re-enrollment in Medicaid automatic until age 21 for youth aging out of care.

The state's active work with youth, young adults, and other partners in MYOI led to a culture shift within the Michigan Department of Human Services. Youth and young adults now are sought out to inform department policy on a wide range of issues, and the state increasingly incorporates the voices of youth and young adults into its ongoing efforts. For example, ten youth and young adults who have been integrally involved with MYOI have been invited to serve on the Michigan Child Welfare Improvement Task Force, recently formed by the governor. In 2006, MYOI youth and young adults served as co-chairs of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Service to At-Risk Youth Transitioning to Adulthood, created by the legislature, and as members of the National Governors Association's Policy Academy Team, which resulted from this task force.

Through its work in support of the MYOI, the state has begun to address system-wide challenges in meeting the needs of older youth in its care. They have become of a leader of this work and have benefited from it by making progress on fulfilling their statutory mandates to ensure the permanence and well-being of the young people they serve.

Lesson: Implementing the core strategies has enabled states to build on opportunities and to turn crises into new opportunities to create public and political will for the system changes needed to improve outcomes for youth and young adults.

The demonstration sites frequently cited the power of the core strategies as an advocacy tool, particularly with regard to promoting systemic changes affecting outcomes for youth and young adults. The Theory of Change and the cumulative impact of the five core strategies make practical sense to decision makers looking for ways to address serious challenges and improve outcomes for older youth in foster care and young adults who have exited care.

Each of the states has brought its own set of circumstances and pre-existing challenges and opportunities. The need to navigate bureaucracy and to successfully build constituencies for change, however, has been fairly universal. Local political, economic, and social challenges are often cited as barriers to reaching positive outcomes for vulnerable populations in our country. States facing adverse local conditions have been able to use the momentum of the five core strategies to take steps toward a new way of doing business. Iowa, Connecticut, and Michigan, for example, were each able to turn daunting local conditions such as a highly publicized child fatality, departmental reorganization, a governor's mandate for results, and systemic reform litigation into opportunities for promoting the core strategies. Each of these states successfully used these potentially high-risk situations as opportunities to achieve change. In times of crisis, the sites' ability to harness data about both needs and effective strategies helped support a platform for improvement. When the opportunity presented itself to introduce new strategies to improve outcomes for youth and young adults, these states took advantage of their experience as demonstration sites and their call to action.

IOWA

The effectiveness of the partnerships created in Iowa was discussed above. Iowa was able to build on partnerships and, in fact, expand and deepen them in the aftermath of a tragic and well publicized child death in 2001 that led the child welfare agency to receive intense attention from the media. That attention increased the community's awareness of the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care. Iowa leaders were able to channel local interest toward solutions by linking to the Initiative's national release of the book *On Their Own: What Happens to Kids When They Age Out of the Foster Care System* and the documentary *Aging Out*. *On Their Own*, written by Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Executive Director Gary Stangler and Martha Shirk, describes the experience of ten young people and the challenges they face as they age out of foster care. Iowa's leaders were able to couple the community's urgent desire to take action to avoid future tragedy with strategies that could improve outcomes for youth and young adults transitioning from foster care. These efforts led to increased collaboration among advocates, state agencies, and community-based providers.

Leaders in Iowa used the momentum created by the tragedy to connect to the infrastructure of Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) sites, which helped Iowa to become one of the most successful demonstration sites.

Iowa continues to expand the reach of the five core strategies statewide and has moved to enact important legislation to further improve opportunities and

outcomes for older youth. Opportunity Passport™ participants were key partners with state leaders in passing a law that created the Preparation for Adult Living program. This program provides the opportunity to extend financial support to youth transitioning from foster care to age 21 and extends Medicaid eligibility automatically for these youth up to age 21. It also provides an increase of more than $2.2 million annually in state appropriations that directly benefit youth transitioning from foster care to independence. Iowa provides a compelling example of how a state used the information from, and promise of, the core strategies to address its own challenges with an end result of improved practice and policy.

CONNECTICUT

The work in Connecticut was shaped by two external factors: legislation that focused on expanding benefits for older youth and the planned reorganization of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, the main public partner. In 2004, Connecticut's legislature enacted several key initiatives with the promise of greatly improving benefits available to older youth in or exiting from foster care: (1) extending foster care benefits to young people wishing to remain in care up to the age of 21, (2) providing tuition waivers for young people up to age 23, and (3) granting Medicaid eligibility to age 21 for young people in foster care. These policy improvements provided a foundation for implementing the core strategies in Connecticut.

