

California Connected by 25

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INITIATIVE

SUMMARY REPORT



November 15, 2007

Prepared by the CC25I Systems Change Assessment Team for:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
The Walter S. Johnson Foundation
The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation
The Stuart Foundation

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We would like to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of CC25I Project Manager Crystal Luffberry and the research assistance of Betsy Baum, Tiffany Chung and Adam Nguyen in completing this report.

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I. Introduction and Background

In 2005, over 24,000 youth of a total 513,000 in foster care nationwide “emancipated”, or aged out of the system by turning 18,¹ over 4,000 of them in California alone. Once emancipated, these young adults are expected to live independently without state-provided support. Young adult outcomes among former foster care youth are poor and there is significant overlap between foster care youth and other vulnerable populations that don’t fare well in the transition to adulthood.² High school drop out rates among some foster care youth are as high as 55 percent.³ Two to four years after leaving the foster care system, only half are regularly employed; nearly half have been arrested; a quarter have experienced homelessness; and more than half of the young women have had a child.² Courtney and Dworsky (2006) found that among current and former foster care youth aged 18 to 20, 31.9% were neither employed nor in school (compared with 12.3% of 19 year olds in the general population), and 37% of females (11% of males) were receiving one or more government benefits.³

Ensuring that these youth have the opportunity to become successful adults meaningfully engaged in their communities will require significant new program investments, collaborative partnerships and innovative approaches to creating a true continuum of services to support them during this transition. The California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) is one example of this type of collaborative effort that is assisting public child welfare agencies and their communities to better serve foster care youth during this critical transition to adulthood. CC25I’s stated goal is: *Through positive youth development and integrated systems of supports and services, transitioning foster youth are connected by age 25 to the opportunities, experiences, and supports that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood.* CC25I includes the following five foundation partners: the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative (www.aecf.org); the Walter S. Johnson Foundation (www.wsjf.org); the Stuart Foundation (www.stuartfoundation.org); The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (www.hewlett.org); and the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation (www.schwabfoundation.org).

CC25I evolved out of the earlier efforts of these funders to integrate philanthropic investment with the work of leading academic and other experts on the issue of transitioning foster care youth. Since 1992 the Annie E. Casey Foundation had been implementing Family to Family (F2F), a national initiative to reform child welfare and foster care programs being implemented in 18 states, including 25 of 58 counties in California. Nationally, a publication by Wald and Martinez (2003)⁴ and the work being done by the Youth Transitions Funders Group⁵ Foster Care Work Group (FCWG) emphasized the need for transitioning foster care youth to be “connected by 25” to the variety of supports that facilitate success in school, work, and independent living.⁶ In California, representatives of the Annie E. Casey, Walter S. Johnson and Stuart Foundations came together in Spring 2004 to explore the creation of a new youth-focused initiative – one that would build a continuum of care for emancipating foster care youth in California. Together these foundations developed the concept of creating an additional F2F strategy in California – one that would expand child welfare supports for foster care youth nearing emancipation. In 2005, the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation joined the Initiative to provide additional county grant support and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation contributed additional funding for program enhancements to align CC25I sites with the FCWG national Connected by 25 demonstration sites in Tampa and Indianapolis.

II. CC25 Initiative Overview

Through comprehensive assessment, planning, and program innovation carried out in conjunction with youth, caregivers, and other community partners, CC25I counties are implementing strategies that can be replicated statewide to improve the adult transition experience of all of California’s foster care youth. Leveraging local, state and national funding with foundation-provided grant assistance, CC25I counties are designing and implementing strategies across seven key areas: *K-12 Education; Employment/Job Training/Post-secondary Education; Financial Competency and Asset Development; Housing; Independent Living Skills Programs; Personal/Social Asset Development; and Permanency.*

The five early implementing CC25I Counties – Stanislaus, San Francisco, Fresno, Santa Clara and Alameda⁷ – serve over 4,300 youth at or near the age of emancipation (14 to 19 years old); 3,600 youth in child-welfare-supervised out-of-home care and another 740 youth in probation supervised placements.⁸ In addition, there are at least 3,900 young adults (through age 24) formerly in foster care under the jurisdiction of these five counties⁹ who might still be in need of support during this transitional period.

