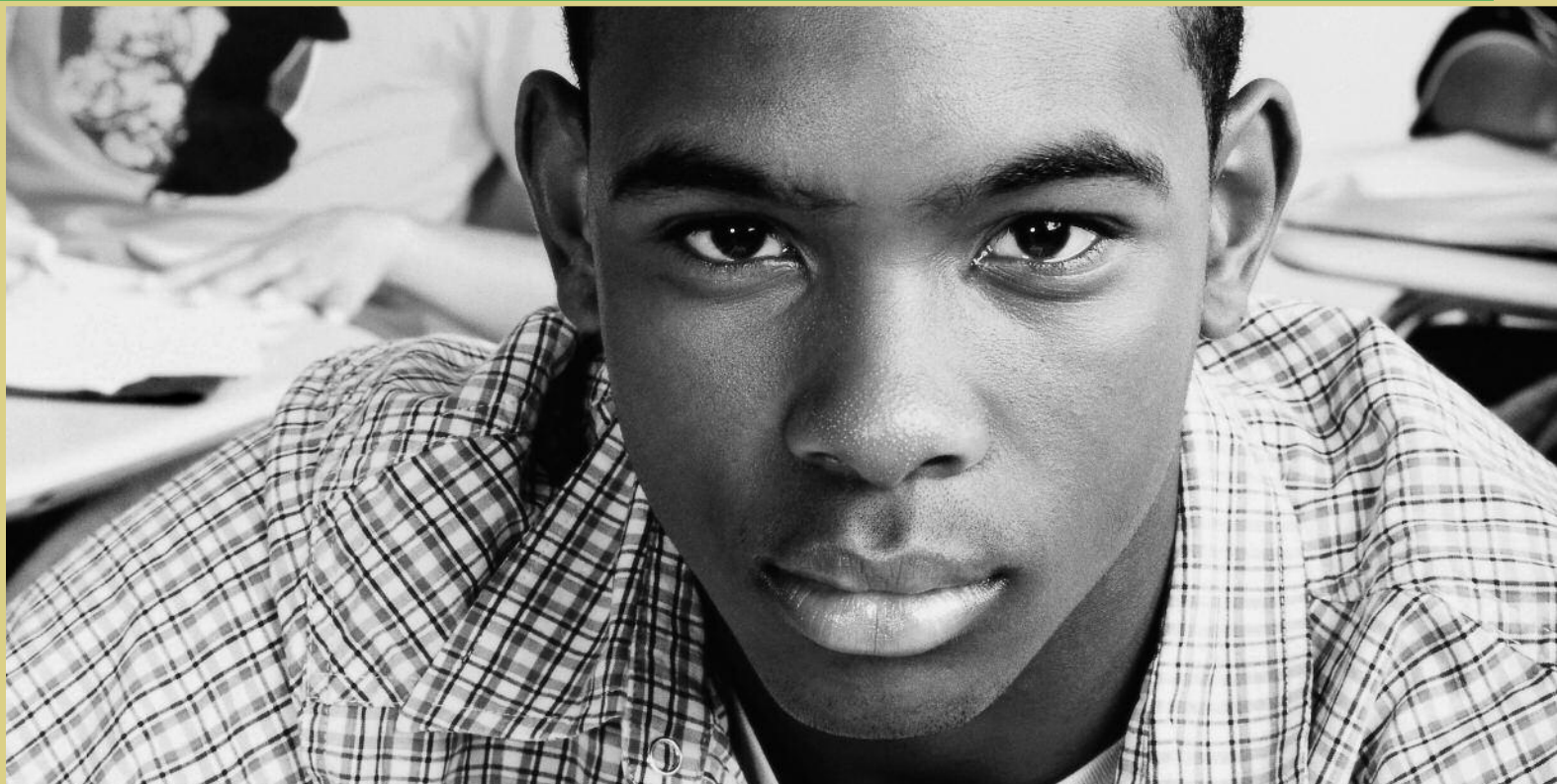
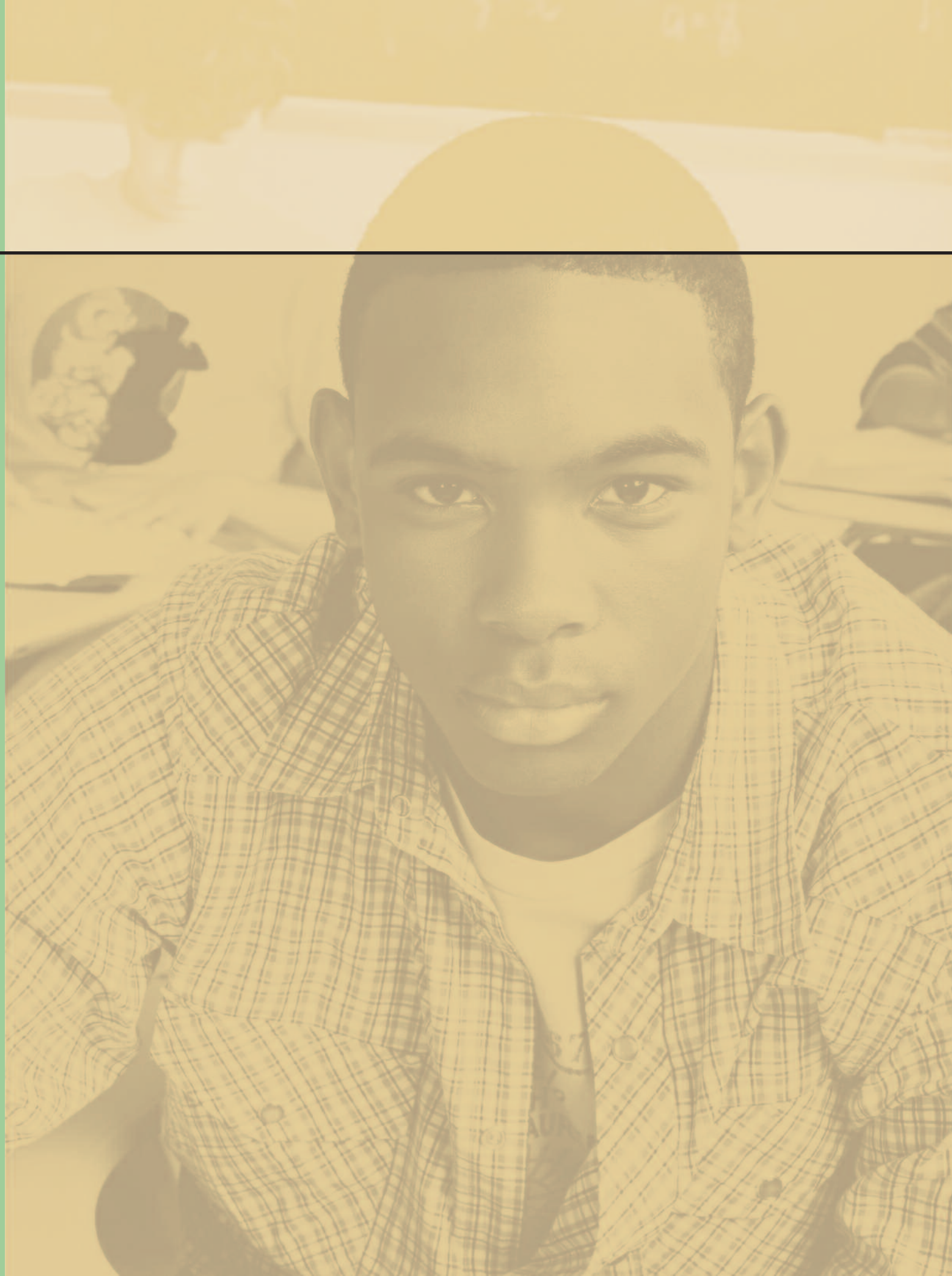


**CONNECTED BY 25:**



**FINANCING**  
Education Supports  
**FOR YOUTH TRANSITIONING**  
**OUT OF FOSTER CARE**





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**Margaret Flynn-Khan**  
**and Soumya Bhat**

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# FOREWORD

**This strategy brief is one of a series of briefs exploring strategies for financing supports and services that help foster youth make successful transitions to adulthood.** It was written by The Finance Project with support from the Foster Care Work Group. The Foster Care Work Group (FCWG) is one of three work groups of the Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG), a collaboration of foundation leaders dedicated to improving the lives of the nation's most vulnerable young people. Foundation leaders participating in the YTFG are committed to achieving a common vision—ensuring that vulnerable youth are connected by age 25 to institutions and support systems that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. The FCWG brings together foundation leaders with a shared interest in preparing youth in foster care for their transition out of the child welfare system and providing them pathways to lifelong economic well-being.