In 2004, when planning began for demonstration sites in Hartford and Bridgeport, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (CDCF) was in the middle of a major reorganization. With the interest and involvement of Connecticut's public agency leaders, Connecticut Voices for Children, a trusted partner and a natural collaborator, was asked to serve as the lead agency. Connecticut Voices for Children initiated the work and, once the point of sustainability planning was reached, transitioned leadership to CDCF. The result is a hybrid structure that builds on the unique strengths of the state agency and Connecticut Voices for Children. Connecticut Voices for Children now serves as the lead for the public will and policy strategy, which fits naturally with its advocacy skills. The core strategies are spreading across the state, to Waterbury and New Haven. The Connecticut Department of Children and Families, as the lead organization, is providing state funding, staff, and other resources to sustain the roll-out. Because key leaders acknowledged the environment when the work was being initiated, the state was able to be a partner in advancing an agenda to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of care rather than waiting several years for a departmental reorganization to take hold.

MICHIGAN

The Michigan Department of Human Services (MDHS) has been the site's lead agency from the start. For several years, the public agency was under intense criticism from advocates due to the extremely poor outcomes experienced by older youth. Wayne County, in particular, had a history of children missing from the child welfare system and youth with poor permanency outcomes. The past Interdepartmental Task Force on Service to At-Risk Youth Transitioning to Adulthood and the current governor's task force were created in direct response to the poor outcomes experienced by children in MDHS's care. Under such conditions, the state agency might not have seemed optimal as the lead entity in a demonstration initiative. But committed agency leaders and staff provided the impetus to respond to these challenges by creating the political will, enlisting the strategic partners, and finding the funding opportunities needed to implement the core strategies and launch the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI).

Michigan leaders saw that the five core strategies—in particular, the youth leadership boards and community partnership boards and the Opportunity Passport™—provided a concrete way to mobilize MDHS and potential partners. MDHS leaders used the strategies as a way to reexamine the extent to which agency policy, practice, and funding were supporting young people. Believing that this approach was the right way to address the poor outcomes of the past, the agency made a public commitment to expand the strategies and practices across the state and to focus on permanence throughout the project. The task force mandated by the legislature in 2006 played a large role in expanding MYOI into additional counties, using state and federal funds in combination with funds from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

In addition, MYOI was particularly adept at using the voices of young people to help make the case for needed policy changes and resource allocation. Members of the youth leadership board created publications that summarized the fifteen top issues that needed to change in order to improve outcomes for youth in care, and they passionately and effectively shared their concerns with the governor, state legislators, and department leaders. As a result, the state included important provisions in a settlement to a class action lawsuit against the child welfare system. These provisions put in place permanency requirements for older youth as well as connecting young people to post-secondary education, and they are drawn, in part, from the policy recommendation of the youth leadership boards. Michigan has demonstrated that in times of systemic turbulence, harnessing political will in a strategic fashion can be the impetus for constructive and sustainable reform.

Appendix F

Resources

More information and the following publications are available on the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative website at www.jimcaseyyouth.org.

Key Publications from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

- Assessing Leverage: Lessons from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative
  By Cornerstone Consulting Group, 2008
- Chafee Plus Ten: A Vision for the Next Decade
  By Madelyn Freundlich, 2010
- Cost Avoidance: Bolstering the Economic Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
  By Cutler Consulting, 2009
- Medicaid Access for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
  By the American Public Human Services Association, 2007
- National Youth in Transition Database—Instructional Guidebook and Architectural Blueprint (Executive Summary)
  By American Public Services Association and Chapin Hall at University of Chicago for State Foster Care and Adoption Data, 2009
- Opportunity Passport™: Building Assets for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Findings from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative 2009
- A Reason, a Season, or a Lifetime: Relational Permanence Among Young Adults with Foster Care Backgrounds
  By Gina Miranda Samuels, 2008

- Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood: Lessons Learned from Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice
  By David Altschuler, Gary Stangler, Kent Berkley, and Leonard Burton, 2009
- Time for Reform: Aging Out and On Their Own With Pew Charitable Trusts, 2007

Related Publications about Youth Transitioning from Foster Care

- A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation to Adulthood
  New Haven, CT: Casey Family Services, 2005
- Extending Foster Care to Age 21: Weighing the Costs to Government Against the Benefits to Youth
  By Clark M. Peters, Amy Dworsky, Mark E. Courtney, Harold Pollack
  Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2009
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act: Frequently Asked Questions on the Provisions Designed to Impact Youth and Young Adults
  Washington, DC: National Foster Care Coalition, 2009
- Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21 (Executive Summary)
  By Mark E. Courtney, Amy Dworsky, Gretchen Ruth Cusick, Judy Havlicek, Alfred Perez, and Tom Keller
  Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2007
- Questions on the Provisions Designed to Impact Youth and Young Adults
  Washington, DC: National Foster Care Coalition, 2009
- When Should the State Cease Parenting? Evidence from the Midwest Study