The logic model (**Figure 1**) underlying the Initiative provides an overview of CC25I resources, focus area goals and some of the locally designed activities and Initiative outcomes. While counties are given flexibility in directing CC25I resources to where they are most needed, they must demonstrate how their current service system and planned activities address all seven focus areas. Counties first engage in a comprehensive self-assessment process – examining available information on the needs and outcomes of the county's transition age foster youth and identifying gaps in the local supports available this population. This self assessment work, as well as efforts to implement the resulting CC25I strategies, require child welfare leaders to work collaboratively with many agencies, communities and individuals, starting with their Independent Living Skills Programs but extending to other non-profit and government agencies, including school districts, workforce investment boards, juvenile courts, health care providers, mental health services, transitional and supportive housing providers, as well as families, caregivers, and foster youth themselves. Community partners, including philanthropic interests, local businesses and interested community members, identify overlapping interests, leverage available resources and contribute to shared outcomes, while avoiding the duplication of efforts that often results when working separately.

CC25I Resources

Each of the original five CC25I counties have received grants of \$150,000 a year for up to three years. These grant funds are being used by public child welfare agencies to leverage and maximize other federal, state and local funding and resources to support both implementation and sustainability of the Initiative. Counties also have the option to receive (and match) \$10,000 a year for three years to establish Individual Development Accounts to teach youth savings and asset development behavior. Counties may access a technical assistance pool funded by CC25I and overseen by the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) at UC Berkeley.¹ The CC25I technical assistance pool funds expert-guided workshops and convenings that respond to the particular challenges identified by the counties in any of the seven focus areas as well as systems improvement efforts. Additional technical assistance is available from the variety of other initiatives in which counties are participating such as F2F, Guardian Scholars, California Permanency for Youth Project, and the Gateway project.

A full-time Project Manager coordinates and oversees the Initiative as a whole, working closely with county leads as well as the CC25I funders. Activities include orientation and support of each site as they progress through CC25I self-assessment, planning, implementation and self-evaluation; coordination of county technical assistance; participation in state policy and other workgroups; and outreach to build awareness of CC25I and its strategies. In addition, two teams from UC Berkeley oversee the development of self-evaluation capacity and the review and synthesis of the systems change efforts of the Initiative, discussed further below.

CC25I Key Focus Area Goals

- *K-12 Education* – There is a shared responsibility between the child welfare system and local school districts in order to provide foster youth with a stable, uninterrupted, needs-appropriate, high quality education that supports and encourages their academic success.

¹ The CC25I technical assistance pool was initially provided through the UC Davis Resource Center.

