

Foster Parent Training for the Delivery of Independent Living Skills

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## FOSTER PARENT TRAINING

### Abstract

Although training is made available to foster parents when they volunteer to share their homes with children in need, the required ten hours for single parents and fifteen hours for coupled parents does not provide enough training for foster parents who are working with youth preparing for independent living to give them the skills they need to succeed. There are many programs designed for youth, but fewer programs are readily available in Fairbanks, Alaska to teach foster parents how to deliver the skills to the youth. Youth leaving foster care continue to have lower outcomes in education, employment, housing, and fiscal management after exiting foster care than children who were raised in traditional homes. The outcome of this literature review is a pamphlet that will assist agencies in educating the parents of foster youth aging out of the foster care system. It will also provide quick access to resources and learning centers that offer training opportunities for foster parents working with youth preparing for independent living.

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### Foster Parent Training for the Delivery of Independent Living Skills

This research paper is designed to provide foster parents information that can help them effectively prepare young individuals for adult life. Several studies over the last five years suggest the training foster parents receive to implement successful delivery of independent living skills is lacking, therefore so is the transition of foster children to independent adult living (Courtney, Lee & Perez, 2011; Dworsky & Courtney, 2009; Murray, Tarren-Sweeney, & France, 2011).

The objective of the Alaska foster care program is to help children maintain a safe and supportive environment, appropriate to their age category or stage of development. It is designed to help parents re-unite with their children or to assist children with long-term placement (State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Office of Children's Services (OCS) (2012). This project addresses youth who are fourteen and older approaching young adulthood to start planning for aging out of the foster care system. OCS publishes the *Alaska's Resource Family Handbook*, created for foster parents. It covers basic information on becoming a foster parent. Included in the handbook is a section dedicated specifically to foster parents who want to specialize in youth who are aging out of the foster care system. Foster parents can choose to focus their training on helping youth develop life skills necessary for independent living. However, there are no regulations that require foster parents to obtain specific training, even if they choose to bring older aged youth under their care.

Currently, candidates for foster parents in Alaska must complete a mandatory 10 hour training if they are a single foster parent or a 15 hour training for a foster parenting couple. The training reviews the child protective system and covers: (a) separation, (b) grief and loss, (c) visitation of biological parents, (d) positive parenting, and (e) how to transition children back to

their biological parents. Some foster parents can choose to become supervised transition living homes (OCS, 2012). These homes are specifically designed to host youth who will not be reuniting with their birth families. The homes provide training and support to help coordinate and access resources teens need to plan for a shift from foster parent care into independent living, but are not requirements for caring for youth transitioning to adult life.

The purpose of this project is to answer the question “What training is necessary to teach foster parents independent living skills to foster youth transitioning to independent living, and what programs in the Fairbanks area are available to teach these skills?” A pamphlet identifying training opportunities designed to help foster parents is one result of this project. The pamphlet describes an uncomplicated system to find programs and resources to help foster parents teach independent living skills.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Since the child’s environment has a significant impact on the success youth have in school and then in adult life, this paper will follow Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model to demonstrate the importance of the child’s bio-ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Bronfenbrenner classifies complex systems that an individual lives and grows within. There are five systems that can be visualized as nested in rings called the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystems. This system explains how the environment impacts the way a child grows and matures (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Oswalt, 2008; Thompson, Rudolph & Henderso, 2011). The microsystem includes groups and individuals who are directly interacting with the child such as family, school, churches, peers and neighborhoods. Growing up in a healthy reassuring manner is contingent on how these groups, places or individual interact with the child (Oswalt, 2008). For foster youth, the microsystem may also include case managers,

mentors, foster parents and foster siblings. As the individual matures they are living under the influence of many environmental factors that affect the way that physical and psychological development occurs (Thompson & Henderson, 2011). The mesosystem consists of interactions between the microsystem and the youth's experiences, for example how they interact with church or in their schools. This systems examines their role in these areas. The exosystem has a significant impact on how the microsystems of an individual are affected; for example a parent losing their job may cause stress in the home. The macrosystem involves the youths culture and society they live in; while the chronosystem involves how the youth put their experiences together to transition into adulthood and go through marriage, having children and managing major life experiences (Thompson & Henderson, 2011).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model demonstrates how the child's environment and ecological systems have a significant impact on the success of the youth in adult life. His theoretical model has changed the way scientists view the study of people and their environments and develop programs and policies that affect children (Ceci, 2006). The theoretical thread of this paper is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and the importance of policy change for educating foster parents on how to help youth develop the skills necessary to enter adulthood successfully (Ceci, 2006).

### **Literature Review**

The literature review for this project addresses the following areas: (a) importance of ongoing training and the need for effective preparation of foster parents, (b) current status of youth transitioning out of foster care, (c) the problems associated with youth exiting foster care without proper guidance and support from foster parents, and (d) effective programs that coach foster parents who teach and deliver ILS to the youth in their care.

### **Need for Ongoing Training and Effective Foster Parent Preparation**

The importance of ongoing training and the need for effective preparation of foster parents is evident in Cooley and Petren's (2011) quantitative and qualitative study. Fourteen women, five men and one respondent who did not disclose gender participated in the mixed methods study. In the sample of foster parents, five were African American, thirteen were Caucasian and one was multiracial. The study found there is a definite need to teach foster parents how to work within the foster care system, recognize strengths and resiliency of the children in their care, improve self-efficacy in foster parenting and ready foster parents to provide skills training to the youth in their care. Although many of the foster parents in Cooley and Petren's (2011) study felt effective in their parenting skills, they clearly demonstrated a need and desire for additional training and recognized their parenting skills could be improved by a more complete system of training.

Cooley and Petren (2011) also found respondents in their study wanted to engage in role-plays, and collaborate with experienced foster parents. In addition, foster parents can benefit from a comprehensive training in the role of foster parents, by learning to understand the mesosystems and exosystems, they will need to navigate, such as case management agencies, legal systems and resources. In addition the provision of information on ongoing trainings or sessions and support should be made available to foster parents.