In March 2004, the Foster Care Work Group, with assistance from The Finance Project, created *Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*. *Connected by 25* made the case for and outlined a bold agenda for foundation and government investment in helping foster youth become successful adults. An important premise of *Connected by 25* is that as public child welfare systems grapple with their mandate to provide protection for all children in their care, preparation for independence and adulthood is often given short shrift. FCWG members chose to focus specifically on preparation for economic success, recognizing that youth aging out of foster care are faced with the economic realities of self-support at a much younger age than other young adults and that economic success is associated with a number of positive life outcomes. *Connected by 25* outlined five strategies to connect foster youth to resources that would prepare them for economic success: advocating and supporting educational achievement, facilitating and creating access to workforce development opportunities, providing financial literacy education, encouraging savings and asset accumulation, and creating entrepreneurship opportunities. FCWG members recognize that an important foundation for success in all five strategy areas is connections to caring adults who can offer ongoing support and guidance to youth. Briefs in this series explore funding sources and financial strategies to support each of these critical resources.

Based on the recommendations presented in *Connected by 25*, FCWG members launched an ambitious demonstration initiative to build the capacity of communities to effectively support young people in transition. This collaborative effort began in three sites in Indiana, Florida, and California. Currently, the national *Connected by 25* initiative includes sites in Indianapolis, Indiana; Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Brevard County in Florida; and Stanislaus, San Francisco, Fresno, Santa Clara, and Humboldt County in California. In each of these sites, funders and community leaders are coming together around the *Connected by 25* vision and crafting efforts to prepare foster youth for successful adulthood, based on the unique needs and resources in their community. This brief explores the range of partners and resources that community leaders and program developers can engage to support educational success for foster youth. It draws on the experiences of the field and the FCWG demonstration sites and aims to further inform those efforts.



# INTRODUCTION

## Higher education attainment has become increasingly necessary for success in the labor market.

In 1999, college graduates between the ages of 25 and 34 earned \$15,000 more annually than high school graduates and \$22,000 more annually than high school dropouts.<sup>1</sup> The benefits of education attainment are especially critical for the estimated 20,000 youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who emancipate from foster care every year with few resources and very little support.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, alarmingly poor education outcomes are evident for youth in and aging out of care. Youth in care are more likely to change schools during the year and to repeat a grade in school.<sup>3</sup> Foster youth and those who have aged out of the system are less likely to finish high school, with an estimated 50 percent to 60 percent of foster youth graduating high school compared with 84 percent of youth not in foster care.<sup>4</sup> The limited research on college enrollment and degree attainment of foster youth indicates that foster youth enroll in college at a significantly lower rate than their peers; between 10 percent and 30 percent of former foster youth enroll in college, while 60 percent of other youth attend college.<sup>5</sup> Very little research on postsecondary education completion rates for foster youth exists, but available data suggests that few among those who enroll in higher education institutions complete a degree. These trends are troublesome given the important role that attainment of a higher education degree plays in determining earnings potential.

Several factors are associated with the low academic achievement of foster youth. Foster youth are disproportionately poor and minority, groups that are at greater risk for poorer education outcomes.<sup>6</sup> They also frequently have the added risks associated with family separation and abuse and neglect by family members. Once in the system, too many of these young people suffer additional abuse and neglect. Many also experience multiple changes in foster care placements, which lead to multiple school placements.<sup>7</sup> In addition, gaps and deficiencies within and among the relevant systems tend to leave no individual or organization clearly responsible or accountable for monitoring and supporting the education success of foster youth. The child welfare system is often so under-resourced that the focus of workers does not move beyond basic safety and crisis management issues. The elementary and secondary (K–12) education system, with multiple separately run local districts, is structured to work best for those in stable living situations and presumes parent involvement,

<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Eric C. Newbulger, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work Life Earnings*, (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, July 2002).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption* (Washington, D.C.: August 2005), see [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/publications/afcars\\_stats.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/publications/afcars_stats.htm).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Foster Youth: HHS Actions Could Improve Coordination of Services and Monitoring of States' Independent Living Programs* (Washington, D.C., November 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Wolanin, *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Higher Education Policy, December 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Merdinger et al., "Pathways to College for Former Foster Youth: Understanding Factors That Contribute to Educational Success," *Child Welfare* (2005); Wolanin.

<sup>6</sup> Wolanin.

<sup>7</sup> The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, *Fostering the Future: Safety, Permanence and Well-Being for Children in Foster Care* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, 2004).

especially for those in special education. As students move on to postsecondary education, though they may be legal “adults,” most typically depend on parents for financial and emotional support and assistance with daunting postsecondary application and enrollment procedures. Foster youth, however, emancipate from care and have to deal with all the challenges of being on their own just when they should be focusing on the transition from secondary school to postsecondary education.

As a result of these factors, the education needs of foster youth and former foster youth too frequently fall into a bureaucratic “no man’s land”; the multiple challenges foster youth face are exacerbated by administrative and bureaucratic barriers and a lack of attention to their education progress by adults in their life. During the past 10 years, new public and private investment and increasing awareness of the need for education assistance have led to the development of several supports aimed at addressing the gaps and deficiencies among systems and promoting education success for foster youth. These supports seek to help foster youth attain the grades and credits necessary to complete high school; understand the options and processes and identify, apply to, and enroll in postsecondary institutions; and persist in their pursuit of and successfully complete postsecondary education. The major types of supports are secondary education success supports, postsecondary access supports, and postsecondary success supports.

- **Secondary Education Success Supports.** These programs and services are targeted primarily at helping middle and high school students earn a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Common strategies are designating staff to act as education counselors and advocates for foster youth; providing tutoring and academic support; and training those who work with foster youth (e.g., foster parents, child welfare workers, group home providers, and independent living staff) to more effectively support academic achievement.





## Defining Postsecondary Education Options

As defined in this strategy brief, postsecondary education options include public and private colleges, universities, and technical and vocational schools. Programs include two-year (associate) and four-year (bachelor's) degree programs, graduate degree programs, and programs to attain technical certificates for individual trades and occupations.

- **Postsecondary Access Supports.** These programs and services aim to provide foster youth and those who work with them information about postsecondary options (see Defining Postsecondary Education Options) and the resources available to help foster youth pursue postsecondary education. Also included is assistance to help foster youth apply to schools, apply for financial aid, and enroll in school.
- **Postsecondary Success Supports.** These resources and services seek to help foster youth attend and successfully complete postsecondary education. Supports include scholarship programs; programs that provide academic counseling and support; assistance with basic needs and health and mental health issues; leadership development; mentoring; and opportunities for foster youth to meet and receive support from other former foster youth on campus.

