Opening Doors

A California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) Update

New CC25I Framework – A Working Draft

Youth as leaders and decision makers in their own lives is the centerpiece around which the proposed new CC25I framework is structured. There are three primary focus areas:

- Permanency
- Education
- Employment/Career Development

The three focus areas are framed to support this youth centered foundational practice. And there are four supportive strategies:

- Agency/Community Leadership
- Teaming and Engagement
- Partnership and Resource Development
- Self-Evaluation

The support strategies are based on the Family to Family principles and values and make up the foundation on which to build a comprehensive continuum of supports and services that connect transitioning foster youth by age 25 to the opportunities, experiences and supports that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. (See draft diagram on next page). This is the outline of our proposed new CC25I framework.

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The California Connected by 25 (CC25I) Initiative is a California Family to Family strategy helping public child welfare agencies and their communities build comprehensive services and supports for transitioning foster youth.

New CC25I Framework Development Process

A subgroup of our CC25I Project Team has met over the Spring and Summer 2009 to develop the new proposed framework, based on site and partner feedback from the March 2009 CC25I Development Institute, experiences and lessons learned from over three years of pilot implementation, and efforts to integrate with other initiatives (Breakthrough Series Collaborative on ILP, Ready to Succeed, CPYP, Family to Family).

In addition to the honed focus areas and strategies, the subgroup has identified model practices and strategies that sites have successfully adopted that are associated with each area. For example, a primary strategy under the Youth as Leaders area is

- *Prepare youth to participate as leaders in case planning and decision-making processes affecting them.*

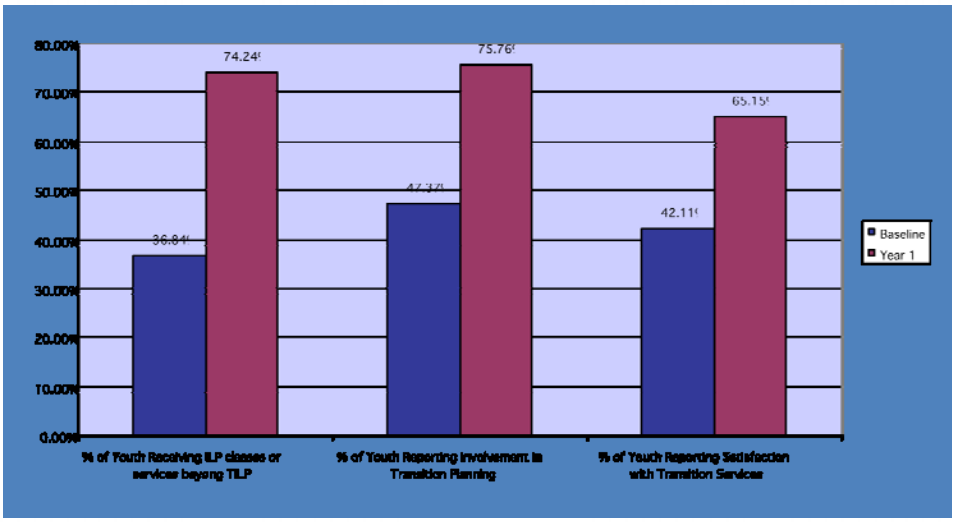
Whereas the original CC25I framework has seven specific focus areas, the proposed new framework has three. We recognize and understand the importance of each of the original focus areas and CC25I sites have demonstrated excellence in all areas – financial literacy and the development of asset based matched savings accounts for example. These areas are not forgotten and are folded into to one of the primary areas. We believe the three primary areas are critical to achieving maximum impact for transitioning foster youth.

This is still a work in progress! Nothing is set in stone and we seek feedback from both CC25I sites and partners. We invite site leads to a forum in January 2010 to review the entire proposed framework. Details are forthcoming.