According to Geenen and Powers (2007), resources are available within the child's exosystem that can enrich the foster care program and provide monetary advantages to the individuals aging out of foster care. Geenen and Powers (2007) interviewed respondents in ten focus groups to explore the experiences and viewpoints of individuals involved in the transition of youth in foster care to adult life. The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the



Independent Living Program (ILP) were utilized to recruit foster youth, 19 who were remaining in foster care and 8 who had aged out of foster care. Of the 27 foster youth, 7 were of African American descent, 8 Caucasian, 2 Native American, 1 Hispanic and 1 a biracial participant. Six of the emancipated youth were female while 13 of the participants were female in the group currently in foster care. Foster parents were also brought into the qualitative study through DHS with 21 participants, 18 were female and 3 were male. Of the participants 7 were African American, 10 were Caucasian and 3 were Hispanic with 1 Native American foster parent. Foster parents ranged between 15 months and 6.9 years of experience. In addition child welfare professionals with an average length of experience of 6.4 years of experience were interviewed. Sixteen of the participants were white, 3 were African American and 1 was Asian; there were 12 female participants. Nine education professionals participated in this study. All were Caucasian and six were female. In addition ILP case managers with at least 1 year of experience participated. Seven of the ILP case managers were Caucasian, 1 was Hispanic and one was African American of which 4 were female. Their study indicated that youth aging out of foster care are not given the same opportunity for a gradual shift into adulthood. They are often unprepared for to successfully lead independent lives, have no safety nets and are not always able to re-enter the child welfare system to seek help. Families have an important role in transition to adulthood, but often times the youth lack typical developmental experiences that promote a healthy transition to adulthood. This study demonstrated that ILS programs are not enough and foster families will need to contribute more to the success of youth leaving their care (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

Geenen and Powers (2007) suggested those working within the foster care program need to be more innovative, and provide extraordinary services to the children to help them succeed as

emerging adults. Funding is simply not enough; regulations and qualifications for volunteering as a foster parent need to include standards of care and training to assist foster parents who are preparing youth to live independently after foster care ends.

In a study similar to Courtney et al. (2011), Jones (2008) surveyed 129 seventeen-year-old youths exiting group home foster care. The youth were recruited from a rural facility near one of the United States largest cities. In the study 62% of the subjects were female and African American youth made up almost half of the population. In this study African American and Native American populations were over represented and all other groups were under represented in comparison to their ratio among county residents. Jones (2008) examined how these youth manage self-sufficiency by gathering quantitative data on (a) education, (b) job placement, (c) financial capabilities, (d) housing sustainability and homelessness, (e) social support systems, (f) availability and use of health and services, (g) becoming a parent or marriage, and (h) use of public assistance, single parenthood, and encounters with the law or delinquent activity.

Although Jones' (2008) findings were similar to Courtney et al. (2007) in regard to receiving services after leaving group foster care, Jones suggested an increased focus is needed to establish better safety nets within the rung of microsystems for youth moving into adult life. Having a friend or family member available to provide support financially or give advice, helped youth maintain independence. Jones proposed that child welfare systems need to be more involved in connecting youth with family members to help support them as they gain their independence, just as Courtney et al. (2007) suggested welfare providers need to encourage foster parents to make greater efforts to connect youth with family members when they leave family foster care

Reid (2007) points out the areas of “relationships, education, housing, life skills, identity, youth engagement, emotional healing, and financial support,” (p.34) are important factors in moving into adult life for young people transitioning out of foster care and these factors are often overlooked or not met. Dworsky and Courtney (2009) argue that having family and support systems are major factors in succeeding in adulthood. Additionally, Dworsky and Courtney (2009) imply that changes in federal child welfare policies have had little effect on preventing homelessness for individuals coming out of foster care who are young adults. Microsystems or family connections have the strongest preventative outcomes of homelessness resulting in a need to develop interventions that create bonds and increased ties to family members such as grandparents and siblings (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009). In order to help the youth meet their needs within their mesosystem, housing assistance should be made readily available to youth aging out of foster care. Thus, foster parents need to be educated regarding the importance of teaching youth independent living skills along with helping youth make connections with familial relations (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009).

Geenen and Powers (2007) suggest that programs funded by the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families amendments of 2001 (PSSF) may be investing dollars into provider driven programs where foster youth are forced to fit in, rather than creating programs that fit the needs of the youth. This can create programming that is not effective and too weak to make a substantial difference in the lives of these emerging adults. Youth in foster care are often not gaining the practical experiences they need to enter adulthood with the skills to live independently and establish healthy relationships. Geenen and Powers (2007) also found that families need to role model these experiences and life. In addition, having too many providers involved in the foster youth’s life can cause confusion and contribute

to deficits in naturally occurring experiences that emerging adults can take away with them when they leave the foster families home.

Despite the efforts of the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (FCIA) that offers additional funding and resources for young adults moving into independent living and create robust exosystems, adolescents in foster care have not been taking full advantage of funds and resources available to them. The youth were 17 years of age at the time of the study that included three states, Illinois (n=474), Wisconsin (n=195), and Iowa (n=63). Over half of the sample were female (56.4%) with greater than half of the sample of African American descent. Information was collected on (a) placements out of the home, (b) current living situation, (c) current family connections and (d) support networks, (e) independent living services, (f) benefits, (g) job placement assistance, (h) education or (i) other government benefits, (j) physical, (k) mental health care needs, (l) marriage, (m) partner, (n) parental, (o) sexual behaviors and (p) criminal behavior after leaving foster care. On the average, young adults ages 17-18 transitioning out of foster care were getting about 14 of the 47 types of the independent living services, followed by youth age 19 who reported only receiving 9 out of the 47 and worse yet youth only received 6 of the 46 skills by age 21.

The development of the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (FCIA) included the provision of vouchers for college and vocational training, housing and medical services. Courtney et al.'s (2011) findings show there is a definite need to increase the involvement of foster parents in ensuring that these youth receive the services they are entitled to and help them become more active in life skills training of foster youth (Courtney, et al., 2011).

### **Current Status of Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care**

With foster youth, the immediate environment or microsystem can change frequently. Geenen and Powers (2007) reported that foster parents and professionals expressed concern about erratic-and insecure living conditions that impact foster children and their likelihood to trust in a relationship. One participant in the study voiced concern that foster youth lose their real families first, then their foster families next, their friends, and finally their school. In the end this often results in losing their ability to feel genuine belonging within their neighborhoods and leaves them feeling empty. Jones (2008) found that many congregate programs are designed to stabilize youth rather than move them to a less intense environment. However, Jones' findings show that youth who are able to remain in their environment without fear of change tend to function better educationally and connect better with the individuals involved in their care who are also invested in teaching independent living skills.