As the number and range of education support initiatives increase nationwide, program leaders and developers need information on financing strategies and funding sources to support their work. This brief presents five financing strategies that can support education success programs and services for youth currently in or transitioning from the foster care system. Supporting education success for foster youth is largely about helping the relevant systems—child welfare, K–12 education, higher education, and workforce development—more effectively and collaboratively address education issues. As a result, the following five strategies emphasize new ways of using and coordinating existing resources to ensure foster youths' needs are met:

1. Access child welfare resources;
2. Access K–12 and adult education resources;
3. Connect with workforce development and technical education resources;
4. Access higher education resources; and
5. Generate community and private support.

For each strategy, this brief highlights relevant funding sources to consider, the range of partners to engage, and considerations for implementation. The brief also includes examples of these strategies in practice.



# STRATEGIES TO FINANCE EDUCATION SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH TRANSITIONING FROM FOSTER CARE

## Strategy I: Access Child Welfare Resources

Child welfare funding sources can provide direct support to students to help pay for postsecondary education and living expenses as well as provide support to programs that provide education services. Relevant funding streams include two federal funding sources targeted to youth currently in or transitioning from care—the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) and the Chafee Education and Training Vouchers program (ETV)—and training and administration dollars under Title IV-E of the federal *Social Security Act*. Some states have also allocated state funds to facilitate education success for foster youth. (See Supporting Former Foster Youth Who Are Pursuing Education and Developing Enhanced Education Supports Within a County Child Welfare Agency.)

### CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

CFCIP funds services and activities that help youth in care who are likely to remain in care until age 18, as well as youth ages 18 to 21 who have aged out of the foster care system, access the services and supports they need to transition to adulthood. Program funds are awarded to state child welfare agencies for distribution to local public or private child welfare agencies. Activities eligible for funding under the formula grant program include education and training, employment, and housing assistance as well as counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and other services that connect youth to dedicated adults and enable them to make better choices and accept greater responsibility for their own lives. The program also

affords states the option of allowing youth in care to remain eligible for Medicaid up to age 21.

Chafee funds are extremely flexible and can support the full range of education supports and services for foster youth. They can be used to provide direct support to students to help them pay for school and living expenses and to fund programs that provide support services to transitioning youth.

### CHAFEE EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS

This program provides funding specifically to meet the vocational training and higher education needs of youth aging out of foster care and those who have been adopted, up to the age of 23. The federal government allocates up to \$60 million annually in ETV funds, with awards to states based on the state's percentage of youth in foster care nationally. Vouchers, up to \$5,000 per year per student, may be applied toward the cost of education and training activities in an institution of higher education and may be disregarded in determining eligibility for other federally supported education assistance, so long as the total assistance does not exceed the total cost of attendance and benefits are not duplicative. This enables young people to access ETV funding and remain eligible for need-based grants, scholarships, loans, and other education programs. States decide the purposes for which the vouchers can be used and the amount awarded to each student. Allowable expenses include tuition, application fees, books and supplies, room and board, trans-

## Supporting Former Foster Youth Pursuing Education in Florida

Florida's Road to Independence Program provides a monthly stipend for youth who transition out of the foster care system and continue to pursue their education. In order to be eligible for the education stipend, a young person must have been in the Florida foster care system for 6 months, adjudicated dependent in the state of Florida, and either been in care at age 18 or have been over age 16 and placed in a permanent guardianship or adopted. The maximum monthly amount awarded is based on need and cannot exceed a 40 hour work week at federal minimum wage times 4.3 weeks. Under this legislation, foster youth are eligible for an initial award from ages 18 to 21 and a renewal award until age 23. Participants in the Road to Independence Program may also receive a tuition waiver for Florida public undergraduate colleges and universities to make higher education more financially accessible. Eligibility for this waiver is broader than eligibility for Road to Independence and also includes youth in relative placements, legal guardianships or adopted. Most of the youth participating in Road to Independence are also eligible for and required to apply for Pell grants. For more information, contact Catherine Heath, Department of Children and Families, 850-922-2425, [Catherine\\_Heath@dcf.state.fl.us](mailto:Catherine_Heath@dcf.state.fl.us).

portation, health insurance, and dependent child care. Many programs that support education success for foster youth include outreach and guidance aimed at ensuring foster youth know about and access education and training vouchers.

### TITLE IV-E FUNDING

Title IV-E is an entitlement funding source that provides funds to states to pay for the living expenses associated with housing children and youth in foster care as well as the administrative and training expenses associated with identifying and supervising appropriate foster care placements. Funding is available for foster care maintenance payments, administration, and training. States receive federal matching funds for allowable expenditures, based on the Federal Medical Assistance (FMAP) match. The various Title IV-E funding streams can support education success in specific ways.

- Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments can cover the cost of food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, and a child's personal travel to his or her home for visitation. This funding can continue to support living expenses

through age 19 for foster youth who are in an education program at age 18 and are expected to complete that program at age 19. This funding can enable foster youth who are still in high school or an alternative education program at age 18 to remain in care through age 19, provided they are on track to complete their education program at age 19. States vary as to whether they take advantage of this option and the degree to which they encourage students to stay in a foster care placement in order to complete their secondary education.

- The administrative portion of Title IV-E covers payments for administrative functions, including placement services, case management, eligibility determination, licensing, recruitment of foster parents, and general administrative activities. If a child welfare agency employs specialized education staff to assist caseworkers in communicating with the education system and addressing the education needs of foster youth, then staffing costs can be claimed under Title IV-E administration dollars.

## Developing Enhanced Educational Supports within a County Child Welfare Agency

The Santa Clara County child welfare agency, one of California's Connected By 25 Initiative (CC25I) sites, has developed an Educational Services Unit with responsibility for training social workers on their roles and responsibilities related to education, monitoring the academic plans and progress of every child in the system, and providing support to social workers in addressing academic needs. Prior to the reorganization to create the Educational Services Unit, monitoring the education of youth in care was part of every social worker's responsibilities, but there were no staff designated and trained to act as experts in the education arena. With the Educational Services Unit in place, social workers maintain their responsibility for monitoring and supporting educational success for youth on their caseload, but there is also accountability, support and expertise in place to help to ensure that educational needs of youth are addressed.

The Silicon Valley Children's Fund (SVCF), a local non-profit intermediary and incubator agency focused on educational success for foster youth, assisted Santa Clara County Department of Social Services (DSS) in restructuring staff into the educational unit. SVCF has also provided training on educational planning and supports available for post-secondary education as part of social worker's ongoing training at DSS, and are partnering with DSS and the Educational Services Unit on a literacy initiative focused on identifying and providing targeted literacy supports to foster youth who need them. Because the Educational Services Unit was developed through redeployed staff resources, it is primarily supported with DSS's core federal and state child welfare funding. Partnership and support from private resources, including SVCF, and the private funders supporting CC25I, have also supported enhanced services and the development of more coordinated and creative approaches. For more information, contact Priya Mistry, Program Manager for Post Secondary Education, Silicon Valley Children's Fund, 408-558-5437, [priya.mistry@svcf.org](mailto:priya.mistry@svcf.org) or Keith Rivers, CC25I Educational Services Coordinator, 408-975-5129, [keith.rivera@ssa.sccgov.org](mailto:keith.rivera@ssa.sccgov.org).

- The training portion of Title IV-E covers payments for training agency staff and foster parents. For example, Title IV-E training dollars can be used for education support programs that offer training to child welfare workers and foster parents on how best to promote education success for foster youth in middle and high school; how to access postsecondary education options and resources; and how to support young people in applying and enrolling in postsecondary education. The trainings must be developed and administered in close partnership with the child welfare agency.