By Mark E. Courtney, Amy Dworsky, and Harold Pollack

Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2007

Youth Advocacy Documents From Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Demonstration Sites

- voice: Discussing Issues and Concerns of Michigan Foster Youth

  and

  voice 2: Discussing Issues and Concerns of Michigan Foster Youth

  Lansing, MI: Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2008

- EmpowerMEnt: Hearing the "Me" in the Voices of Georgia's Foster Youth

  Atlanta, GA: Metropolitan Atlanta Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2007

- L.I.F.E.—Listen. Inform. Future. Empower.

  Des Moines, IA: Moving On Up! Passport to Independence Youth Leadership Board, Youth Connections Council, and elevate™, 2007

- LEAP For A Better Tomorrow

  San Diego, CA: San Diego Leadership Empowers All Possibilities, 2008

Helpful Organizations

- ABA Center on Children and the Law

  http://new.abanet.org/child/Pages/default.aspx

- American Public Human Services Association

  www.aphsa.org

- Annie E. Casey Foundation

  www.aecf.org

- Casey Family Programs

  www.casey.org

- Casey Family Services

  www.caseyfamilyservices.org

- Center for Study of Social Policy

  www.cssp.org

- Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

  www.chapinhall.org/research

- Corporation for Enterprise Development

  www.cfed.org

- CLASP

  www.clasp.org

- The Finance Project

  www.financeproject.org

- The Forum for Youth Investment

  www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

- National Conference of State Legislatures

  www.ncsl.org

- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

  www.ncjfcj.org

- National Governors Association

  www.nga.org

- The Pew Charitable Trusts

  www.pewtrusts.org

- Youth Transitions Funders Group

  www.ytfg.org

Issue-Specific Websites

- Fostering Connections

  www.fosteringconnections.org

- Kids Are Waiting Time for Reform

  www.kidsarewaiting.org/publications/reports

- National Child Welfare Resource Centers

  www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/tta

- National Youth in Transition Database

  www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/nytd/about_nytd.htm

- Policy For Results

  www.policyforresults.org

Appendix G

Glossary

Activities: The specific interventions, and actions that communities implement to carry out strategies.

Annie E. Casey Foundation: The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to fostering public policies, human service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. The Foundation makes grants that help create innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs and, through Casey Family Services, provides direct services that advance both positive practice and sound public policy.

Associated Costs: Costs that are related to the purchase of an asset that are eligible for matched savings in the Individual Development Account.

Authorized Initiative Liaison: The person designated by the Initiative to support the community and interact with the site on a regular basis.

Auxiliary Fees: Fees related to the purchase of an asset that are not eligible for matched savings in the Individual Development Account.

Banking Partner: Bank that has a working relationship with the site and provides the Individual Development Account and the personal bank account for Opportunity Passport™ participants.

Budgeting: Organizing and managing the funding you have by setting up a tracking and accounting system.

Casey Family Programs: Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care. Established by United Parcel Service founder Jim Casey, the Seattle-based national operating foundation has served children, youth, and families in the child welfare system since 1966.

Chafee Act: The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 is commonly referred to as the Chafee Act. The Act provides financial, housing, counseling, employment, educational, and other appropriate supports and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age.

Co-investment Partnership: Agreement between the Initiative and a community to implement the five core strategies with local public and private resources.

Co-investment Site Coordinator: The key contact person in the co-investment site.

Community Partnership Board: A group of community representatives who work together with the youth leadership board to implement the core strategies.

Community Partner: An individual or organization that brings important skills and resources to the community implementing the core strategies.

Core Strategies: The five strategies designed to create the critical conditions in a community necessary to improve systems and outcomes for young people in transition. The strategies are:

- Youth Engagement: Preparing young people to be meaningfully involved as decision makers and advocates.
- Partnerships and Resources: Connecting to resources of public and private systems and philanthropy, expanding and deepening community support, and cultivating community champions for young people transitioning from care.
- Research, Evaluation, and Communications: Involving key stakeholders in the use of data to drive decision making and communications and to document results.
- Public Will and Policy: Advancing policies and practices that improve outcomes for young people transitioning from foster care.
- Increased Opportunities: Creating an array of opportunities and helping young people gain entry to them.