To further complicate matters, foster youth face challenges related to their mesosystem. The mesosystem involves care providers engaging actively in school programs, sports, and the physical and social development of the youth (Oswalt, 2008). Foster youth are subjected to involvement in several social service programs and lack of communication among these groups and providers can cause confusion in roles. This can result in services falling through the cracks and foster youth needs are left unmet or services can be repeated (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

The exosystem includes things such as access to health care, parent workplace, or extended family members (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Henderson & Thompson, 2011; Oswalt, 2008). The youth typically do not interact with their exosystem, but their exosystem can impact their home life. For example, if a child wants to join sports, but the family is uninsured, they may not be permitted to join the school basketball team. The exosystem can be a problematic

area among youth who are in the care of foster parents who are ill informed about the resources and opportunities foster youth are entitled to through the John Chaffee Independence Care Act of 1999. In fact, a Midwest study of 732 youth by Courtney, et al. (2011) found that youth transitioning into adulthood did not appear to be receiving applications and paperwork that can streamline funding and independent living services to youth aging out of foster care.

To further address the ecological challenges faced by foster youth, it is important to consider the cultural background of the youth when placed in foster care. Some of the cultural contexts described in Bronfenbrenner's macrosystems such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, values and family history can become overlooked by placement in foster homes with their own cultural contexts (Cooley & Petren, 2007; Thompson & Henderson, 2011). In Fairbanks, Alaska, the need to increase the number of Alaska Native foster homes is concerning. As recent as August of 2013, the Fairbanks Daily News Miner reported that of the 2,000 youth in foster care, 1,200 are Alaska Native children (Gilbert, 2013). Only 30 homes of 103 in Fairbanks are Alaska Native families. This makes maintaining macrosystems for the children challenging. In a qualitative study by Cooley and Petren (2007) foster parents expressed the need to learn more about working with diverse populations and cultures in order to better meet the needs of the youth in their care (Cooley & Petren, 2007). To enable individuals the ability to deliver comprehensive care to foster youth, it is necessary to understand the overlying culture that encompasses laws, customs and resources at the child's roots and present position in life (Henderson et al., 2011).

### **Problems Associated with Youth Exiting Foster Care**

**Life skills.** OCS (2012) and the Child Welfare Information Gateway website define independent living skills as the ability to be self-sufficient as an adult. Their aim with

independent living programs is to increase educational, vocational, money management skills, household management skills and housing opportunities for youth who leave foster care.

Unfortunately, many of the programs have shown only minor success as pointed out by Courtney et al. (2011), with staggeringly low numbers of achieved adult living skills in the areas noted above. In a qualitative study by Geenen and Powers (2007) caseworkers and foster parents felt that Independent Living Programs (ILP) were not enough and did not consider the individual needs of the foster youth and did not pertain to the real world. In the same study, foster parents commented on the need to include a focus on teaching children to be responsible for themselves and how to prepare them in advance for departure from congregate homes when they take the ten hours of required training each year. Caseworkers indicated that foster parents needed additional training to navigate all of the services available, but foster care policies can make it challenging for foster parents to navigate the multiple professionals and paraprofessionals involved in the foster youth's care contribute to the lack actually connecting youth with the services they need.

Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick and Painter (2007) addressed the challenges of youth aging out of foster care in a qualitative study. The researchers formed focus groups that encouraged the participants to converse among each other sharing their experiences and points of view using open-ended questions to determine what concerns they had related to the development of independent living skills necessary for aging out of foster care. The four groups were comprised of foster care youth, youth who had aged out of foster care, foster parents and social workers to determine repeating scenarios and pull data together to identify major themes for the youth preparing to age out of foster.

There were 100 foster parents who participated in the Scannapieco et al. (2007) Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) study; 22 were African American, 11 were Hispanic and 67

were White; 85% were women and 15% were male. The foster youth included 33 African Americans, 25 Hispanic youth, and 47 White with an 88% female ratio. There were 78 African American, 22 Hispanic and 0 White foster youth participants who graduated from the PAL program. Finally, there were 40 African American, 12 Hispanic and 48 white child welfare workers participating in the focus groups.

As a result of the focus groups, Scannapieco et al. (2007) found that all participants' felt foster youth should have more opportunities to build ILS skills. Youth who took part felt good about the experience but did not feel they were able to implement what they practiced in a classroom environment. Participants unanimously believed it was necessary for foster parents to receive training to assist teens to implement the skills learned in the PAL program and help the youth apply the knowledge. In addition, the groups suggested practicing in vivo would be beneficial. All group participants identified they have been unsatisfied with the ability of youth to manage money, maintain a safe place to live, utilize and obtain public transportation and passes as well as other basic needs such as understanding their health and mental health care needs.

In a similar study by Geenen and Powers (2007), ILP outcomes did not prove effective in meeting the needs of foster youth. In the qualitative study participants emphasized that in a perfect system, foster parents would provide the training and intermediate support the ILP programs are receiving funding to provide. This type of training and skill development would occur in a normal home environment and reduce the need to have multiple social service providers involved in the youth's care, therefore minimizing the mesosystem clutter. More importantly Geenen and Powers (2007) study brought attention to and acknowledged that foster parents need to obtain training and receive backing from the foster care system to take the



responsibility of teaching independent living skills to the foster youth. In a study by Jones (2008) of foster youth living in a group home designed to focus on education rather than treatment, found considerable improvements in long-term outcomes in the group home environment. The group home offered the provision of long term security along with trained caregivers who worked with youth after school to integrate ALS into their daily lives (Jones, 2008). Training foster parents with similar expectations for how to teach foster youth ALS in single household settings may produce better outcomes and provide less disruption within the foster youth's fragile microsystems.

The group home Jones (2008) described with 144 youth has shown significant outcomes in the success of the youth exiting their care. The group home opened in 2001 and they have followed the youth and have seen success. Jones found that 50% of the youth entered college; at one point youth had two to three jobs a year with a minimum of about one period with no employment. The youth who did not enroll in higher education entered jobs at the non-skilled level and did not seem career driven. Nearly 75% of the youth were engaged in adult life through employment, education or marriage a year post discharge. In interviews after three years, the youth reported rates at 96% connected rate to adult life including employment, education or marriage (Jones, 2008). The young adults who left the residential unit showed reduced rates of involvement with the justice systems, homelessness and becoming victims in contrast with other studies that were reporting on foster youth outcomes after discharge.