Figure 1: CC25I Logic Model

California Connected by 25 Initiative Overview

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

Focus	Inputs	Goals	Activities	Anticipated Outcomes												
	Includes funding grants to Alameda, Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus Counties.	Build a local, integrated system of transition supports and services for emancipating and emancipated foster youth ages 14 to 24.	Community partnership, program and policy development, system integration, and other locally-developed activities to improve transition outcomes.	Foster youth successfully transition to adulthood and are connected by age 25 to housing, employment, support systems, etc.												
<u>CC25i Systems Change/Overall Funding</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>CC25i Base Grant</td> <td>\$1.5M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CC25i Addendum Grant, National Merger Service Enhancements</td> <td>\$750k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Federal, State and Local Match</td> <td>\$7.1M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UC Davis Resource Ctr. Technical Assistance</td> <td>\$125k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CalSWEC Technical Assistance</td> <td>\$ 75k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>System Change Review - UC Berkeley</td> <td>\$286k</td> </tr> </table>	CC25i Base Grant	\$1.5M	CC25i Addendum Grant, National Merger Service Enhancements	\$750k	Federal, State and Local Match	\$7.1M	UC Davis Resource Ctr. Technical Assistance	\$125k	CalSWEC Technical Assistance	\$ 75k	System Change Review - UC Berkeley	\$286k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through community partnership, collaboration and leveraging of resources, develop and sustain an integrated system that successfully helps youth transition to adulthood. Increase youth, caregiver and community involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of transition services and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and strengthen partnerships with youth, caregivers, the community, as well as key systems serving transition-aged youth, such as workforce development, housing, banking, etc. Implement community outreach and marketing strategies that share information and motivate financial investment for transition age services. Develop youth leadership board & community partnership board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model service delivery partnerships promote systems integration Increase community involvement in strategies that promote youth success Increase public, private and community investment in transition age foster youth
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<u>Employment/ Training/ Post-secondary</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Annie E. Casey Technical Assistance Youth Employment Partnership</td> <td>\$40k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gateway Project Grants</td> <td>\$476k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gateway Technical Assistance</td> <td>\$256k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Guardian Scholars</td> <td>\$519K</td> </tr> </table>	Annie E. Casey Technical Assistance Youth Employment Partnership	\$40k	Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs		Gateway Project Grants	\$476k	Gateway Technical Assistance	\$256k	Guardian Scholars	\$519K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase foster youth awareness of and preparation for college and career pathways. Provide access to employment preparation, occupational training and work experience. Emancipated foster youth have the supports and services needed to successfully complete college. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement liaisons, employment specialists, and other strategies improving linkage of foster youth to One Stop and WIA services. Implement wage subsidy, work experience/OJT, and/or Career programs for foster youth. Develop college support programs such as Guardian Scholars. Implement college/career pathway programs such as Gateway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase % of youth accepted to/enrolled in/completed college Increase % youth enrolled in/completed vocational training or internship Increase % of youth with paid employment Increase % of youth with paid or unpaid work experience 		
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<u>Financial Literacy/Competency</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>CC25i IDA Grants</td> <td>\$120k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Technical Assistance</td> <td>\$50k</td> </tr> </table>	CC25i IDA Grants	\$120k	Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Technical Assistance	\$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase youth saving and asset building behaviors. Improve financial competency of youth emancipating from foster care. Provide opportunities and experiences that lead toward economic success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide financial literacy and/or entrepreneurial training. Implement matched savings account program (IDAs). Through youth, agency and community partnership boards, develop door opener opportunities for youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase % of youth with savings accounts Increase % of youth with checking accounts Increase average savings, deposits and assets among youth who become IDA holders 								
CC25i IDA Grants	\$120k															
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<u>Housing</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>First Place Fund</td> <td>\$625k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster Youth Housing Initiative</td> <td>\$1.4M</td> </tr> </table>	Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs		First Place Fund	\$625k	Foster Youth Housing Initiative	\$1.4M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a continuum of housing supports and services and link youth to the services that best meet their needs. Expand housing and transitional housing resources. Incorporate permanency and lifelong connections concepts into transitional housing models. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with other initiatives & organizations to develop a continuum of local housing resources to meet the needs of transitioning youth. Utilize THP+ funding to increase transitional housing capacity. Develop lifelong connections host family transitional housing models, as well as traditional single and scattered site housing options where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase % of youth with housing Increase % of youth who feel their housing situation is safe Increase % of youth in long-term housing. 						
Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs																
First Place Fund	\$625k															
Foster Youth Housing Initiative	\$1.4M															
<u>Independent Living Skills Program</u>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand independent living services and aftercare supports among youth ages 14 to 24. Increase youth, caregiver and community involvement/engagement in transition planning and services. Integrate child welfare and independent living services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach and provide ILP services to youth beginning at age 14. Integrate Ansell Casey Assessment, Transition Conferences and/or permanency planning with transitional independent living planning. Partner and leverage resources to increase community capacity to serve emancipating/emancipated foster youth. Provide trainings for caregivers, staff, etc. on transition needs of youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase % of youth receiving any ILP services Increase % of youth reporting participation in transition planning Increase% youth reporting satisfaction with ILP services 												
<u>K-12 Education</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Mental Health Advocacy Services Technical Assistance</td> <td>\$150k</td> </tr> </table>	Mental Health Advocacy Services Technical Assistance	\$150k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase understanding of foster youth educational rights and access to educational opportunities. Partner with caregivers, schools and other partners to improve educational outcomes of foster youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train youth, caregivers and staff regarding foster youth educational rights, responsibilities and resources. Develop educational liaison to assess educational needs of youth and link to services that can assist them in achieving educational goals. Provide advocacy, tutoring or develop other strategies to increase reading, math and language skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase % of youth passing CHSEE Increase % of youth graduating from high school Increase % of youth who have college as an educational goal Increase % of youth taking college prep classes 										
Mental Health Advocacy Services Technical Assistance	\$150k															
<u>Permanency/Personal & Social Asset Development</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>California Permanency for Youth Project</td> <td>\$325k</td> </tr> </table>	Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs		California Permanency for Youth Project	\$325k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist emancipating youth in identifying and maintaining a network of supports and services. Establish lifelong, committed adult connections for foster youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health clinician, youth advocates/supporters, etc. participate regularly in emancipation conferences and transition planning. Internet search and other family finding techniques implemented. Youth and agency work together to identify, develop or maintain significant adult lifelong connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase % of youth reporting mental health needs are being met Increase % of youth with permanent connections [a stable relationship with a safe adult who has made a commitment to provide life-long support] 								
Other (non CC25i) Funding Inputs																
California Permanency for Youth Project	\$325k															
<u>Data System/Outcomes/Accountability</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>CC25i Self-Evaluation Tools</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>UC Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research</td> <td>\$300k</td> </tr> </table>	CC25i Self-Evaluation Tools		UC Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research	\$300k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a database and outcomes framework. Track important basic outcomes for transition aged youth. Establish program improvement process based on review of outcome data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a data system for gathering data and begin entering relevant data. Establish baseline for outcome measures. Identify Self Evaluation Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data availability CWS and partners evaluate data at least quarterly Program improvement informed by outcome data 								
CC25i Self-Evaluation Tools																
UC Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research	\$300k															
<u>CC25i Project Management</u>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>1FTE Project Manager</td> <td>\$345k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CC25 R&D Phase</td> <td>\$ 26k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project Mgmt Expenses/Support</td> <td>\$80.4k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>.25 FT F2F Supervisor</td> <td>\$120k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SF Foundation, Hewlett Fiscal Agent</td> <td>\$37.5k</td> </tr> </table>	1FTE Project Manager	\$345k	CC25 R&D Phase	\$ 26k	Project Mgmt Expenses/Support	\$80.4k	.25 FT F2F Supervisor	\$120k	SF Foundation, Hewlett Fiscal Agent	\$37.5k					
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- *Employment, Job Training and Post-Secondary Education* - Provide emancipating and emancipated foster youth access to and support in a broad array of youth-focused employment, training and post-secondary education programs that lead to meaningful, living-wage employment and careers.
- *Financial Literacy and Competency* - Make available to youth a broad array of instructional support, practical experience, and opportunities that lead to financial management skills, asset building behavior and the accumulation of assets such as savings accounts, cars, homes, etc.
- *Housing* - Ensure that every foster youth who emancipates from the child welfare system has access to a variety of housing options that are supportive and flexible enough to meet the developmental needs of young adults.
- *Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP)* - Fully integrate efforts to serve transitioning foster care youth with those of the child welfare and probation systems and to ensure that ILSP provides a comprehensive continuum of accessible transition services in community locations where youth feel safe, connected to peers, supported by caregivers and significant connections, and encouraged to excel.
- *Permanency* - Ensure that all youth leave the foster care system with at least one lifelong connection to a caring, committed, loving adult, feeling both resilient and empowered to reach their full potential.
- *Personal & Social Asset Development* - Create and implement a continuum of specialized services to support emancipating and emancipated foster youth with special needs and assist them in identifying, utilizing and maintaining a network of supports and services throughout the transition period.