"Irresistible" ETO Information

In May the CC25I team hosted a convening targeting Self-Evaluation and the use of Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) software. Stanislaus County graciously offered to share baseline and year one data. As a result, we were given a "first look" at what your diligent data entry efforts may provide. Stanislaus shared this graph (below) and discussed their own hypothesis about what we see and why we see it.

Between baseline and year one, strategies were implemented to increase youth involvement in and ownership of transition services. Stanislaus County "interviewers" began calling each youth the day of an ILP class reminding them of the class and offering transportation. Additionally, interviewers made it their responsibility to meet with each transition age youth personally and discuss transition plans. Take a look at the data collected...might it have made a difference? While additional analysis is yet to be made, the prospect of what lies hidden in ***YOUR ETO*** database is exciting….and endless!



Courtesy of Daphne Short, Stanislaus County Data Analyst, Researcher

Supporting Youth Leadership: Providing Youth with Reasoning Tools for a Successful Future

CC25I has partnered with the Youth Advocacy Center to provide a two-day training next January 20 – 21, 2010. The Youth Advocacy Center (YAC) is based in New York City and is recognized as a leading U.S. social entrepreneur. Using their *Getting Beyond the System*® (GBS) philosophy and approaches to effect change, the GBS empowers teens to take a leading role in preparing for their own future. Core GBS concepts that will be presented at the January convening include:

- ***The Socratic Approach*** – empowers adults to communicate with youth in a way that is nonjudgmental and fosters critical thinking and self authorship, personal responsibility and youth empowerment
- ***Case Studies*** – Customized cases will be used as curriculum materials that engage youth and adults actively in learning critical thinking and self-advocacy in the context of realistic and relevant situations young adults face.

CC25I sites will be asked to bring teams of 4-5 to the convening, including one youth with leadership responsibilities. As part of our endeavors to partner and integrate with other initiatives, sites participating in the BSC on ILP and Ready to Succeed are also invited to attend the convening. CalSWEC will send Save the Date and registration information in the coming weeks so stay tuned.

"Holding onto Youth"

By Liza Giron Espinoza

Santa Clara County has made a conscientious effort to include the views, opinions, feedback, and suggestions of current and former foster youth in our CC25I strategy. Whether it is through YAB (Youth Advisory Board) or an ILP focus group, youth are invited and encouraged to participate. The youth voice has been a big piece of the planning for ILP changes and transitions, especially the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on ILP redesign.

One of the key "lessons learned" from our youth is that *life happens.* We have learned that in order to keep our youth engaged in services, programs, and projects we must be willing to hold onto them – and not just expect them to hang on to us. This means willingness on our part to think creatively and "outside the box." Sometimes it means getting out of our comfort zone.

Santa Clara County's ILP BSC Core Team includes youth partners. These young people have school, jobs, and personal responsibilities that go on outside of their BSC participation – and sometimes *life happens.* Rather than just "cut them loose" or write them off, we have tried to "meet them where they're at." This includes getting together off site for breakfast, lunch, coffee, or after hours to bring them up to speed. We have called, sent emails and text messages to keep in touch – and we continue to reach out and send updates even if the young person hasn't been as responsive as we'd like. The extra effort makes the young person realize that he or she is an important member of the team, and that we value their contribution.

The first step to developing a strong relationship is building a foundation. This can be accomplished by being clear with each other regarding expectations. Accountability to each other is the second step. Youth have told us to set expectations and hold them accountable: don't just tell them; lead them. Teach them what they need to know to be able to feel like a part of the team. Follow through on what we say we will do. Don't brush them off and count them out. With youth and staff holding each other to specific expectations, it makes the partnership work.

Being supportive of youth by involving them and having mutual accountability makes for a more meaningful experience, for youth and staff alike. Trust is built and over time, a sense of responsibility to each other develops. When we build relationships and make the effort to hold on, it helps youth hang on…..isn't that the big idea?