One of the main reasons that it is important to help youth develop economic resources, obtain a high school diploma or GED, and gain the skills for employment is to help reduce the chance of homelessness (Courtney et al., 2007). Additionally, foster parents who develop positive relationships with foster youth increase their level of function and provide safety nets for

the youth when they exit foster care (Jones, 2008; Southerland, Mustillo, Farmer, Stambaugh & Murray, 2009),

**Education.** Youth often move in and out of foster care placement frequently altering their ecological systems. Surprisingly, the youth are resilient in their ability to stay abreast educationally with other youth living in non-congregate homes (Pecora et al., 2006). A study by Pecora et al. (2006) demonstrated the importance of the stability of residence. In their study more than half of the participants were of color, 15.7% American Indian or Alaska Native, 5.8% were Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 10.5% were Hispanic and 21.3% were Non-Hispanic Black. From elementary school through high school, 65% of youth in foster care had seven or more school transfers before finishing high school. The youth graduated at a rate of 84.8% while the general population graduated at 87.3% ages 18-29.

Although it might be expected that similar results for higher education would follow, Pecora et al. (2006) reported that two in five foster youth gained some secondary education after high school; however, only just over 20 % finished the program or the degree sought after. Foster youth appeared to fair even worse at just over 16% completion rates for vocational or technical degrees. Only 2% completed a Bachelor's or higher degree. For youth ages 25-33 the rate of graduation was only slightly higher at 2.7% graduation rate for a Bachelor's degree. The general population of like age range had a 24.4% completion rate. For alumni ages 25-33, the Bachelor's completion rate (2.7%) was much lower than for the general population in a similar age range of 25 to 34 years (24.4%) (Pecora et al., 2006).

A pilot study by Merdinger, Hines, Lemon-Osterling and Wyatt (2005) demonstrated the need to ensure that caregivers are acting as advocates and role models within the youth's microsystem. Merdinger et al. found the most frequently quoted statements from youth who

entered into college involved having positive role models; however, these role models were typically not the foster parents. The role models were teachers who had a strong influence on the foster youth to stay in school and were innovative in their attempts to ensure they were successful. This is reflective of the study by Jones (2008) who found the development of long-term relationships with teachers who are trained to understand the needs of the youth have better educational outcomes. In addition, long-term stability is important. Jones also found that when the youth are confident their microsystem will not change for the duration of their high school years to independence, they will engage with more dedication to their education and treatment.

**Finances.** In 2006, Leming-Osterling, Hines and Merdinger (2005) completed an evaluation on the program Advocates to Successful Transition to Independence (ASTI), which was comprised of 30 female and 21 male participants average aged 16.3 years. There were 5 African Americans, 4 Asian Pacific Islanders, 18 Mexicans and 19 White individuals who made up the 51 youth in the study. Leming-Osterling and Hines found that 51.9% of participants did not know how to budget money; 55.8% did not know how to find and secure housing, 63.5% could not balance a checkbook, 75% did not know how to obtain a credit card, obtain car insurance or health care insurance; and 80.8% of the youth did not know how to purchase a car. Leming-Osterling and Hines demonstrated in their study a distinct disconnection with the youth's ability to engage with their exosystems. Pecora et al. (2006) found in a sample of 659 young adults from public welfare agencies that young adults exiting the foster care system between 20 and 34 years of age were financially unstable; one-third of the participants' incomes were below or right at poverty level and they had no health insurance. In fact Pecora et al. (2006) reported at least 16.8% of the sample participants were on Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) or other assistance.

The ILP program could be more effective if foster parents were involved in the role of implementing classroom curriculum to real life. ILP programs are not enough to bridge the needs of foster youth into adult living (Geenen & Powers 2007). Ideally, foster parents would take the position of providing support and training like the ILP programs are financed to do. It would create a more natural environment for youth and reduce the need for yet another social worker to become involved, thus producing an even more “foster care” upbringing. In order for ILP to be successful, foster parents must become trained in ILP; until then, it appears unconventional ILP classroom settings will continue to be essential resources for foster youth aging out of congregate care (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

**Employment.** In order to support the demands of living independently, employment is necessary for youth to thrive in their communities. In a study by Daining and DePanfilis (2007) of 100 youth, only 52 were currently employed and 48 were unemployed during the interview period with seven having never worked. Most of the youth who were employed were working full time jobs. The time on the job ranged from 0-37 months. Job stability was a common factor among the 52 employed youth who had been working three months straight (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007).

Pecora et al.’s (2006) findings show that the employment rate for young adults who aged out of the foster care system were at nearly 15% less than the national average of 95%. During the time of their study, many foster youth were in precarious financial and housing situations. Restructuring independent living delivery systems for youth leaving foster care to include more extensive preparation and delivery of resources will help youth become more competitive in the workforce and maintain stable housing (Pecora et al., 2006).

**Housing.** In the Daining and DePanfilis (2007) study, homelessness, after exiting congregate care continued to be problematic for foster youth. Despite 72% of youth having stable homes after being discharged from foster care, 28% of foster youth moving into adult life reported being homeless after leaving foster care. A study by Pecora et al. (2006), showed similar reports of homelessness with numbers exceeding one in five homeless young adults after exiting foster care. In order to prevent homelessness, foster youth need intensive case management before they are seventeen. Foster care providers need to be familiar with FCIA and the case managers that work with the youth to ensure services can be connected and funding can be made available to transition to out of care placement (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2009). Outcomes found in a study by Courtney et al., (2011) in a comparison of group home placement and foster home placements showed youth leaving group home care were more likely to tap into resources from their exosystems and obtain housing services. This is likely because group home care is contracted to teach life skills to the youth in their care while foster parents are not. Despite providing more natural family settings in normal home surroundings, the youth in family care received notably less help; thus, child social services programs need to increase their efforts to include foster parents in delivering life skills (Courtney et al., 2011).