CC25I Self-Evaluation and Systems Change Assessment

To evaluate their work across the seven focus areas and determine whether an effective continuum of programs and supports is being developed for youth, CC25I counties must commit to implementation of a customized data system to track youth outcomes. UC Berkeley's Center for Social Services Research (CSSR), in partnership with the CC25I counties, has developed the overall youth outcomes framework for CC25I and the UC Berkeley F2F Self-Evaluation Team is overseeing all CC25I data collection efforts via Efforts to Outcomes, a web-based data collection system developed by Social Solutions and funded by CC25I partnering foundations. Implementation of youth assessments and utilization of Efforts to Outcomes by CC25I counties began in 2007 and will provide baseline data and allow counties to analyze data trends in each of the seven key focus areas, as well as identify program areas that could benefit from additional enhancement, reform or expansion.

The overall work and accomplishments of CC25I counties over the course of the Initiative will be documented through a systems change assessment. With the four core F2F strategies as a foundation, counties are promoting systems change by building community partnerships to develop and sustain integrated service delivery systems; engaging youth and caregivers in program design, implementation and evaluation; utilizing technical assistance and cross-county sharing to improve programs; involving transitional youth and caregivers in transition planning; and engaging in self-evaluation. A second team at UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy, is documenting the activities and achievements of the five CC25I counties over the course of their first three years. This work will result in a series of descriptive reports and conclude with a set of best practices for implementing effective programs for transition age foster care youth. This work will also provide the foundation for the CC25I Project Manager to further develop and refine the CC25I Family to Family strategy and framework for dissemination to other F2F counties in California.

III. Profile of Early Implementing CC25I Counties

The five early implementing CC25I counties vary considerably in their geographic, demographic and child welfare statistical profiles. Santa Clara, San Francisco and Alameda are urban counties located in the densely populated San Francisco Bay area whereas Fresno and Stanislaus are rural counties located in central California. **Figure 2** shows that Fresno and Stanislaus have populations with the highest percentage of Hispanics and those who speak Spanish at home. In Santa Clara, San Francisco and Alameda Counties, Asian/Pacific Islander residents make up a larger share of the population than Hispanics, and they represent a broad array of ethnic origins and languages that these general statistics cannot adequately describe.

