



California Connected by 25 Initiative

A partnership of the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative
Walter S. Johnson Foundation * Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation
Stuart Foundation * William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

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Building Partnerships & Improved Outcomes for Transitioning Foster Youth
A California Family to Family Strategy

Few young people are prepared to be wholly alone and independent at age 18, especially foster youth. Once discharged from care on their 18th birthday, state-provided support ends and these youth often have no place to live, no job, and no family safety net or committed adults to support their transition to adulthood. Nationally, 46% of foster youth drop out of high school, 25% become homeless and 51% are unemployed. Ensuring that the 4,000 foster youth transitioning out of California's foster care system become successful adults will require significant new investments, partnerships and innovative approaches.

The California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) is a California Family to Family strategy helping public child welfare agencies and their communities to build comprehensive supports and services for transitioning foster youth. The goal of the initiative is to connect foster youth by age 25 to the opportunities, experiences and supports that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. CC25I is part of the national Connected by 25 Initiative established by the Youth Transition Funders Group (www.ytfg.org) and was launched in 2005 through co-investment by the following philanthropic organizations:

- Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative (www.aecf.org)
- Walter S. Johnson Foundation (www.wsjf.org)
- Stuart Foundation (www.stuartfoundation.org)
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (www.hewlett.org)
- Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation (www.schwabfoundation.org).

Overview

There are currently seven CC25I counties in California (Fresno, Humboldt, Orange, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Solano and Stanislaus). Glenn County is completing a formal proposal and is expected to join the Initiative in November 2008. Through assessment, planning and practice innovations developed with youth, caregivers and community partners, CC25I counties are implementing locally-designed strategies that can be spread to improve statewide practice and outcomes in the following key focus areas: K-12 Education; Employment/Training/Post-secondary Education; Housing; Independent Living Skills; Financial Competency and Asset Development; Personal/Social Asset Development; and Permanency. CC25I permanency work aligns with the goals of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP). Counties integrate their CPYP activities in their Connected by 25 work plans. Counties are also encouraged to integrate many other quality improvements in their Connected by 25 work plans, such as Guardian Scholars, Gateway Programs, Transitional Housing Plus, and Youth Transition Action Teams. Though the focus of the Initiative is on foster youth 14 through 24 years of age, some goals and strategies impact a broader age-range of foster youth in order to provide the developmental foundation needed for later success. For example, meeting a youth's educational needs from pre-Kindergarten to emancipation provides

building blocks for adult success in post-secondary education, vocational training, employment and career.

Early implementing CC25I counties are helping to develop the framework for a California Family to Family foster youth transitions strategy with guiding principles, key elements, tools and technical assistance. As part of building a comprehensive continuum across the seven CC25I focus areas, critical aspects of the work include:

- Practices that support youth as leaders and decision-makers in their own lives;
- Practices that engage caregivers as transition teachers and partners for youth;
- Shared leadership and partnership with the community promoting involvement and investment in successful outcomes for transitioning foster youth.

Self Evaluation & Systems Change Assessment

CC25I partnering nonprofit foundations have allocated significant resources to develop county capacity to measure client level outcomes for emancipating foster youth. Through the efforts of the University of California at Berkeley's Center for Social Services Research, tools and technical assistance are being provided to build county capacity for self-evaluation. A web-based data collection system ("ETO") has been developed to track youth outcomes and transition services, and provides critical outcome and trend data for program improvement. The foundation collaborative is also funding a systems change assessment by the University of California at Berkeley's Center for Child and Youth Policy. Briefs will be developed in each CC25I focus area outlining effective models and quality practices and describing how county CC25I work, technical assistance, and cross-county sharing are spreading these quality practices and helping counties to achieve their CC25I goals.

Technical Assistance

CC25I counties receive training and technical assistance in developing and/or implementing their locally-designed strategies. The California Social Work Education Center at University of California at Berkeley (CalSWEC) works with CC25I counties to identify training needs and arranges training with a wide range of state and national consultants and experts. In addition, CC25I counties come together for twice-yearly California convenings and occasionally convene with other National Connected by 25 sites. These convening opportunities create a professional learning and networking community supporting implementation of Connected by 25. CC25I has partnered with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (www.jimcaseyyouth.org) and their work together is developing CC25I's Opening Doors strategy in the area of financial literacy, matched savings accounts and youth leadership and community partnership boards.

For more information about CC25I, visit: <http://www.f2f.ca.gov/California25.htm>

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