**Relationships.** Relationships are the basic building blocks of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. At the core of the model microsystems are vital factors in the healthy promotion of youth to adulthood (Oswalt, 2008). Studies show that positive bonding in relationships between foster parents and older youth, affect the youths overall emotional and behavioral functioning with foster parents as well as their peers (Southerland et al., 2009). In addition, Southerland et al. (2009) found that foster parents who considered their role in the youths care to be a parental figure, seemed to influence the youth to function at a higher level.

Some foster parents wanted to have more information regarding the needs of youth in their care and to better understand how to effectively establish relationships with biological families to communicate and work with them for the benefit of the child (Cooley & Petren, 2008). In the same study, foster parents wanted to develop the ability to work with the culture of the foster child and learn from real life examples of issues that may occur while foster parenting (Cooley & Petren, 2008).

Southerland et al. (2009) found emotional bonds between foster parents and children in their care were critical to the social and emotional functioning of the adolescents. This discovery offers support to the idea that positive worthwhile relationships among youth and foster parents may influence distal outcomes in psychosocial abilities in adult life. In fact, Southerland et al. also found that poor linkage to programing that supports child functioning had less to do with positive behavior and emotional well-being than the relationship between the foster parents and the youth. This may be due to foster parents stepping into the role of parenting rather than treating their relationship with the youth as professional and the youth as the consumer.

In addition, increased focus will need to be placed on providing safety nets for emerging adults from foster care, to provide a similar cushion that young adults with family supports can return to if they fail in their efforts to live independently (Jones, 2008). Jones (2008) takes a strong stand on these issues and emphasizes the need to advocate for young adults coming out of foster care for an extended period until they are able to achieve stability. Reid (2007) points out the areas of “relationships, education, housing, life skills, identity, youth engagement, emotional healing, and financial support,” (p.35) as important factors in moving to adult life for young people transitioning out of foster care that are often overlooked or not met. According to Dworsky and Courtney (2009), the importance of having family and support systems are greatly

implicated as essential factors for succeeding in adulthood tying in neatly with Bronfenbrenners' ecological theory.

Dworsky and Courtney (2009) imply that changes in federal child welfare policies have had little effect on preventing homelessness for young adult foster youth. The microsystems of family connections have the strongest preventative outcomes of homelessness resulting in a need to develop interventions that create bonds and increase ties to family members such as grandparents and siblings. Housing assistance should be made readily available to youth aging out of foster care. Thus, foster parents need to be educated regarding the importance of teaching youth independent living skills and ways to stay housed and make connections with familial relations (Dworsky & Courtney 2009).

**Coordinating Services.** According to child welfare, caseworkers face many obstacles to successfully communicating with foster parents. Among caseworkers, foster parents and foster youth mutually believe there is a lack of good communication along the lines of mesosystems and exosystems. In addition, foster parents believe they do not have enough knowledge about services accessible through the John Chaffee Act regarding youth moving toward independence (Scannapieco et al., 2007). Geenen and Powers (2007) found a common thread among professionals, parents and youth in relation to poor collaboration among providers. Because youth are involved with several systems, the communication is deficient causing confusion over who is responsible for what roles each entity should provide in caring for the foster youth. This often causes gaps in care and replication of services. To complicate matters more there continues to be a lot of frustration with the system and poor relationships with case managers for the youth. One youth in a study by McCoy, McMillen and Spitznagel (2008) reported not speaking with his caseworker for over five months. Other youth reported they were never able to

get in touch with their case workers, while some youth and foster parents reported having problems connecting with ILP specific case managers and were put on long waiting lists (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Even after enrolling in ILP, Geenen and Powers (2007) report ongoing confusion among the caseworkers and the foster parents with one parent testifying that a young man in her care was attending ILP and had obtained employment as was recommended by his caseworker and agreed on by the foster parent and foster youth. At the time the youth was scheduled to report to work the caseworker was calling to tell the foster parent to send the foster youth to a class on how to keep a job that directly conflicted with his new work schedule. This incident caused significant frustration among the youth and the foster parent.

Youth become discouraged by the number of people they have to make contact with to get their needs met. In many situations they have to go to their counselor to get connected to services like ILP to work on financial aid forms for college, then to their caseworker to receive funds for school clothes. Foster parents become frustrated with the multiple providers and abundance of resources but the lack of communication results in nothing getting done (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Cooley and Petron (2011) infer that training for foster parents should be designed to include systems related to foster care and define the role of the foster parent, case manager and legal system. The training should also ready foster parents for the challenges related to getting through the system and provide them with an all-inclusive resource guide and educate them on how to advocate and work effectively with the numerous programs and systems the foster youth will be engaged with. The foster parents can also benefit from learning how the foster care system functions and what part paraprofessionals and professionals play in helping the foster parents overcome system hurdles and utilize resources that are available to youth in their care (Cooley & Petron, 2011).



**Financial Supports.** The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (FCIA), offers additional funding and resources for young adults moving into independent living. As a part of the youth's exosystem, FCIA can provide financial and housing supports for young people so that they may be successful in their communities when transitioning from foster care. According to Geenen and Powers (2007), resources are available to enrich the foster care program to provide advantages to individuals aging out of the system; at the same time, their findings show that those who are working within the foster care program will need to be more innovative, and provide extraordinary services to the children, in order to help them be successful as emerging adults. Funding is simply not enough, regulations and qualifications for volunteering as a foster parent will need to be implement in the standards of care and training for foster parents to teach soon to be adults the skills they need for independent living (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

### **Effective Programs that Coach Foster Parents to Teach ILS**

**Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life Skills.** The Casey Life Skills Assessment looks at the behaviors and abilities of youth who are looking forward to achieving their long-term goals. The assessment is designed to help youth determine how well they are able to manage adult life skills (Casey Family Programs, 2001). A brief example of the areas the assessment evaluates are: a) maintaining healthy relationships, b) employment and study routines, c) future planning, d) ability to use local resources, e) activities of daily living, f) managing finances, g) computer competency, h) adult support networks.

