



# Transforming Systems strengthening lives

## California Connected by 25 Initiative

2008 Highlights

The California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) was developed to address the needs of youth as they transition from foster care to adulthood. As foster care ends youth lose access to many important services and may be without community, family safety net or committed adults to support their transition to adulthood. The goal of the initiative is "Through positive youth development and integrated systems of support and services, transitioning foster youth are connected by age 25 to the opportunities, experiences and support that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood." The initiative is a California Family to Family (F2F) strategy being developed to assist county child welfare agencies and their communities to build a comprehensive continuum of supports and services around seven key focus areas:

- K - 12 Education
- Employment/Job Training/Postsecondary Education
- Housing
- Independent Living Skills Program
- Financial competency, Savings and Assets
- Personal/Social Asset Development
- Permanency

Though the focus of the Initiative is on youth 14 years through 24 years of age, it is recognized that an early focus on stable, high quality education from Pre-school through 12<sup>th</sup> grade is an important foundation for later success. In addition to the four core Family to Family strategies which are an important foundation for this work, participating counties are implementing the following CC25I "strategies for success:"

- Youth as Leaders for Change and Decision-Makers in their Lives
- Child Welfare Agencies and Communities as Invested Partners in Change
- Caregivers as Transition Teachers and Partners

### County Highlights

Important highlights of the past year are that services and system integration are being improved. Of note, youth are invited to the table by more CC25I counties more often, and agencies are working to ensure that child welfare, probation and independent living programs (ILP) have integrated referral of youth to CC25I programs and services as part of everyday practice. Examples of progress in improving services and developing models for systems integration are well underway by just a sampling of the county CC25I innovations and accomplishments shared on the following pages.

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

## *Humboldt County*

- ◆ Humboldt was accepted into the Initiative during 2007. First year implementation activities included working on developing a CC25I One-Stop location and youth positions to provide peer mentoring.
- ◆ Completed a mapping project and transition-aged youth are facilitating focus groups-the information will help in developing a comprehensive education/employment strategy.
- ◆ Participated in recent Title IVE draw down training with the goal of hiring several additional educational liaisons to support foster youth.
- ◆ Have six active THP + slots with the plan to contract 12 additional slots.
- ◆ Permanency is moving forward through participation in the CPYP project. Mental health clinicians have been infused the overall work, permanency is being embedded in regular supervision sessions with county caseworkers, and efforts have begun to bring family finding processes into early removal/team decision making processes.

## *Orange County*

- ◆ Orange County began CC25I in July 2007. Through contracts with the Orangewood Children's Foundation, Orange County Department of Education, Bridging the Gap, and Foster Assessment Center and Testing Services, foster and emancipated youth are being supported through a wide variety of programs and services, including independent living coaches, educational tracking and support, vocational assessments, mentoring, and transitional housing.
- ◆ Foster Youth Services (FYS) now supports all 10-19 year old foster youth & former dependents in Probation institutions; FYS and all school district liaisons are linked to the Orange County ILP Secure Extranet.
- ◆ A Youth Advocate Contract is in place and Youth Advocates are being assigned to attend community meetings, TDM's and Emancipation Planning Conferences. Emancipated youth are involved in an advisory capacity in all levels of the agency.
- ◆ THP Plus Host Family and Scattered site models implemented. An IDA (matched savings account program) is in the planning stage. ILP is being redesigned as a result of youth/caregiver focus groups.
- ◆ Participation in a college preparatory pilot project Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) to enhance the number of foster youth that are motivated and prepared to attend college.
- ◆ More than 377 foster youth have been served through the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP).

## *San Francisco*

- ◆ City, County and Community are working together to increase access to and support for youth in vocational training, employment and educational opportunities.
- ◆ An employment specialist is linking agency, One-Stop and ILP, building relationships with businesses/potential employers, and joint agency/ILP efforts have established a job internship program for foster youth. In past year 62 youth received job placements, entered vocational programs and participated in internships.
- ◆ School and psychotropic med info entered into CWS/CMS for updated HEP's, need for educational surrogates identified and surrogates appointed, and tutoring resource info disseminated. A Guardian Scholar program is in development at San Francisco City College.
- ◆ THP+ host family model implemented (First Place for Youth) and host family model for youth and their relatives is starting up (Edgewood).
- ◆ IDA savings and asset purchase program being implemented with 40 youth. Youth board in place and development of a virtual community partnership board is being considered.