Liza Giron Espinoza is the Employment Program Supervisor for Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, Department of Family and Children's Services

AVID and Beyond

The 3rd Annual AVID Convening was held on August 25th at the Double Tree Hotel in Sacramento. The theme of this year's convening was *AVID and Beyond* with the goal of foster youth participating in a variety of college readiness services to increase the number of youth who participate in postsecondary education.

All eight CC25I counties participated and a pre convening AVID orientation session was provided to those sites not a part of the original AVID pilot. The four pilot sites had a successful year with over 60 youth enrolled and another 150 expected to enroll this year.

Specific convening highlights included:

- Motivating students during trying economic times
- Description of the Cornell note taking process to increase critical thinking, recall and preparation for college
- Caregiver Engagement by reviewing note taking assignments at home
- Key AVID data elements and outcome tracking
- Expanding foster youth participation in AVID across the state

A special thanks to our presenters: Timothy Bonnel, *Student Financial Aid Programs Coordinator, California Community Colleges' Chancellor's Office,* Lucy Berger, *Foster Kinship Care Educational Coordinator, California Community Colleges,* Pam McGee, *AVID Regional Director, Fresno Region VVII,* Denise Harshman, *Orange County Regional Coordinator,* Andrea Lichter, *Region V AVID Program Director.*

And a big thanks to Tracy Fried, *Tracy Fried & Associates,* for planning and facilitating the convening!

CC25I and Systems Change Analysis: Heidi Sommer from UC- Berkeley

Heidi Sommer is a doctoral student in the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley. Her dissertation is examining the factors that influence participation in local Independent Living Services programs among adolescent foster youth.

For the past three and half years Heidi and her advisor, Professor Jane Mauldon, have overseen the systems change assessment of CC25I in the four early implementing counties (Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Stanislaus). Heidi has attended many county workgroup meetings and CC25I convenings to track accomplishments through the Initiative. She has worked closely with the CC25I Project Team to identify challenges and best practices emerging from the work of CC25I counties. Heidi and Dr. Mauldon are completing a series of reports on county achievements in the various focus areas – K-12 Education, Housing, Financial Literacy, Permanency and Post Secondary Education/Career Development – as well as in systems change areas of Youth and Caregiver Engagement, Community Partnerships and Self-Evaluation. Heidi hopes to continue with this type of research and evaluation work in the nonprofit sector after completing her degree in the Spring.

Heidi has long been interested in the policies and services available to foster youth, and while an undergraduate at UCLA, worked with homeless runaway youth in Hollywood, many of whom spent time in foster care.

Contact Heidi at 510.428.2516 or h_som@berkeley.edu

The CC25I Systems Change reports can be found at the CC25I website: http://www.f2f.ca.gov/California25.htm

Youth Advisory Board Surveys

Late this summer surveys were distributed to the eight CC25I sites with instructions for members of the respective Youth Advisory Boards to complete and return. The survey is intended to collect information on accomplishments thus far – and the challenges encountered along the way – as well as to measure what issues rise to the surface in terms of youth engagement technical assistance in the future. There is no better source for this information than the youth advisors currently assisting county child welfare agencies to improve the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of services for foster youth transitioning to adulthood.

We will use the information to complete a write up of CC25I county accomplishments in the area of youth engagement and youth leadership. We will also use this information to determine the future direction of youth engagement work to be offered by CC25I.

CC25I Financial Literacy Report Release

We are pleased to announce the release of a new report *"California Connected by 25: Efforts to Address Financial Competency and Asset Development among Transitioning Foster Youth."* This report is the third in a series documenting the challenges, accomplishments and lessons learned thus far among the Initiative's early implementing counties in California. The Systems Change Assessment Team at UC Berkeley produced the report for the CC25I funding partners – The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Walter S. Johnson Foundation. The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation and The Stuart Foundation. The executive summary of the report and the full report can be found on the CC25I page of the California Family to Family website at: www.f2f.ca.gov.

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Coming in the Winter 2009 Edition:

- Update on New CC25I Framework
- Youth Survey Results
- ETO Outcomes Reports
- County Highlights