Figure 2: General Demographics by CC25I County

	Alameda	Fresno	San Francisco	Santa Clara	Stanislaus
Ethnicity¹⁰					
White	39%	37%	45%	43%	52%
Black	13%	5%	7%	3%	2%
Asian/Pacific	23%	9%	32%	27%	5%
Hispanic	21%	47%	14%	25%	38%
Other or Multiple Races	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Language Spoken at Home¹¹					
English Only	64%	59%	55%	55%	69%
Spanish	14%	32%	12%	18%	24%
Indo-European	6%	3%	7%	7%	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	15%	6%	26%	20%	3%

Figure 3 provides a sense of how large the CC25I target population is in each of the participating counties. Looking first at the in-care population of youth supervised by both the Child Welfare and Probation agencies, Alameda serves approximately 1,400 youth between the ages of 14 and emancipation at any given time; Fresno 900 youth; San Francisco 850 youth; Santa Clara 800 youth; and Stanislaus 250 youth. In addition CC25I efforts could be serving at least an additional 1,357 previously emancipated young adults (from child welfare supervised placements) in Alameda County, 843 in Fresno County, 748 in San Francisco County, 734 in Santa Clara County and 196 in Stanislaus County. It is important to note that these exit-to-emancipation figures fail to capture emancipated youth that were supervised by local probation departments¹² while in care, or those who exited care for reasons other than emancipation but are still eligible for aftercare services. Hence, the population targeted by CC25I in the five counties is actually larger than the totals presented here.

Not all in-care youth supervised by the child welfare agency are placed within their county of origin, and counties often identify homes for youth in other counties (**Figure 3**). Fresno and Stanislaus place within county the vast majority of their child welfare supervised youth under their jurisdiction – 86% and 81% respectively in 2006 – whereas Santa Clara places 68% in county, Alameda 58%, and San Francisco 50%. While all five counties serve some youth under the jurisdiction of other counties, nearly half of all youth placed in Stanislaus County are the responsibility of other counties of origin. County jurisdiction and placement are relevant factors when youth are in need of transitional supports and services. The local Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) in the county of placement is responsible for delivering these services and the county of jurisdiction is responsible for reimbursing the cost of these services.

Within the guidelines of state-mandated core ILSP services, counties have flexibility in designing their programs and therefore local ILSPs vary considerably in terms of how they are structured and the degree to which their activities are integrated with efforts of the larger child welfare and probation systems and other community service providers.

In Fresno and Stanislaus Counties, ILSP services are provided in-house, are co-located with their child welfare agencies and include an array of life skills, educational assistance, employment training/placement, housing and other support services. In San Francisco and Alameda Counties, ILSP services are provided by contracted service providers that share an ILSP office located separately from the child welfare agency. Santa Clara County utilizes five contracted community service organizations to provide the same broad array of ILSP services to eligible youth and these programs operate from their own agency sites throughout the county. The Foundation for California Community Colleges contributes core life skills training, educational assistance, and college/employment services, mentoring, and a host of other supports to ILSPs in all five counties.

Figure 3: Child Welfare Transition Age Youth Statistical Profile by CC25I County

	Alameda	Fresno	San Francisco	Santa Clara	Stanislaus
Child Welfare Caseload in Foster Care (1/1/2007 point-in-time) ¹³					
Ages 14-15	443	355	298	312	98
Ages 16-20	649	409	479	363	96
Probation Caseload in Foster Care (1/1/2007 point-in-time) ¹³					
Ages 14-15	62	50	9	25	14
Ages 16-20	261	98	72	109	40
Number of Youth Who Exited to Emancipation From Child Welfare Supervised Placements (of 5+ days) ¹⁴					
Between 1/1/2000 and 12/31/2002	527	425	352	372	88
Between 1/1/2003 and 12/31/2005	830	418	396	362	108
In and Out of County Placement – Child Welfare Supervised Youth 16 to 20 (1/1/2006 point-in-time) ¹⁵					
% of youth placed in county of origin	58%	86%	50%	68%	81%
% of youth served in county from other county of origin	21%	19%	9%	15%	49%

Counties participating in CC25I must demonstrate how they are creating or further expanding a continuum of support for transitioning foster care youth across all seven focus areas, though they have flexibility in directing their CC25I grants in a manner that most effectively leverages other funding and build program areas where local needs assessment has identified the greatest need. CC25I county priorities are as follows:

- Stanislaus County – Stanislaus County Community Services Agency (CSA) identified the following focus areas as being key in their CC25I work: K-12 Education; Employment/Job Training/Post-secondary Education; Housing; and Financial Competency and Asset Development. Program development is focusing on expanding educational advocacy and tutoring services at the secondary educational level, to set youth on a course to high school graduation and post-secondary success, and developing a lifelong connections model of THP-PLUS to support permanency and build a continuum of housing options for transitioning foster youth. CSA and community partners also committed to building a “bridge” program and other opportunities for transitioning youth in post-secondary education, employment, training and career exploration. Finally, CSA, local community organizations and banking partners are eager to implement strategies to provide financial literacy training and other support that emancipated youth need to actively accrue personal assets.