To complement the Casey Life Skills guide and assessment, Ready, Set Fly! is designed as a guide to help foster parents teach life skills (Casey Family Programs, 2001). It was developed in collaboration with foster parents, adoptive parents, teens and young adults in Tucson Arizona as a part of the Casey Family Programs. The skills included in the Life Skills

Guidebook are the skills needed for adult living. It is intended to teach foster parents and other individuals in parental roles to instill life skills in a one to one setting. The skills are designed for ages 8-10; 11-14; the target group of this paper, ages 15-18, and then 19 and older. Foster parents are encouraged to use the guide after foster youth in their care have completed the Internet-based Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) (2001). The ACLSA should identify any areas the child needs help mastering before adult living. The activities in the guide are designed for flexibility so that they can be integrated in the family setting (Casey Family Programs, 2001). Currently, there are not enough studies related to the outcomes of programs like the Casey Family programs since federal policies changed with the introduction of FCIA in 1999 (Casey Family Programs, 2008). The Casey Family Programs have conducted a study of alumni in Texas and Michigan, but further exploration in the success of the programs need to be examined.

**Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting Group Preparation and Selection (MAPPS/GPS) and Permanence and Safety Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (PS-MAPP).** This program was created for potential foster parents and families interested in adopting so that they are informed about the duties involved in becoming foster or adoptive parent (Alliance of Kansas, Inc., 2012). MAPPS/GPS helps families evaluate their parenting skills and understand the dynamics of foster parenting and adoption that often involve multiple partnerships and long term planning for the youth. There are ten sessions that help prepare the parents to obtain the skills to be functional in their role and within the systems they will need to navigate.

Areas the MAPPS/GPS (Children's Alliance of Kansas, Inc., 2012) program targets include understanding and meeting the developmental and mental health needs of the children

entering foster care or adoptive families. It covers safety issues and reviews the needs of the children. In addition they learn to share parenting with the natural family if they plan to become foster parents. The foster parents also learn how to actively participate in planning for permanent living. There is heavy emphasis on communication and trust with the foster and adoptive parents as well as the child welfare workers through assessment and problem solving approaches. The PS-MAPP program uses shared decision-making and solution based approaches that help build trust and team effectiveness (Children's Alliance of Kansas, Inc., 2012).

Deciding Together (Children's Alliance of Kansas, Inc., 2012) works in conjunction with the MAPPS guide and promotes collaboration between foster parents, social workers and adoptive parents. It also teaches and supports partnerships with biological family members and past positive connections to work together for the greater good of the child. Another extension of the MAPPS program is called Choices (Children's Alliance of Kansas, Inc. 2012). It promotes mindful thinking and consideration of alternatives and consequences in a group setting, which helps youth develop confidence, become self-sufficient and productive within their community. The parent version was developed to help parents nurture their children by teaching them how to recall past decisions, learning from them and recognizing opportunities and obstacles to their success or wellbeing.

**I'm Getting Ready. I CAN DO IT!** This program encourages foster parents, teacher's mentors, friends, parents, or grandparents to engage in the learning process with the youth (Casey Life Skills, 2001). It uses interactive workbooks that are created to motivate learning. It can also be used independently by the youth. It is not solely designed for foster parents but covers information that young people need to know as they venture into their independent

futures, such as finding an apartment, nutrition, financial management, legal problem or concerns and safety. It can be down loaded free (Casey Life Skills, 2001).

**The Alaska Resource Family Center (ARFC).** ARFC provides programs in Fairbanks that focus on supervised transitional living for youth who are preparing to emancipate from the system and their biological families. According to the Fairbanks Director of Independent Living Programs, Ms. L. Johnson of OCS, foster parents are referred to ARFC for training (personal communication, October, 2013). Workers are trained to work with foster parents to instill the skills and education to help youth move toward independent living. OCS does not provide foster parent training and refers foster parents to ARFC for all training needs. ARFC connects foster parents and foster youth to training of any age and provides programs that will work with parents to prepare adolescents to move into independent living. They maintain a large assortment of resources and materials to increase the life skills foster youth will need to navigate adult life. ARFC provides seminars across the State of Alaska that focus on independent living for youth. In addition to trainings and seminars they also help foster parents utilize the Casey Life Skills assessment designed to assess life skills after the foster youth turns 16 years of age (Alaska Resource Family Handbook, 2012).

OCS (U.S. Department of Health and Social Services Children's Bureau, 2012) can provide funding for independent living funds for foster youth after they have turned 16 years of age and are under 21. These funds are designed to provide youth with resources, life experiences and funds they need to be effectively independent as adults. The funds also cover education and training to pay for college or vocational training. OCS will pay for programs that offer bachelor's degrees but nothing less than a two-year program. They also provide funding for programs that are one year or longer to help youth find employment as well as for vocational

programs that have been operating for at least two years. OCS will provide up to \$5,000 dollars annually for housing and book costs. To qualify the youth must be in foster care at the time of applying and must be at least 16 years of age and less than 21 years of age. The youth need to commit to a full time program in order to qualify for funding.

**Other Local Training.** Presbyterian Hospitality House's (PHH) uses a program called the Teaching Family Model. PHH only provides training to foster parents contracted by their agency. According to McCormic (personal communication November, 30, 2013) the Teaching-Family Model (TFM) developed in 1975 to improve quality of care provided by professionals. The framework is based on setting goals that are individualized and agreed upon by the client. The Teaching Family Association has forged standards for certification of member agencies by providing a set of standards of care that mirror the TFM. The program uses a behaviorally-based educational process that promotes a home environment that feels welcoming. The idea behind TFM is to learn to give and take between the foster parents and the foster youth. In this model the parents are encouraged to correct the youth by helping them seek out better ways to handle their behaviors and work with others (Schlientz, 2010). PHH does not provide training to foster parents wishing to increase their ability to teach youth ILS; instead they refer them to the Alaska Resource Center for Families and Children according to McCormic (personal communication, November, 30, 2013).

PHH provides an independent living program called the Independent Living Lab. It provides services to 18-24 year old youth who have successfully completed long-term placement but need additional help moving into adult life. They learn how to manage finances, gain employment and take care of their homes and household responsibilities; however, according to

McCormick the program is not designed to teach foster parents how to deliver ILS to youth (personal communication, November, 30, 2013).

In 2012, Carl Rayburn, Director of Therapeutic Family Treatment Homes at Family Center Services of Alaska (FCSA) reported three systems of training for foster parents to learn how to deliver independent living skills (C. Rayburn, personal communication, November 20, 2012). The first type of foster parent training is initially done through OCS who send foster parents to ACRF for actual training. After the initial training, case managers and social service providers are connected to foster parents and each party takes responsibility for ongoing training and education of foster parents in regard to ILS or other training needs. Finally, foster parents and group home care providers are encouraged to support, the self-determination of the foster youth aging out of foster care and transitioning to adult life to engage in ILS programming. To date, there are no specific programs designed to teach foster parents how to deliver ILS to the youth in their care according to C. Rayburn (personal communication, November 20, 2012).