Core Strategies Rubric: A tool that defines the essential criteria for each stage of a strategy's activity and provides guidance about implementing these activities.

Critical Conditions: These are conditions that must be in place in a community in order to improve systems and achieve desirable outcomes for young people. The critical conditions are:

- Young people are decision makers and advocates for themselves and others.
- Partners in public and private systems provide the necessary resources and support.
- Stakeholders use data to drive decision making, communications, and the documentation of results.
- Public will is galvanized by the need to improve outcomes, and policy is focused on the reforms necessary to improve outcomes.
- Young people have access to an array of opportunities that support them.

Disproportionality: A way to describe the differences in the percentage of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the country as compared to the percentage of the children of the same group in the child welfare system.[1]

Disparity: Unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic minority to a non-minority. This can be observed in many forms, including decision points (e.g., reporting, investigation, substantiation, foster care placement, exit), treatment, services, or resources.[2]

Door Openers: Opportunities for advancement and supportive mechanisms specifically designed to help youth and young adults experience normal cultural events; achieve critical developmental benchmarks;

and benefit from individuals promoting their personal, educational, and professional growth.

Evaluation: An assessment that measures progress toward indicators and outcomes.

Expansion Site: A geographic area within a state where the five core strategies are being embedded beyond the original site.

Financing Strategies: Methods of providing fiscal support and resources to implement strategies.

Flexible Funds: Funds that have few or no specific "strings attached." Such funds are useful to pay for services, supports, activities, and administrative costs that other primary funding sources do not provide.

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act: Federal legislation that amends parts B and E of Title IV of the Social Security Act to connect and support relative caregivers, improve outcomes for children in foster care, provide for tribal foster care and adoption access, improve incentives for adoption, and other purposes.

Individual Development Account (IDA): A special savings account to establish a pattern of regular savings and to accumulate specified assets. Funds are matched at least dollar to dollar when approved purchases are made.

Indicators: Units of measurements to determine the effect of specific interventions in individuals, communities, or systems.

Institutional Funding: Public funding targeting a particular population or purpose that is likely to be ongoing.

Jim Casey: Founder of United Parcel Service (UPS). Mr. Casey was the benefactor for the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs.

Lead Agency: A local organization serving to provide the operational structure for managing the local implementation of the five core strategies on behalf of a jurisdiction.

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1   Hill, R. B. (2006). *Synthesis of research on disproportionality in child welfare: An update.* Washington, DC: Casey–CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System.
2   Ibid.

Logic Model: A tool that concisely describes the Theory of Change.

Match Dollars: For every dollar given, a funder requires that the recipient obtain additional resources from state or local funding to match the original dollar.

MISIDA (Management Information System for Individual Development Accounts): A "three-in-one" tool—evaluation, account management, and project administration. Web-enabled, MISIDA is a data collection and reporting system used for supporting and tracking Individual Development Accounts.

Opportunity Passport™: A package of resources that helps young people make a successful transition to adulthood. It includes:

1. Financial literacy training
2. Matched savings account
3. Personal bank account

Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey: An online survey for Opportunity Passport™ participants that captures youth indicator data as well as demographic characteristics.

Memorandum of Understanding: Document that expresses mutual accord on an issue between two or more parties.

Outcomes: The results of targeted work.

Performance Measures: Measures of effort that reflect the level or quality of activity.

Personal Bank Account: A component of the Opportunity Passport™—a checking or savings account for short-term expenses and instant access to cash.

Policy Matrix: Data collection tool for collecting and monitoring data on state statutes and other policies that impact young people leaving foster care.

Results-based Accountability: A method for holding organizations and individuals accountable for the impact of their work on mutually agreed upon results for children and families.

Self-evaluation: A process by which communities assess the extent to which they are accomplishing what they want to accomplish.

Site: A specific geographic area working with the Initiative to implement, operate, and sustain the core strategies.

Sustainability Planning: An active process of maintaining necessary resources (fiscal and non-fiscal) for long-term operational stability with successful outcomes.

Technical Assistance: Specific expertise provided to meet an identified need.

Theory of Change: The Initiative's belief about what interventions and conditions will improve outcomes in the areas of permanence, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, and personal and community engagement for youth transitioning from care.

Youth-Adult Partnership: The intentional effort by both young people and adults to work together to make decisions, learn from each other, and implement action plans. The voices of young people and adults are reflected in all decisions.

Youth Engagement: The meaningful, active participation of young people in planning and decision making affecting them individually and systemically.

Youth Leadership Board: A group of young people in or formerly in foster care who are working with adults in the community to implement the core strategies.