- San Francisco County – Top priority in San Francisco County was given to expanding the array of employment and training opportunities for youth in high wage sectors and increasing communication and coordination among local service providers, including the integration of transitioning foster care youth into the current One-Stop system. Current and former foster youth from the Probation Department, ILSP and the Honoring Emancipated Youth (HEY) youth advisory board identified assistance with finding and keeping jobs; accumulating and accessing assets; better coordination between San Francisco ILSP and other ILSPs in the San Francisco Bay area; and easier access to ILSPs for San Francisco youth placed out-of-county. County child welfare staff emphasized the need for on-going training on services for transitioning youth, readiness assessments of youth, guidance in serving out-of-county youth and expanded employment and training programs.
- Fresno County – Local stakeholders in Fresno County, including former foster youth and foster parents, identified post-secondary education/employment/job training, housing and ILSP services as the highest priority program areas in need of improvement and expansion. In the area of post-secondary education, employment and job training, the County is pursuing a variety of “bridge” type programs to facilitate the pathway from high school to work and higher education, and developing other post-high-school support services to promote retention and success. To expand local housing capacity for emancipated youth, Fresno County has applied for THP-Plus state funding to support host-family and scattered site housing models. Fresno County ILSP is working to expand its outreach, ensure services are culturally appropriate for all segments of the target population and increase the ability of youth and foster parents to access programs. An example of this is that campus-based ILSP social workers are now bringing ILSP services directly to foster youth at school.
- Santa Clara County – Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS) highlighted several areas for their CC25I efforts. First, train and link youth to high wage employment and careers through more effective use of existing One-Stop Centers in the County and by increased partnership between DFCS and local employment/training service providers. Second, increase the supply of transitional housing by accessing THP-Plus dollars to implement a local host-family model and by working with San Jose State University to utilize dormitory rooms to house emancipated youth participating in college/career training. Third, expand opportunities for youth to gain financial literacy skills and build financial assets through mechanisms such as Individual Development Accounts. Integrating CC25I with their F2F efforts, DFCS adapted existing workgroups to implement strategies in each of the seven CC25I focus area and each workgroup is co-chaired by an agency staffer and a community partner. The County is also working to better coordinate the five community agencies contracted to provide independent living skills programs and integrate them within the larger work of DFCS.
- Alameda County –The most pressing area for improvement in services identified by the Alameda County CC25I proposal was the aftercare component of the local Independent Living Skills Program known as Beyond Emancipation (formerly the ILSP Auxiliary). With the largest number of youth emancipating annually among the five CC25I counties, the County perceived a clear need to bolster Beyond Emancipation’s capacity to case manage former foster care youth and develop an easy to access continuum of care for these youth as they seek support with housing, post-secondary education, and employment. These efforts are building on existing collaboration between Alameda County and local service providers to strengthen community networking and develop strategies for working together to link transitioning youth to the services they need.

IV. Environmental Landscape

County efforts to implement CC25I benefit greatly from an abundance of child welfare agency reform, legislative action and philanthropic investment taking place on the federal, state and local levels. Particularly in California, the current landscape against which transitional foster youth programs are taking shape is one of dynamic change and expanding resources. CC25I builds on existing efforts by counties and communities to improve child welfare systems and services for transitional youth, and strengthens participating counties' ability to enhance and integrate funding, program initiatives and local/state collaborations that exist outside of CC25I.

Child Welfare Systems Reform & Accountability Efforts

Since at least 2000, a variety of public and private initiatives have aimed to improve child welfare systems and transitional youth outcomes, many with overlapping objectives and strategies. CC25I is an additional strategy of the California Family to Family (F2F) Initiative, a public-private partnership assisting child welfare agencies in 25 California counties (and 17 other states) to achieve better outcomes through its four core strategies¹⁶: Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families (Foster and Relative); Building Community Partnerships; Family Team Decision-Making; and Self-Evaluation. Among CC25I counties, Santa Clara has been a part of F2F since 2000, San Francisco and Stanislaus since 2001, and Alameda and Fresno since 2003.