## *Fresno County*

- ◆ Youth Advisory Board established - Youth Organizing New Ideas (YONI) Comprised of six youth, YONI helps youth become informed advocates, involved and part of efforts to impact the Fresno County Child Welfare Design.
- ◆ The Host Family Model Program was launched during summer 2007. The program provides housing and supportive services by allowing the youth to continue to live in their foster family placement or with a caring adult with whom they have a permanent connection.
- ◆ In the fall of 2007, a county core team was established with representation from DCFS, County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Regional Office to engage foster and probation youth to participate in local programs. AVID programs assist with college preparation and career exploration.
- ◆ Pathways to Education and Careers, implemented by Fresno's Workforce Investment Board, City College and DCFS, is providing a one semester learning community, college credit, and English and Math remediation and career preparation coursework. Opportunities will expand with a CSU Fresno Guardian Scholar's program that is being developed.
- ◆ Fresno's Superior Juvenile Court Presiding Judge has supported Connected by 25 and embraced its inclusion of Probation foster youth. DCFS is collaborating with Probation to facilitate their finalization of guardianships and an adoption.
- ◆ In partnership with By Design Solutions and Wells Fargo, an IDA matched savings account program is being implemented to provide banking, financial management and asset-building opportunities for 20 foster youth. Youth savings will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$1,000 over 24 months for asset purchases related to education, training, vocational opportunities, housing, health care, and other qualifying expenses.

## *Stanislaus*

- ◆ The My Home Model of Transitional Housing Program has served 34 youth since its implementation in June 2006. Youth live with "lifelong connections" and receive an integrated model of transitional housing, employment, and permanency services case-managed by an ILP/Aftercare social worker in coordination with the youth and lifelong connection
- ◆ Emergency Connected for Life Meetings occur before a youth's permanency hearing. The primary goal of the meetings is to identify individuals who are most important in the youth's life, and to establish lifelong connections. The secondary goal is to start the discussion about the youth's future including educational goals, participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP), emancipation, etc. and to be able to identify at the earliest possible time the resources that can be utilized by the youth for successful transition to adulthood.
- ◆ Connected For Life/Foster Youth Transition meets monthly to discuss issues that concern transitioning foster youth and strategies to enhance permanency practices. The committee is composed of community partners and youth representatives. (Permanency)
- ◆ Child Welfare Services and Stanislaus County of Education Foster Youth Services (SCOE FYS) have excellent partnership in providing and prioritizing youth for tutoring services. These services are provided by Huntington Tutoring Services. The youth who completed the services in 2007 have improved their grade level by an average of 2.0 grades.
- ◆ An IDA program has been implemented with 20 former foster youth. The Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) database has been implemented for data and outcomes of all transitioning CWS foster youth.

### *Santa Clara*

- ◆ Santa Clara's CC25I Initiative is worth far more than their grant funding and leveraged funding and resources. Their marketing of CC25I to change the landscape in their community, and their strong weave of youth, community partners and agency staff working together brings priceless value to their efforts.
- ◆ Partnerships with workforce development and higher education served 40 youth in two new Career Pathway programs and provided housing in SJ State University dorms and other shared housing and Host Family plans. Santa Clara is working with the community colleges to sustain the success they have built with Career Pathways.
- ◆ Santa Clara reached capacity of their 80 THP+ slots have requested an additional 70 slots for the coming year.
- ◆ Employment services counselors bring employment expertise to Child and Family Services and transitioning foster youth. A streamlined Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) Employment Program allows application for **21 different job classifications representing over 1000 codes** through one on-line application. Over 30 youth have been hired into the program. Employment Services held a recent job fair with over 70 employers and **240** foster youth in attendance.
- ◆ Working to streamline the multiple local educational initiatives in an effort to improve educational outcomes for children K-12 and youth ages 18 to 24, and co-locate FYS liaisons with DFCS staff.
- ◆ The Youth Advisory Board is credited with getting Santa Clara's IDA program on the right track with **over 45** youth involved in active IDA matched savings accounts. As equal partners with adults in planning/ implementing programs, youth helped to make the curriculum interesting, relevant and more easily accessible. Youth co-trainers share transition experiences and inspire youth understanding of the value of financial literacy education, savings and asset building, and help youth to successfully complete training and program enrollment.

### **Lessons Learned**

With the Initiative approaching the three year milestone, there are a number of lessons learned thus far worth mentioning:

- ◆ Early and on-going supports and services that meet the developmental needs of foster youth are an important foundation for later success.
- ◆ Transitioning foster youth need a longer runway of sustained family and community support in order to "launch" successfully into adulthood - this requires (1) programs and resources that can stabilize housing and ease the abrupt drop from foster care at 18; and (2) providing continuing supports up to and after 21 years of age to ensure educational, employment/career and permanency goals are achieved.
- ◆ There is not a recognized, formalized or well-defined system of communication and hierarchy for the myriad placement resources for foster youth (i.e. foster parents, kin caregivers, foster family agencies, group homes, etc.). As such efforts to engage and/or integrate these partners is particularly challenging, often occurring one caregiver at a time.
- ◆ Educational advocates and educational opportunities for foster youth make a difference.
- ◆ Integration between public child welfare and local workforce development to develop services and supports for transitioning foster youth is one of the most challenging areas of our work.
- ◆ Permanency is primary: we must address loss, grief and the emotional/social impacts of foster care if we expect youth to become engaged, inspired and productive adults.
- ◆ Good data drives good decision-making.