### STATE CHILD WELFARE FUNDS

A growing number of states are making supports available to former foster youth ages 18 to 21 using state child welfare funds and, in many cases, federal CFCIP funds. These efforts help foster youth complete secondary education and transition to post-secondary education by providing stability and support for basic needs. In some cases, states are also offering youth targeted incentives and supports to participate in education. The scale and scope of these efforts vary significantly from state to state. Thirty-two states have made some level of basic living supports available to young people through age

21; four states have extended supports to age 22 or 23, typically on a voluntary basis.<sup>8</sup> Twenty-one states have taken advantage of the option to extend Medicaid coverage to youth aging out of foster care, with some states only extending coverage to age 19 or 20 and others extending through age 21. In many states, the continued receipt of state support for foster youth from ages 18 to 21 depends on participation in education activities.

### Considerations

- Chafee dollars are the most flexible funds available to pay for services for youth transitioning out of foster care. States use Chafee funds for diverse services and supports aimed at preparing and assisting youth as they transition to independence. These dollars typically are allocated to independent living providers, so education success programs can only access this funding if they are closely collaborating with the public child welfare agency and/or private independent living providers.
- The Chafee program encourages states to engage in collaborations with a broad range of community stakeholders. Partnering with different stakeholders, including state and local child welfare

agencies, community-based and nonprofit organizations, and K–12 and higher education entities, provides opportunities to maximize federal, state, and local resources for education as well as to provide comprehensive independent living services for youth.

- Title IV-E is one of the few remaining entitlement programs, meaning dollars are not capped but are available to match allowable state expenditures. This funding is an attractive option to pursue to support education success for foster youth. To access these funds, program developers have to work in close partnership with child welfare administrators to institutionalize training and services within the child welfare system.
- Education and training vouchers can be used at any institution of higher education as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965.<sup>9</sup> This includes accredited trade and vocational schools as well as for two- and four-year colleges and universities. Many youth, trade and vocational school administrators, and financial aid officers at higher education institutions need to be made aware of the availability of these resources to support a broad range of postsecondary education options.

<sup>8</sup> Numbers are based on a search of the state-by-state policy database of the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development; see <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/>.

<sup>9</sup> “Institution of higher education” as defined in Public Law 105–244 means a public or non-profit school accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting association that: awards a bachelor’s degree or not less than a two-year program that provides credit towards a degree; provides not less than one year of training towards gainful employment; or is a vocational program that provides training for gainful employment and has been in existence at least two years. Additionally, the institution admits as regular students only persons with a high school diploma or equivalent, or admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance.

## Strategy 2: Access K–12 and Adult Education Resources

The foundation for postsecondary education success is to ensure foster youth graduate from high school with the academic preparation necessary to succeed in postsecondary settings. Increasingly, policymakers, agency officials, and program developers are coordinating to make certain foster youth have the stability and support needed to complete secondary education. This financing strategy aims to deploy the existing resources supporting K–12 education and adult education so they more effectively address the needs of foster youth. Core K–12 and adult education resources are critical funding sources to support the secondary education success of foster youth. Following are ideas for directing four main streams of funding: core K–12 education funding from federal, state, and local sources; special education resources under Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA); *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* resources; and adult education resources.

### CORE K–12 EDUCATION FUNDS

If targeted supports and changed practice regarding the education needs of foster youth can be institutionalized into existing K–12 systems—or at least developed in close partnership with K–12 systems—then it is possible to support these services with the local, state, and federal dollars that provide core support for K–12 education budgets, primarily Title I and state and local education dollars. For example, schools can designate and train school support staff or school counselors to understand and address the challenges facing foster youth and coordinate with the child welfare agency to ensure their education needs are met (see *Bringing Education and Child Welfare Together to Develop Targeted Education Supports for Foster Youth*). Schools can also devote resources to developing and implementing improved administrative and data tracking

processes to help ease the disruption of school transfers. Moreover, they can allocate funding for transportation to help foster youth stay in their schools of origin even when they experience changes in foster care placement.

### SPECIAL EDUCATION DOLLARS

For all students with special needs, special education dollars are available to support various academic support and related services. Studies indicate a high percentage of foster youth—between 30 percent and 50 percent—are classified as in need of special education services at some point in their education career. Because accessing special education services often requires some advocacy as well as the involvement and permission of the “parent” as defined by legislation, children in foster care can miss out on receiving services they need and for which they are eligible because they do not have a parent actively engaged in the development and ongoing implementation of their individual education plan (IEP). Some state and local initiatives have focused on training child welfare workers and foster parents so they understand the rights and requirements under IDEA Part B and become effective advocates for foster youth.

In addition, IDEA requires IEPs for students ages 16 and older to include “transition services” for postschool activities for young people in special education. The different activities cited in the legislation are aligned with independent living and postsecondary access services and include activities that facilitate the transition to postsecondary education; vocational education; integrated employment, including supported employment; continuing and adult education; adult services; independent living; or community participation. In addition to the potential for local IDEA dollars to support student-specific transition services as part of an IEP, state

## Bringing Education and Child Welfare Together to Develop Targeted Education Supports for Foster Youth

Hillsborough County Connected by 25 (Cby25) in Florida has succeeded in developing innovative collaborations among the various systems serving foster youth to support their education success. With support from the Lumina Foundation for Education, and in collaboration with the Hillsborough County School District, Cby25 designated a high school guidance counselor to focus on foster youth throughout the district. The guidance counselor, a school district employee who is collocated at the Cby25 office, is charged with developing education plans—as is required by law for all children and youth in foster care—and monitoring education progress for all foster children attending high school in the district. This position was funded by the school district upon completion of the Lumina Foundation grant. In addition, Cby25 received funds from the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay and the county child welfare entity to fund a middle school guidance counselor. The school district has committed to funding an elementary school guidance counselor.

Cby25 also operates a GED program for youth in and transitioning out of foster care. The program, located at the Cby25 site, provides individualized and flexible GED instruction to a small number of foster youth. The two teachers who staff the program are funded by The Eckerd Family Foundation and other private sources. An adult education tutor, funded with school district adult education funds, spends one day per week on site at the school. Adult education resources also pay for the computer-based tutoring and assessment tools the program uses. For more information, contact, Diane Zambito, executive director, Hillsborough Cby25 Initiative, 813-310-2204 or [diane@cby25.org](mailto:diane@cby25.org).

administrative dollars under IDEA may be used for “the development and implementation of transition programs, including coordination of services with agencies involved in supporting the transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary activities.” These dollars can be used to fund the development of more coordinated approaches between child welfare and K–12 education stakeholders to support foster youth who are special education students in transitioning to appropriate postsecondary education.

Many states have dedicated state education agency staff and structures for coordinating transition services for special education students. These staff may already be coordinating with adult education, vocational rehabilitation, and mental health agencies, and these individuals are an important point of collabora-

tion for supporting postsecondary education achievement for foster youth receiving special education services.