Rayburn also implemented a program specifically designed to teach ILS. Unfortunately the program has been closed out due to non-participation; however, its closure may provide insight on some of the issues surrounding the difficulties related to educating youth on ILS (personal communication, November 20, 2012). OCS is largely responsible for the initial training of foster parents contracted with FCSA foster parent program (despite utilizing ACRF as the actual training center). The initial training is not focused on ILS but does address stages of development. The core training components of OCS are (a) learning what to expect and what services are available, (b) looking at one's own strengths and needs, (c) developing skills to understand the child's behavior, (d) learning about stages of development (e) understanding the

importance of teamwork, such as working with the caseworker, the child's parents, schools, etc. (State of Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2012).

Utilizing a web supported education center called the Alaska Center for Resource Families, many foster parents will gain their first 10 to 15 hours of training (State of Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2012). After the initial training, foster parents are required to attend quarterly training through OCS in order to maintain their foster parent licensure. Other options to receive training from community resources is also an acceptable method of maintaining required training hours; however, the hours must be signed for on an alternative training form (State of Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2012).

There are several models of guidance and teaching for foster parents available on-line or in work book curriculum, such as Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life Skills, MAPPS/GPS and PS-MAPPS, I'm Getting Ready. I CAN DO IT!, as well as agencies such as ARCF, PHH and FCSA. These programs can increase their ability to teach and train foster parents the skills to deliver independent living skills to youth in their care by collaborating with each other and offering information on local programming to foster parents.

### **Intended Audience & Application**

Community social service programs and providers who employ foster parents and provide foster care service to the youth of Fairbanks can benefit from this project by learning better ways to educate foster parents to deliver independent skills training to youth in their care. By having access to a pamphlet that can easily identify resources and services, foster parents can quickly access educational opportunities to learn how to deliver life skills to foster youth. Community and social service providers are not only important in advocating for better programming but are the individuals working for agencies that have the ability to implement

better use of funding and teach enhanced foster care delivery for to the interim parents of foster children emerging into adulthood. In a study by Freundlich, Avery and Padgett (2006), only agency associates gave independent living programs a positive rating. Social workers, guardians and court judges did not share the same opinion on independent living curriculums and blame flaws in the programming rather than on the youth, when they achieve poor outcomes in independent adult living. This clearly demonstrates the need for more strategic planning on behalf of agencies to deliver the skills and resources necessary for foster parents to assist youth in their care to succeed.

Some agencies blame the children in the foster care system, describing them as having a lack of motivation or an unwillingness to learn. In the Freundlich et al. (2006) study, judges and direct care providers shared a different opinion on the existing programming, calling the programming weak and focused on preparing children to enter the welfare system rather than build on their strengths and talents. Developing a higher standard of training will support strength based attitudes as identified in the literature for Fairbanks agencies providing foster care services in the community, out-lying villages and rural communities. In addition, this training would help programs that provide educational, vocational, financial training and assistance gain a better understanding of the needs and challenges of this population so they may better support their journey to meet life goals and become empowered to live healthy lives in their communities.

Policy makers and programming specialists in the Fairbanks community can learn the importance of implementing successful connections for youth aging out of the foster care program. Foster care youth require more than a good education and monetary supplements; they need support from individuals who are willing to act as parents and healthy mentors. Agencies



can learn more about the role of parenting and the value it has on enhancing successful independent living for youth leaving the system. Foster parents and agencies are finally beginning to take the role of parenting foster children seriously (Reid, 2007). This project can help take foster parenting to a higher level of care and mentoring. Cooley and Petron (2011) found a common theme among foster parents in a qualitative study that described a need for reference guides that can be provide to foster parents to identify agencies that can be called on for help with different issues or concerns regarding foster care. Additionally, many of the respondents of the study specified they would like to see trainings in the future for foster parents listed in the manual.

The result of this project is a pamphlet that will assist agencies employing foster parents by educating the parents of foster youth aging out of the foster care system. It is designed to provide foster parents with the ability to access resources and learning centers, web sites and training opportunities to enhance their skills to impart adult life skills to foster youth. It will also help foster parents implement best practices of engaging with and teaching life building skills with foster children. This pamphlet contains information about adult life skills and how foster parents can help children obtain the skills included in the FCIA that the U.S. congress passed in 1999 to improve prospects and provide independent living services and life skills training (U.S. Department of Social Services Children's Bureau, 2012).

Each category of independent living skills on the pamphlet will be matched with an agency or program in the Fairbanks community that can teach or train foster parents to deliver the independent living skills to the foster youth. In addition, web sites for grants and additional funding for youth venturing into independence will be included on the pamphlet for foster parents to easily access.

The completed brochure includes a section of frequently asked questions and answers from foster parents regarding parenting skills, teaching independent living skills, dealing with emotional and behavioral problems, finding funding and when to recognize that the caregiver needs to focus on self-care.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the questions, “What training is necessary to teach foster parents independent living skills to foster youth transitioning to independent living, and what programs in the Fairbanks area are available to teach these skills?” The literature review in this paper shows that youth need innovative foster parents who can teach them the skills to live independently in their community once they have left foster care to venture into their adult lives. Foster parents, case managers, social workers and foster youth all agree that foster parents need more training in order to deliver independent living skills to youth, better coordinate services and obtain monetary and familial supports upon departure from the foster care system (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Without implementation of training programs for foster parents that go beyond the 10-15 hour training required by OCS, remedial outcomes for higher education, prosperous employment, the development of healthy supports and relationships and secure housing will continue to plague foster youth leaving care (Geenen & Powers, 2007; Scannapieco et al., 2007).