California counties were joining F2F at a time when the State itself entered a period of redesign due to growing concerns about the functioning and outcomes performance of child welfare agencies. Assembly Bill 636, the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act, was passed by the California Legislature in 2001 and established a system for ongoing review of child welfare agency performance, county Self-Improvement Plans and performance on child welfare indicators among all 58 counties in the State.¹⁷ In addition, the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)¹⁸ has created various committees to identify and analyze program issues, develop policy recommendations, and work with state agencies to implement program services. There is a CWDA subcommittee focused on Independent Living Skills Programs (ILSPs) operating in California and a CWDA workgroup developing an improved Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) document.

Other initiatives aimed at improving child welfare systems and transitional youth outcomes have evolved simultaneously with CC25I, allowing for more direct collaboration and alignment of objectives and strategies. California is one of six states chosen to participate in a National Governor's Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care and a new vision for California's ILSPs has been emerging from this work. This goal for ILSP Redesign in California is to move from a largely referral and classroom-based program to a performance-based cross-system service delivery continuum able to meet the individual needs of each youth. As a member of both the NGA Policy Academy and the ILSP Redesign teams, the CC25I Project Manager contributes the lessons learned and best practices occurring in CC25I counties to these state efforts to improve the continuum of supports needed by youth transitioning out of the foster care system. In addition, the guidelines for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) were released in 2006 as part of federal accountability efforts. NYTD will fulfill the mandated data collection requirements of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 by requiring states to track outcomes and services for both youth receiving ILSP services as well as random samples of emancipated/former foster care youth (through the age of 21) regardless of whether they received ILSP services or not. The youth outcomes data that states are expected to provide the NYTD in the future have been incorporated into the outcomes being tracked through CC25I self-evaluation efforts.

The State and counties have implemented these reform initiatives over the years despite continuing issues of staff workload and agency funding levels. The Child Welfare Workload Study confirmed that workload levels were roughly double those recommended to achieve a minimal improvement and even further from the optimal levels necessary to

implement best practices. Efforts to improve services for transitional youth have also been greatly impacted by decreasing public funding levels for ILSPs. The California CWDA indicates that while the number of youth served has increased from 19,487 in fiscal year 2000-2001 to 34,618 in 2006-2007, funding for the Independent Living Skills Program and Extended Independent Living Program in California has decreased from \$41.2 million (2000-2001) to \$38.6 million (2006-2007).¹⁹

California Legislative Landscape

Policymakers and youth advocacy organizations in California have been extremely busy over the past decade passing legislation and expanding resources in support of efforts to improve the child welfare system and outcomes of current and former foster care youth. While most child welfare legislation pertains to foster care youth in general, there has been an increasing amount of legislative action on behalf of transitioning foster care youth in particular.

Examples of some of the legislation related to CC25I focus areas includes:

- AB 490 (and updates in AB 1261) promotes K-12 school stability, improved academic supports, and expedited enrollment and academic records transfer through interagency collaboration, as well as mandates the designation of a foster youth education liaison in each county;
- AB 2463 requires California state universities and community colleges to improve programs to recruit, support and retain foster care youth in post-secondary education;
- AB 1808 expands the Foster Youth Services (FYS) programs operated by local offices of education to provide academic supports to improve K-12 educational outcomes of foster care youth residing in a licensed foster home or county-operated juvenile detention facility;
- AB 1198, AB 427, AB 1119, and AB 824 created the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP/THP-Plus) and expanded it over time to fund counties' efforts to house teens and young adults (now through age 24) transitioning from foster care to independent living; and
- SB 591, AB 408 and AB 1412 support the attainment of permanency for foster care youth and efforts to keep them central in the process that identifies permanent relationships with individuals important to them.

Private Foundation Initiatives

Participating counties are working to integrate their CC25I work not only with existing child welfare reform efforts and legislative directives, but also with other privately funded initiatives developed prior to or during the life of CC25I

Examples include:

- California Permanency for Youth Project (www.cpyy.org) – addressing permanency issues;
- California Gateway Project (www.careerladdersproject.epcservices.com) – addressing post-secondary education and employment opportunities for former foster care youth;
- Guardian Scholars (www.orangewoodfoundation.org/programs_scholars.asp) – providing college-based supports for former foster care youth;
- Foster Youth Education Project (<http://www.mhas-la.org/about.html#projects>) – addressing K-12 issues affecting current foster care youth; and
- Foster Youth Housing Initiative – increasing housing options for transitioning youth in the SF Bay area.

County participation in public and private initiatives such as these, as well as involvement in ongoing state policy and budget action, have provided a firmer foundation of awareness and support for current CC25I efforts. Many of the counties' CC25I objectives and desired outcomes are directly linked to or build on these other program expansion and outcomes improvement efforts. Other initiatives are also incorporating elements of the CC25I logic model and strategies. For example, programs such as THP-Plus and Guardian Scholars are interested in utilizing the same Efforts to Outcomes data tracking software that CC25I counties will employ for self-evaluation, and are considering aligning data tracking to relevant areas of the CC25I outcomes framework.