### **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**

The *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* offers legislative protections and funding to support education stability and success for homeless children and youth, defined as those “without fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” The act explicitly includes children and youth “awaiting foster care placement,” and it calls for liaisons for homeless children and youth within each local education agency. McKinney-Vento seeks to allow homeless children and youth to remain in their school of origin and requires their transportation to that school; it allows for immediate enrollment in a new school



## Supporting School Stability for Foster Youth with McKinney-Vento

State legislators are starting to consider the mobile nature of foster youth when examining the education needs of students in or awaiting foster care placement. For example, some states are broadening eligibility provisions under the federal McKinney-Vento law. In June 2005, Delaware's legislature passed HB 279, confirming the state practice of considering all foster youth as "homeless" under McKinney-Vento. This state legislation enables a child who has entered foster care or changed placement during the school year to remain in his or her home school for at least the remainder of that school year. When a child enters care, discussions take place among the child welfare agency, court-appointed special advocate, school district, *guardian ad litem*, and, when possible, parents to determine what is in the child's best interest. Once a decision is made, the child welfare agency notifies and collaborates with the school district/school. The school district/school must, within 48 hours, arrange for the child's transportation to his or her home school. The ultimate goal is to continue to meet the student's education needs. For more information, contact John Bates, Foster Care Program Manager, Delaware Division of Family Services, 302-633-2665.

if a child cannot remain at the school of origin, even if necessary documentation is not available. The degree to which foster youth fall under the provisions of this legislation is ambiguous and depends on state interpretation of "awaiting foster care placement" and "without fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." Some states have chosen to apply McKinney-Vento broadly to foster youth. For example, Delaware designates all youth in care as homeless under the requirements of McKinney-Vento (see Supporting School Stability for Foster Youth with McKinney-Vento).

### ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT

Adult education dollars should be considered for students who have dropped out of high school or are not well served by traditional high schools and need alternative programs. A high percentage of foster students complete their secondary school requirements by attaining a GED. The *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* (AEFLA) formula grant is the primary federal funding source for adult education, including GED, basic education, and English-as-a-Second-Language courses. The U.S. Department of Edu-

cation allocates funds to state education departments, which then competitively award 82.5 percent of their federal grant to local school districts, community colleges, community- and faith-based organizations, and other providers to support adult education programs. States retain 17.5 percent of the federal allocation for program improvement activities (12.5 percent), such as professional development for instructors and administrative expenses (5 percent). Programs serving foster youth should consider working in partnership with adult education providers to develop GED programs specifically for foster youth and former foster youth or wrap needed support services around existing GED programs.

### Considerations

- Accessing core K–12 education funds, special education dollars, or resources under McKinney-Vento begins with identifying and developing relationships with the people who make decisions about the allocation of funds. Developing relationships with K–12 education stakeholders can be challenging, because it is difficult to know whether to focus at the school, district, or state

level. For targeted programs authorized and funded by the federal government (e.g., IDEA, McKinney-Vento, and adult education), typically staff are designated at both the state education agency and school district levels. A helpful place to begin is the state education agency's website. Many states provide information on the administration and organization of targeted programs and contact information for state and local program administrators.

- Individuals interested in engaging special education transition staff should gather information on the number and percent of youth in state care with IEPs. Because a strong emphasis of transition services is coordinating with parents to help the young person move to independence, state education agencies may be willing to collaborate with entities

that can help the transition of young people who do not have parents available to support them.

- Making connections at the state education agency and district levels is important. Yet, in most states and districts, school principals retain considerable autonomy over the allocation of resources within their school. Because supports are often implemented at the school level and depend on the goodwill and buy-in of school administrators and staff, this level of engagement should not be ignored. Local programs seeking to support foster youth in completing secondary education and moving on to postsecondary education are urged to identify the high schools serving the largest number of foster youth and focus on developing relationships with principals, teachers, counselors, and support staff at those schools.



## Strategy 3: Connect with Workforce Development and Technical Education Resources

Workforce development and technical education resources can provide funding for programs aimed at supporting secondary education success and those aimed at supporting postsecondary education success for foster youth (see *Coordinating Workforce Development and Education Supports to Maximize Workforce Development Opportunities for Youth*). The focus of workforce development and technical education resources is to help young people gain the skills, experience, and knowledge they need to succeed in the labor market. Education success is a critical component of workforce preparation. System administrators in the technical education, K–12 and postsecondary education, and workforce development arenas increasingly understand the value of coordinating to create targeted education opportunities tied to high-growth sectors of the labor market.

These efforts hold particular promise for former foster youth because many of them need to be self-supporting. For many former foster youth, education experience linked with paid work experience, particularly if structured as internships through which young people earn credit, may be more attractive and feasible options than traditional postsecondary education options. In addition, postsecondary education opportunities at community colleges and technical schools typically have less rigorous entry requirements, which is important for foster youth who have poor K–12 academic records. Following is an overview of how the main federal funding sources supporting workforce development (the *Workforce Investment Act* [WIA]) and technical education (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs) can be used to sup-

port education success for foster youth. For more information, see The Finance Project strategy brief *Financing Workforce Development Programs for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care* at [http://76.12.61.196/publications/Workforce\\_SB.pdf](http://76.12.61.196/publications/Workforce_SB.pdf).

### WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

Administered through the U.S. Department of Labor, WIA's Youth Activities and Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs represent the largest sources of federal funds for workforce development, supporting a wide range of employment and training services for youth and adults.<sup>10</sup> WIA provides formula grants to states, which then pass the funding to local workforce investment boards and youth councils that oversee the distribution of funds through contracts to local workforce program developers. To foster a more comprehensive youth development system, the *Workforce Investment Act* requires local workforce investment boards (WIBs) to establish subgroups, called local youth councils, to coordinate and oversee WIA-funded youth activities. WIA has two main streams of funding: one for youth and the other for adults.

- **WIA Youth Activities Program.** WIA consolidated year-round and summer youth programs into a single formula-funded program that supports services primarily for low-income youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and who face barriers to employment. WIA requires program developers to address up to 10 program elements for eligible youth: academic enhancement, alternative secondary school services, summer employment opportunities, work experience, occupational skills training, leadership

<sup>10</sup> G. Rubinstein and A. Mayo, "An Overview of Federal Workforce Development Policies," *Training Policy in Brief* (Washington, D.C.: Workplace Alliance, 2006), 9. See <http://www.workforcealliance.org/>.

## Coordinating Workforce Development and Education Supports to Maximize Workforce Development Opportunities for Youth\*

The Walter S. Johnson Foundation's California Gateway Initiative links transitioning foster youth to postsecondary education and high-wage, high-growth career pathways. Currently operating in six California counties—Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus—the initiative is focused on coordinating education, workforce development, and supportive services for youth transitioning from foster care. Higher education helps transitioning youth gain the necessary skills, knowledge, experiences, and professional networks that contribute to long-term self-sufficiency, but it is a challenging environment to navigate without a support system. By connecting education partners with workforce investment boards and social services agencies, the California Gateway Initiative helps improve the chances that youth will succeed in higher education.

Through the initiative, in one semester, youth can earn 12 credits by taking classes centered on college orientation, career counseling, and English and math skills. Full-time college faculty work together to integrate coursework while making the courses relevant to various career options and occupations. Youth later matriculate into industries, such as allied health, biotechnology manufacturing, construction and other skilled trades (e.g., aviation, automotive, and heavy equipment mechanics), energy and petrochemicals, and financial services, or they continue to pursue a four-year college degree.

Community colleges and workforce investment boards have been engaged as core partners in developing and implementing the initiative. To help lay the groundwork for the project, the foundation provided a grant to the Career Ladders Project to convene and encourage community colleges to strengthen the educational and career advancement opportunities they provide to youth transitioning from the foster care system; the Career Ladders Project also provided ongoing technical assistance to the partners as the programs were developed. The foundation also provided support to community colleges to design a specialized curriculum with classroom supports focused on helping youth succeed. In addition, it provides grants to support county workforce investment boards and requires youth in the initiative to be co-enrolled in WIA activities to receive case management and employment services while attending college classes. The workforce invest-

development, supportive services, adult mentoring, guidance and counseling, and follow-up services. The U.S. Department of Labor allocates WIA youth funds to state agencies, which are required to pass through 85 percent of these funds to local areas.