This is not a new problem. The development of the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, (FCIA) that include the provision of vouchers for college, vocational training, housing and medical services was created as a result of the foster care system lacking in its ability to help youth achieve average outcomes similar to those of the general population (U.S. Department of Social Services Children’s Bureau, 2012). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model clearly points to the need for the addition of federal acts like FCIA that attempt to fill the

gaps in the foster youths microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems. Foster youth continue to be subjected to extended systems that reach beyond that of youth in the general population. Foster youth are trying to manage lives that include not just their families, schools, church and places of employment, but they also include multiple social service programs and constant change in their microsystem and mesosystem (Jones, 2008). As a society, it is important to ensure that the youth have the ability to acquire the similar support systems and access to resources, education, vocational training and health care as they exit foster care, but they will need foster parents who are trained and have information on how to access the foster youth entitlements. The development of this pamphlet should be helpful in assisting parents to access to training and resources they can use to improve their foster parenting skills and delivery of independent living skills to the youth in their care.

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## ***Local Agency***

### ***Family Centered Services of Alaska***

*Family Center Services of Alaska (FCSA) reported three systems of training for foster parents to learn how to deliver independent living skills.*

- *The first type of foster parent training is initially done through OCS who send foster parents to Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) for actual training.*
- *After the initial training, case managers and social service providers are connected to foster parents and each party takes responsibility for ongoing training and education of foster parents in regard to independent living skills or other training needs.*
- *Finally, foster parents and group home care providers are encouraged to support the self-determination of the foster youth aging out of foster care and transitioning to adult life to engage in ILS programming.*

907-474-0890

[www.familycenteredservices.com](http://www.familycenteredservices.com)



## **Local Agency**

### **Presbyterian Hospitality House**

*Presbyterian Hospitality House (PHH) supports independent living in Fairbanks. PHH uses a program called the Transition to Independent Living Lab in combination with the Teaching Family Model.*

- *PHH provides an independent living program called the Independent Living Lab. It provides services to 18-24 year old youth who have successfully completed long-term placement but need additional help moving into adult life.*
- *Teaching-Family Model (TFM) developed in 1975 to improve quality of care provided by professionals. The framework is based on setting goals that are individualized and agreed upon by the client.*

**907-456-6445**

[phhalaska.org](http://phhalaska.org)

**TIP Model web address: [tipstars.org](http://tipstars.org)**

**Teaching Family Model: [www.teaching-family.org/tfmodel.htm](http://www.teaching-family.org/tfmodel.htm)**

## *Becoming an Effective Foster Parent Training Opportunities*

- *Ready Set Fly-Program is designed to compliment the Casey Life Skills and provides foster parents with the skills to help impart independent living skills. It is designed to teach foster parents and other individuals who have parental roles to instill life skills. It covers healthy relationships, employment, planning for the future, use of local resources, activities of daily living, finances, computer skills and support networks.*  
[www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org).
- *Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPPS/GPS) helps parents and families interested in adopting or foster parenting to evaluate their parenting skills. This is a ten-session course to help potential foster parents obtain the skills to function in their role and within the systems they will need to navigate foster parenthood.*  
<http://mappbooks.com/choices.php>

➤ *Becoming an Effective Foster Parent Cont.*

➤ *I'm Getting Ready, I Can Do It! Encourages foster parents, teachers, mentors, friends or grandparents to engage in the learning process with the youth. It uses interactive workbooks that are created to motivate learning.*

<http://www.casey.org/cls/resourceguides/subdocs/imgettingready.pdf>

➤ *The Alaska Resource Family Center*

*ARFC provides a wealth of programs and resources for foster parents and foster youth. They work hand in hand with the Office of Children's Services and connect foster parents to training, and maintain a wealth of information for foster parents working with youth who are preparing for adult life. They also provide seminars across the state that focus on independent living for youth. [www.acrf.org](http://www.acrf.org)*



### *Assistance with Employment Needs*

- *School counselors can assist with appointing a career guide. Career guides can also be obtained through the Alaska Job Centers. <http://jobs.alaska.gov/training.htm>*
- *Youth aged 14- 18 are eligible for funds from the Alaska Youth First Program to increase career skills and opportunities.*

*[labor.alaska.gov/bp/youthfirst.htm](http://labor.alaska.gov/bp/youthfirst.htm)*

### *Job Corp of Alaska*

- *Alaska Job Corps students is designed to help youth receive the skills needed to succeed in the workforce – Free to the youth.*
- *Apply at <http://recruiting.jobcorps.gov/>*
- *Need more information contact a job core representative at (907) 562-6200 or by email at [ak.admissions@jobcorps.gov](mailto:ak.admissions@jobcorps.gov)*

*Assistance with Educational Needs*

***Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)***

*The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, of 2002, provides funding to assist foster youth and eligible former foster youth in attending post secondary education and training programs. Scholarship applications must be received by June 15<sup>th</sup>. Here's how to help youth apply...*

- *Complete the enrollment process to the University of Alaska campus of your choice. Funding availability varies from state to state.*
- *Fill out and turn in the FAFSA form (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>)*
- *Complete the UAF Foster Youth Presidential Tuition Waiver*
- *Include high school or GED and college transcripts.*
- *Complete 2 letters of recommendation and send in with application*
- *Assist the youth in compiling a personal essay and attach*
- *Complete applications for two other scholarships.*
- ***MAIL YOUR COMPLETE PACKET BY JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup> OR TURN IN TO THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE AT UAF :***
- ***FOR QUESTIONS: Contact the Independent Living Coordinator: Amanda Metivier @ (907) 786-6732, [almetivier@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:almetivier@uaa.alaska.edu)***



## *Funding*

- *OCS has can assist with funds designed to provide youth with college or vocational training for programs that are not less than two year degrees. In addition they will provide funding for programs that are one year or longer that assist youth in finding employment.*
- *OCS will assist with up to \$5,000 in housing and book costs per year.*
- *Under the John Chaffee Foster Care Independence Act, Grants are offered to States and Tribes who submit a plan to assist youth in a wide variety of areas designed to support a successful transition to adulthood. Activities and programs include, but are not limited to, help with education, employment, financial management, housing, emotional support and assured connections to caring adults for older youth in foster care*  
*<http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/independentliving/ilfunds.aspx>*
- *Regional Independent Living Specialist*  
*751 Old Richardson Hwy., Suite 300*  
*Fairbanks, Alaska 99701*  
*Phone: (907) 451-2064*

# Foster Parent Connection



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<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=free+images+no+copyright+helping+young+adults+succeed>

*Becoming a foster parent for youth preparing to enter independent adult life requires knowledge, training, collaboration and access to resources. This brochure can help foster parents find the training and tools to help youth in their care find success in higher education, financial management employment and housing after leaving the safety of foster care.*