V. Future Reports

As of July 2007, Fresno, San Francisco and Stanislaus Counties had finished their second year as part of the CC25I and Santa Clara County had been implementing the Initiative for eighteen months. As Alameda County was completing its first full year with the Initiative, a joint decision was made by the County and their funder to transition out of the Initiative, however they continue their excellent work and commitment to building a comprehensive continuum for transition-aged foster youth. At the same time, new counties such as Orange County and Humboldt County were in the process of joining the Initiative.

Future reports from the Systems Change Assessment team will provide a more in depth look at each of the seven CC25I focus areas – K-12 Education; Employment/Job Training/Post-secondary Education; Financial Competency and Asset Development; Housing; Independent Living Skills Programs; Permanency; and Personal/Social Asset Development – and document what the counties have accomplished in each thus far. The ultimate goal for the CC25I Systems Change Assessment is the development of a defined package of guidelines, resources and strategies that can assist other counties in building a comprehensive continuum of support for transitioning youth and in improving transition outcomes locally. Future reports will contribute to this effort by documenting the activity of counties over the life of the Initiative, identifying critical resources and best practices, and highlighting true systems change achievements.

Endnotes

- ¹ Pew Charitable Trust and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. 2007. *Time for Reform: Aging Out and On Their Own*. Report available at: http://www.pewtrusts.org/our_work_ektid26082.aspx.
- ² Wertheimer, Richard. 2002. *Youth Who "Age Out" of Foster Care: Troubled Lives, Troubling Prospects*. Child Trends Research Brief, 12/2002.
- ³ Courtney, Mark E. and Amy Dworsky. 2006. Early Outcomes for Young Adults Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care in the USA in *Child and Family Social Work*, Volume 11, pp. 209-219.
- ⁴ Wald, Michael and Tia Martinez. 2003. *Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country's Most Vulnerable 14–24 Year Olds*, Working Paper for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
- ⁵ The Youth Transitions Funders Group is a collaboration of philanthropic interests that invest significantly in programs and services for transition aged youth in three vulnerable populations – youth involved with the juvenile justice system, foster care youth, and youth who were educationally disconnected - across the United States.
- ⁶ Youth Transitions Funders Group Foster Care Work Group. 2004. *Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*.
- ⁷ After its first full year as part of CC25I, Alameda County transitioned out of the Initiative to focus more strongly on local needs and priorities, and as of the writing of this report, Orange and Humboldt Counties were preparing to join CC25I.
- ⁸ Point-in-time estimates on January 1, 2007. Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Smith, J., Dunn, A., Frerer, K., Putnam Hornstein, E., Ataie, Y., Atkinson, L., & Lee, S.H. (2007). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved June 18, 2007, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/betaSystem>>
- ⁹ Annual counts. Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Smith, J., Dunn, A., Frerer, K., Putnam Hornstein, E., & Ataie, Y. (2006). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved July 16, 2007, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>>
- ¹⁰ State of California, Department of Finance, *California County Race/Ethnic Population Estimates and Components of Change by Year, July 1, 2000–2004*. Sacramento, California, March 2006. http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/ReportsPapers/Estimates/E3/E3-00-04/E-3_2000-04.asp
- ¹¹ U.S Census, Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics, 2000.
- ¹² Exit data was not available for probation-supervised cases at the time the CSSR website was accessed.
- ¹³ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Smith, J., Dunn, A., Frerer, K., Putnam Hornstein, E., Ataie, Y., Atkinson, L., & Lee, S.H. (2007). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved June 18, 2007, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/betaSystem>>
- ¹⁴ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Smith, J., Dunn, A., Frerer, K., Putnam Hornstein, E., & Ataie, Y. (2006). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved July 16, 2007, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>>
- ¹⁵ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Smith, J., Dunn, A., Frerer, K., Putnam Hornstein, E., Ataie, Y., Atkinson, L., & Lee, S.H. (2007). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved June 19, 2007, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>.
- ¹⁶ For the source of this text and more information on F2F, please see: <http://www.f2f.ca.gov/>.
- ¹⁷ Needell, B. & Patterson, K. (2004). The Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636): Improving Results for Children and Youth in California.
- ¹⁸ The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) is a non profit association representing the human service directors from each of California's 58 counties. For more info see: <http://www.cwda.org/>.
- ¹⁹ "History of Independent Living Program Funding" provided by the County Welfare Directors Association of California (<http://www.cwda.org/>).