- **WIA Adult Program.** The WIA Adult Program provides funds to support various employment

and training services. Activities funded under WIA include job search and placement, assessments and career planning, basic and occupational training, and supportive services. As with WIA youth funds, states pass through 85 percent of adult funds to local areas. Adults ages 18 and older are eligible for services. Older youth, ages 18 to 21, may be eligible for dual enrollment in the WIA Adult and Youth Programs.

ment boards grant funds to community colleges to cover the costs of faculty stipends as well as classroom-based counselors who assist youth with any personal, academic, and social challenges they encounter. In some counties, the boards are providing additional funds to cover other supports, such as food, books, and transportation. Youth also receive supports through partnerships with social services agencies that provide outreach, enrollment, and case management services and referrals to the community colleges. Foster youth also serve on initiative advisory groups.

The Initiative encourages resource and service coordination for youth through system-level collaboration, braided funding, and in-kind supports. The courses offered for credit are supported with community college state education FTES (full-time equivalency student) dollars, per student enrolled. Youth attend classes full time, so they are eligible for financial aid and many receive Pell grants. Low-income and disadvantaged youth also qualify for enrollment fee waivers through the California Community Colleges Board of Governor's Fee Waiver Program, and they receive academic support, counseling, financial aid, and other services through California Community Colleges' Extended Opportunity Programs and Services. Faculty and counselors also help youth access Chafee education and training vouchers to cover additional education-related costs.

The Career Ladders Project worked with the California Community College System Office to develop and provide strategic support to a larger demonstration project designed to link underprepared and disconnected young adults to community college and career pathways. Informed by the lessons learned in the Gateway Initiative, system-funded Career Advancement Academies have now been launched in three regions of the state, including the Central Valley, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco East Bay. For more information, contact Linda Collins, executive director, Career Ladders Project, 510-268-0566 or [lcollins@careerladdersproject.org](mailto:lcollins@careerladdersproject.org); or see <http://careerladdersproject.epcservices.com/projects/career.php>.

\* Note: This example is excerpted and adapted from Brittany Anuszkiewicz, *Financing Workforce Development Programs for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, April 2007).

### **CARL D. PERKINS CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, Carl D. Perkins funds have historically supported vocational education geared toward students transitioning directly from high school to the workplace. As the labor market increasingly requires advanced education, programs under Carl D. Perkins have become more focused on connections with and

transitions to postsecondary education. The 2006 reauthorization of Carl D. Perkins added a requirement for the development and implementation of "career and technical programs of study." These programs of study are designed to link and coordinate a student's secondary and postsecondary education experiences so the experiences are non-duplicative and lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level

or an associate or a bachelor's degree. States must develop the programs of study in consultation with local programs so the programs can be offered by each local school district and community or technical college receiving Perkins funds. Perkins authorizes basic grants to states and Tech-Prep funds as well as several smaller discretionary grants. For more information, see <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/index.html>.

■ **Basic Grants to States.** This program provides formula grants to states that are used to more fully develop the academic, vocational, and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students, including young adults and nontraditional students such as foster youth, who elect to enroll in vocational and technical programs. States must

distribute at least 85 percent of their funds to local secondary and postsecondary education agencies. They have considerable flexibility to determine what specific programs and functions they will fund as well as to determine what proportion of funds will go to local secondary education agencies and what proportion will go to postsecondary institutions (typically, community colleges). Some states allocate most of their dollars to secondary programs, while others allocate most of their dollars to postsecondary programs. Program developers should consider partnering with state and local education agencies, institutions of higher education, and other providers of vocational and technical education for inclusion and input in the state career and technical education plan.



- **Tech-Prep Funds.** Federal Tech-Prep funds are awarded to consortia of secondary school districts and postsecondary institutions to establish programs of study that integrate academic and technical education across education levels and lead to a technical skill proficiency, credential, certificate, or degree. This funding is focused on connecting and aligning secondary and postsecondary education, and programs must include at least the last two years of high school and the first two years of postsecondary education. Some programs begin as early as ninth grade and transition students through to a bachelor's degree in the chosen career field. Program developers working on education success for foster youth should identify which districts and institutions in their community have received Tech-Prep funds and seek to partner with them to create options for foster youth and youth transitioning out of care. Tech-Prep education is a particularly attractive program for youth transitioning out of care because it offers a seamless transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

## Considerations

- In 2003 the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth produced a report recommending that targeted supports be made available for certain categories of high-risk youth, including foster youth. One outcome of this work has been that some federal agencies have been designating foster youth and former foster youth as a high priority for services within existing funding streams. This is true of the U.S. Department of Labor WIA youth funds. For this reason, WIA youth funds may be a particularly viable funding option for programs providing targeted services for foster youth.
- Under Carl D. Perkins, each state must include in its annual report data on how special populations engaged in vocational education are faring relative to state performance goals. Foster children are one of the groups designated as a “special population.” Therefore, state and local officials involved with Carl D. Perkins may be open to partnerships that develop targeted education supports for foster youth.
- The state workforce investment board and its local youth councils oversee the development of five-year plans for the allocation of WIA funds. Youth council members include WIB members such as educators and employers with an interest or expertise in youth policy, representatives of youth services and human services agencies, and youth. To access *Workforce Investment Act* funding, it is important to develop relationships with members of local youth councils and state investment boards and to gain familiarity with the state plan.
- For youth ages 18 and older, program developers should consider the option of dual enrollment in WIA Adult and Youth Programs. Older youth, for example, may receive opportunities for summer employment, work experience, and educational and leadership opportunities through funding under the WIA Youth Program for which they may not be eligible under the WIA Adult Program. This will enable managers to diversify programs and maintain sustainability by maximizing both funding streams.
- Program developers should encourage youth in foster care to take advantage of opportunities to become members of the local youth council. Participation can strengthen youth leadership skills while also providing a forum to speak about the unique needs of foster youth as funding decisions on WIA youth funds are made.

## Strategy 4: Access Higher Education Resources

Several higher education resources exist for programs that are focused on helping former foster youth access and succeed in postsecondary education. Most of this funding, such as federal student aid or federal academic preparation and support programs, is available to a broader population than foster youth. Helping link former foster youth to these existing resources can be an important component of support programs on college campuses and can help program leaders avoid recreating services for foster youth that may already be available to them on campus. Many postsecondary support programs on college campuses have focused on outreach and training to help college staff from various offices on campus be more aware of and responsive to the unique needs of students who are former foster youth. In addition to in-kind support from existing staff and services from existing programs, some campus support programs have been successful in accessing cash support within higher education institution budgets. Following are strategies for accessing three main types of higher education resources: federal and state resources aimed at helping students pay for or defray the cost of postsecondary education, federal academic preparation and support programs, and in-kind and cash support from colleges and universities.

### FEDERAL AND STATE STUDENT AID

Federal programs are a significant resource for direct financial aid to students. *Higher Education Act* programs provide the lion's share of federal financial assistance, including the Pell Grant program, Federal Direct Student Loans, Federal Family Education Loans, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and the Federal Work-Study program. Many states also provide tuition waivers for foster youth at public colleges and universities. Ensuring foster youth apply for and access the student aid

resources for which they are eligible is a role many postsecondary access programs play. For more information on federal student aid options, visit [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) and click on the "Smart Student's Guide to Financial Aid."

### ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The federal government makes a significant investment in programs that help disadvantaged students—typically defined as low-income, first-generation college attendees—access and succeed in postsecondary education. The main federal programs that fund academic support and preparation services for disadvantaged students are Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and the TRIO Programs, which include Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services. Many college campuses, especially those serving large numbers of low-income students, have offices that house staff from these programs. Program leaders of on-campus support services for former foster youth should investigate whether these programs exist on their campus and whether a partnership with them is feasible (see *Integrating Support for Former Foster Youth Within an Academic Preparation and Support Program*).

### COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Programs that obtain the buy-in of college administrators and staff can help increase the resources that colleges and universities direct toward foster youth on campus. This typically begins with efforts to create awareness of the unique challenges that foster youth and former foster youth face in completing their education on campus and of the resources that are available to assist them. Many programs educate staff in different campus offices so they can better understand the issues facing foster youth and support them in their efforts to complete



## Integrating Support for Former Foster Youth Within an Academic Preparation and Support Program

Programs seeking to support the success of former foster youth in higher education institutions can partner with federally funded academic preparation and support programs. This type of partnership was developed in California between the Orangewood Guardian Scholars Program, which provides scholarships and support services to former foster youth in Orange County and the Student Academic Advancement Services (SAAS) program operating at University of California-Irvine. SAAS uses a federal TRIO Student Support Services grant to fund a program on campus that connects disadvantaged students with university services, including tutoring, counseling, Graduate Record Examination (GRE) preparation, and other resources related to graduate school. SAAS is designed around the “pipeline” concept, with staff offering heavy support when students enter the institution to ensure they are stable, are on the right track academically, and have the supports they need to persist in their postsecondary education.

In 2000, the university chancellor was approached by donors interested in expanding the SAAS program to provide services to the Orangewood Guardian Scholars Program (GS). The Orangewood Children’s Foundation was already providing these students with scholarships and some off-campus supports, but it lacked a support structure on campus. The students served by the two programs experienced similar issues, presenting an overlap in existing services. The GS program logically fit within the existing TRIO Program and did not require additional funding or substantial modifications.

Currently, the SAAS program works with more than 500 students each year, approximately 12 of whom are Guardian Scholars. Each GS participant receives an annual scholarship of \$6,000 from the Orangewood Foundation and is eligible to serve as a mentor/tutor for an additional \$1,500 per year. University of California-Irvine also contributes to the students’ success by giving them priority registration for classes their first year and allowing Guardian Scholars to have housing options during the off season when dorms are closed. Since the merger, most of the Guardian Scholars have gone on to pursue internships, graduate school, and study abroad programs. For more information, contact Joe Maestas, director of student academic advancement, University of California-Irvine, 949-824-6234 or [jamaesta@uci.edu](mailto:jamaesta@uci.edu).

their education. Offices on campus that are useful to train and designate staff to work with foster youth include student services, residence life, financial aid, and admissions (see Providing Support for an On-Campus Support Program in a University Budget and Directing Existing Community College Resources to Support Former Foster Youth Through State Legislation). If college and university adminis-

trators understand and buy-in to a program, they may also be willing to designate dollars or space on campus for a central coordinating office providing services to former foster youth.

### Considerations

- Program developers seeking to establish partnerships with existing education support programs

## Providing Support for an On-Campus Support Program in a University Budget

Housed at California's San Jose State University, the Connect, Motivate, Educate Society (CME Society) is a network-based program of support services for former foster youth. The services help foster youth who are transitioning from foster care to college by providing outreach; support and guidance in the transition to college; year-round housing; identification of financial aid resources; and academic support, counseling referrals, and community connections. The program coordinators help student members identify and apply for funding opportunities geared toward foster youth as well as offer academic and general support services. If students are not able to obtain scholarships, the program helps foster youth seek work-study opportunities and part-time employment to offset their education costs.

Laying the groundwork to generate internal and external support for the program was critical in the initial stages of the CME Society. Before searching for potential funding opportunities, the program leaders developed collaborations with key offices that interact with foster care youth across campus, beginning with the Division of Student Affairs. They also explored potential off-campus partners and private funders to support the program. The program director spent her first year putting together proposals for different donors and secured an initial planning grant to determine the feasibility of implementing such a program on campus.

A grant received in 2006 enabled the CME Society to develop a cost-sharing agreement between the university's Division of Student Affairs and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation (WSJ). The WSJ three-year implementation grant is supporting 50 percent of the program director position and fully funding an education coordinator position. The other 50 percent of the program director position, office equipment, space, staff benefits, and operating expenses are covered by the university. The foundation dollars are gradually decreasing over the three-year grant period, with the understanding that San Jose State University will sustain the program beyond the initial implementation grant.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the program, the program director is looking to different niches for support. The university continues to fund the program director as well as space and indirect costs. Several foundation grants are being used for activities related to early academic planning for eighth graders in foster care, a college outreach program, high school orientation on higher education opportunities, and a toolkit of resources for college. The CME Society is also exploring a partnership with the Educational Opportunity Program for first-generation college students; this will help ensure the CME Society is not an isolated service on campus, but is part of a broader set of supports for students. For more information, contact Connie Hernandez Robbins, director of the CME Society, 408-924-1098 or [connie.hernandez-robbins@sjsu.edu](mailto:connie.hernandez-robbins@sjsu.edu).

## Directing Existing Community College Resources to Support Former Foster Youth Through State Legislation

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office recognizes the significant identification and service deficit regarding youth from foster care who attend higher education. Acknowledging this need, it has taken the lead on the statewide Foster Youth Success Initiative to encourage education access, retention, and completion for former foster youth. The unfunded mandate for the initiative was established in 1996, when California passed AB 2463 requiring all public colleges in the state to provide information and support to youth emancipating from the foster care system. The community college system's response was to designate a student service liaison at each community college to help students from foster care access financial resources and student and academic support services. Designated liaisons receive training and are connected to a network of other liaisons and child welfare organizations and experts through the Foster Youth Success Initiative web page, ListServe, and regular local and regional activities. Although the community colleges do not currently receive specific funding to support the liaisons' work, the initiative is providing important contributions to the educational success of foster youth, including helping ensure financial aid personnel are aware of the resources available specifically for former foster youth (e.g., Chafee education and training vouchers) and helping foster youth apply for and package those resources appropriately with other federal, state, and private sources of support; and establishing contacts on campus designated to helping support foster youth. These contacts include Educational Opportunity Programs; outreach, counseling, and assessment programs; and other student services on campus. This initiative provides a valuable starting point for independent living, scholarship, and social services agencies interested in partnering with institutions of higher education. For more information, contact Tim Bonnel, coordinator, California Community College Chancellor's Office, 916-445-0104 or [tbonnel@cccco.edu](mailto:tbonnel@cccco.edu).

on campus should be careful to explicitly spell out the partnering entities' roles and responsibilities in supporting former foster youth on campus.

- One strategy to encourage college or university staff to work with former foster youth is to develop a collaborative body through which individuals from multiple campus offices can come together. For example, in Indiana, Ball State University Guardian Scholars created a "Stakeholders Group" that includes representatives from each of the major offices on campus. The group meets quarterly, and the program calls on individuals in the group to help students as needed.
- Program leaders who have been successful in convincing university administrators to allocate space or dollars to on-campus support programs often stress the importance of a "champion" who offers a point of entry. In some cases, programs have identified a donor to the university to champion the cause to university officials. In other cases, they have made the case to university administrators, often by having former foster youth share the challenges and successes they have experienced.

## Strategy 5: Generate Community and Private Support

Private dollars and community support can offer critical resources for programs fostering education success for foster youth. Philanthropic support from national, regional, and local foundations; community fundraising; and in-kind contributions from volunteers or interns are three options to cover core operating activities, expansion and innovation, or research, policy, and coordination. Private dollars can help support the coordination functions and processes needed to bridge the gaps among separate systems. They can also support advocacy to help change existing policies when needed. Dollars raised through community fundraising typically are more flexible than the core federal and state sources supporting child welfare, K–12 education, and higher education, so they can be used to fill in gaps in funding from public sources.