## Recent Developments

A number of positive recent developments for the initiative as a whole have occurred as follows:

***Project Management Transition:*** Crystal Luffberry has transitioned out of the CC25I Project Manager role and began a new position as the Director of Integration with the California Co-Investment Partnership. The goal of this integration work will be to take quality system improvement approaches to scale in California. Replacing Crystal as the new CC25I Project Manager is James Anderson. James was previously the CC25I site lead for Santa Clara County, where he also coordinated additional system improvement endeavors.

***Solano County*** has made concerted efforts to improve its quality of services available to emancipating foster youth and with strong community partnerships in place submitted a formal CC25I grant proposal on April 30, 2008. The proposal will go to the Walter S. Johnson Board in August.

***Glenn County*** is currently conducting a self-assessment and with CC25I technical support will become the first county to fully integrate the CC25I strategies with the California Permanency for Youth (CPYP) strategies into one formal proposal.

***At least three other California counties,*** including one large southern county, have expressed interest in submitting CC25I proposals, and as part of the strategic plan, the CC25I Project Team is actively working to develop the needed assistance and support for counties to join the Initiative.

***Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance:*** Active CC25I counties that have gained maturity and expertise will host a series of technical assistance sessions, in which counties will learn innovative approaches with the goal of replicating such best practices back in their own sites. ***Orange County*** hosted the initial session on the practice of drawing down Title IV-E funds to support expanded educational services and supports for all school age foster youth, with over 40 representatives from multiple CC25I site in attendance. ***Santa Clara County*** has offered to host the next TA session on Financial Literacy and IDA account management.

***California's Opening Doors DVD*** has been filmed and produced by California Family to Family/Connected by 25 in partnership with The Alex Smith Foundation and California Youth Connection. This 7 minute DVD is titled "Successful Futures for Foster Youth." Collateral written materials will be created and a dissemination strategy developed that fosters local public/nonprofit/philanthropic partnerships and use of the DVD to generate financial resources connecting foster youth to education, employment, career pathways, housing and other assets to support a successful transition to adulthood. CYC plans to use the DVD to aid the fund-raising efforts of local chapters.

***CC25I Systems Change*** evaluation is continuing. UC Berkeley continues work on a series of reports that will link systems changes to CC25I accomplishments in each of the seven key focus areas of the Initiative.

***CC25I ETO:*** Counties are in varying stages of implementation of CC25I ETO data tracking. All are using ETO for ILP services tracking. In order to ensure outcome data for self-evaluation and system improvement, the Initiative is working with counties on developing local processes that streamline and integrate data collection and ETO entry with regular child welfare and probation business processes and workflow.

### Your Comments are Welcome

Please let us know your thoughts, ideas and suggestions regarding the Initiative. We welcome your contribution on how best to move the work forward on behalf of all foster youth as they journey toward preparing for successful adulthood. Thank you for your support and assistance!

*James Anderson, Project Manager*  
**408.916.7479**  
[Jamesanderson.cc25i@gmail.com](mailto:Jamesanderson.cc25i@gmail.com)

## CONTACTS

For County-specific strategy information, contact the individuals listed below.

### **San Francisco County**

Sophia Isom, Program Manager  
Family and Children's Services Division  
Human Services Agency  
415.558.2329  
[sophia.isom@sfgov.org](mailto:sophia.isom@sfgov.org)

### **Santa Clara County**

Wendy Kinnear-Rausch, Program Manager  
Department of Children and Family Services  
Social Services Agency  
408.975.5623  
[wendy.kinnear@ssa.sccgov.org](mailto:wendy.kinnear@ssa.sccgov.org)

### **Orange County**

Bob Malmberg, Program Manager  
Children and Family Services  
Co. of Orange Social Serv's Agency  
714.940.3935  
[Bob.Malmberg@ssa.ocgov.com](mailto:Bob.Malmberg@ssa.ocgov.com)

### **Solano County**

Linda Orrante, Deputy Director  
Solano County Health and Social Services  
707.784.8331  
[LSOrrante@SolanoCounty.com](mailto:LSOrrante@SolanoCounty.com)

### **Stanislaus County**

Nenita Dean, Manager III  
Child and Family Services  
Community Services Agency  
209.558.2348  
[deanne@co.stanislaus.ca.us](mailto:deanne@co.stanislaus.ca.us)

### **Fresno County**

Lisa Nichols, ILP Supervisor/CC25I Coordinator  
Children and Family Services  
559.453.5095  
[lnichols@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:lnichols@co.fresno.ca.us)

### **Humboldt County**

Cynthia Sutcliffe, Program Manager  
Social Services Branch  
Health and Human Services  
707.476.4707  
[CSutcliffe@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:CSutcliffe@co.humboldt.ca.us)

### **Glenn County**

Lucy Hernandez, Community Services Program Manager  
Glenn County Human Resource Agency  
530.934.1452  
[lhernandez@hra.co.glenn.ca.us](mailto:lhernandez@hra.co.glenn.ca.us)