### **PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT**

Philanthropic resources include private, corporate, family, and community foundations with a national, regional, or local focus. When identifying foundation prospects, program developers should consider how their work aligns with different funders' interests. Initiatives supporting education success for foster youth can appeal to foundations focused on education achievement for disadvantaged populations; foundations focused on child welfare issues, particularly related to foster youth transitions; and foundations focused on youth development, youth leadership, and youth workforce development. The support generated through foundations is most typically short term and aimed at piloting new approaches or expansion, though some foundations make longer-term investments and will provide general operating support. Local foundations generally are more likely to make longer-term or ongoing investments in organizations in their focus community.

### **COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING**

Community fundraising strategies can take many forms, including capital campaigns, planned giving, special events, direct mail solicitation, and donor development. These efforts require significant time and expertise to implement effectively. The benefit of undertaking these activities is they generate resources that are flexible and can be used how, where, and when the initiative needs them. Fundraising can also help raise the profile of the initiative in the community. Organizations that do not have the internal capacity to engage in community fundraising should begin by considering how they can build that capacity. Programs that are university-based might be able to draw on the development capacity of the university, which is typically very sophisticated and well organized (see *Working in Partnership with University Development to Raise Funds*). Some program developers have also had success in partnering with civic organizations to help plan special events. For campus-based programs, fraternities and sororities often have community service requirements and might be able to help plan or hold a fundraising event to benefit the program. Engaging young people involved in the program and/or establishing a fundraising committee of volunteers willing to invest their time are other options to consider.

### **IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM VOLUNTEERS OR INTERNS**

Typically, the most expensive component of academic preparation, access, and support programs is staff who can act as education advocates for foster youth and who can help coordinate and link students to existing resources that may be helpful to them. Some programs have made good use of interns and volunteers to provide case management, mentoring, and advocacy for young people as a way

## Developing Enhanced Supports for Former Foster Youth on Campus Using Academic Support Resources and Interns

The long-standing Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at California's San Francisco State University aims to improve education access and retention among low-income and disadvantaged students. The program offers admission, academic, and financial assistance to eligible students, including orientation sessions on college services and optional enrollment in a summer academic program. EOP students can also receive counseling, tutoring, and advising services or be considered for EOP grants through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application process.

In 2005, the EOP program director and a School of Social Work professor collaboratively developed one of the first Guardian Scholars programs in Northern California. The program leaders recognized the potential to bring together resources to serve former foster youth attending the university. Guardian Scholars are invited to join the program when they self-identify as a former foster youth or ward of the court during the admissions process. The program currently serves 29 Guardian Scholars and accepts 10 new students per year; the group is composed of first-time freshmen, transfer students, and continuing students.

The Guardian Scholars program is able to maximize its resources by supplementing its staff with social work school interns. Each year, \$2,000 stipends funded by local foundation grants are offered to two interns from the School of Social Work in exchange for a one-year commitment to the program. The interns work 16 hours per week on a rotating basis and assist with the needs of first-year students as well as various programming needs. The interns work only with Guardian Scholars to offer guidance with the financial aid process and paperwork. In addition to the two university staffers and intern capacity, a case manager position was created out of a three-year startup grant from the Stewart Foundation. In the past two years, other local foundation grants were secured to sustain this position past its initial funding phase.

The merger freed up the EOP program director for other functions while enabling better delivery of one-on-one services for the students. The students receive case management on an individual basis, with a focus on academic and mental health services. Program administrators are, in turn, able to learn more about their students' needs through a formal clinical assessment. Much of this Guardian Scholars program's success lies with its ability to access office space from the university, the critical top-down support from administrators, and the vested interest from others on campus to institutionalize such a program benefiting foster youth. For more information, contact Xochitl Sanchez-Zarama, Guardian Scholars program director, San Francisco State University, 415-405-0546; or see [www.sfsu.edu/~eop/ucan.htm](http://www.sfsu.edu/~eop/ucan.htm).

## Using Volunteers as Education Mentors for Transitioning Foster Youth

Educate Tomorrow, an education mentoring program in Miami, Florida, supports youth ages 16 to 23 who are aging out of the foster care system by matching them with mentors/life coaches. The youth initially attend a three-day life skills camp with a heavy emphasis on planning for their academic futures. During this time, preselected mentors arrive on site as “life coaches” to work individually with youth to create a five-year education plan. Educate Tomorrow supports the mentor relationships and provides resources to help the youth enroll in college and training programs, apply for financial aid and scholarships, and find housing and employment opportunities. The program also works with the school system to facilitate in-school support groups and in-school staff mentors. The holistic community approach creates a safety net to ensure student success and graduation. Currently, 99 percent of the Educate Tomorrow youth are enrolled in an academic program. Moreover, of the 29 foster youth from Miami who are attending four-year universities, 21 came through the Educate Tomorrow program. Initial funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service and other local foundations helped build the program.

With only seven staff members and three AmeriCorps VISTA members, the Educate Tomorrow program is largely dependent on its volunteer capacity. Approximately 160 former foster youth are matched with mentor volunteers, all of whom are recruited on an individual basis by the program’s staff members through word-of-mouth and targeted marketing at community meetings and gatherings. Graduate students from Florida International University, the University of Miami, and Miami Dade College are used as part-time interns assisting with the program’s marketing and strategic planning processes. The initiative is also starting to work with additional AmeriCorps members to serve more youth and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers to explore ways to improve the program’s marketing, curriculum, capacity, and ability to expand to other communities. For more information, contact Virginia Emmons, executive director, Educate Tomorrow, 305-374-3751; or visit <http://www.educatetomorrow.org>.

of containing costs (see Developing Enhanced Supports for Former Foster Youth on Campus Using Academic Support Resources and Interns and Using Volunteers as Education Mentors for Transitioning Foster Youth). The federal volunteer programs—AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Senior Corps—offer potential pools of volunteers. Programs that are associated with colleges and universities that have relevant disciplines (e.g., social work, educational psychology, education, or counseling) may also be able to access students as interns. In addition, some programs have recruited individuals from the general public and trained them to provide volunteer

education mentoring. Volunteers from the national network of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), which is now integrating more information on education issues for teens into its training, are potential partners for education support programs interested in using volunteers as education advocates.

### Considerations

- Program developers must have strong buy-in from college administrators to access the university’s assistance with development.
- Support for education scholarships tends to be an arena that donors gravitate toward, because

## Working in Partnership with University Development to Raise Funds

The Ball State University/Ivy Tech Community College-East Central Region Guardian Scholars program offers support services to former foster youth on campus, including academic assistance, financial aid, and personal guidance; connections to campus and community resources; and a center where students who are former foster youth can drop in and use a computer, grab a snack, and check in with other students and staff. The Indiana-based program was started with a two-year grant followed by a one-year supplemental grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the program on campus, the program developers reached out to the dean of Ball State's College of Science and Humanities early in the development of the program. He has become a champion of the effort and identified securing funding for the program as a priority area for the development office. A development officer from the university has partnered with the program coordinator to seek funding for the initiative from private donors, not-for-profit service clubs and organizations, and community foundations. They established three funds to receive program donations at the university—an endowment fund, a debt relief fund, and a program support fund. They are also now establishing a scholarship fund. To engage potential donors, the university's development officer and the program coordinator convened a sustainability planning task force that was charged with identifying individuals, particularly those who could donate funds or be helpful in raising funds, to serve on a longer-term program advisory committee. Sustainability efforts have yielded a \$100,000 donation to help sustain programming; a \$1 million plus planned gift that will endow the program; and foundation support, including grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to help fund the program for two years. For more information, contact Alishea Hawkins, Guardian Scholars program coordinator, 765-285-5338 or [arhawkins@bsu.edu](mailto:arhawkins@bsu.edu).

this benefit is clear and easy to understand. Program leaders seeking donor support for services on campus should consider how to package the components of their program in a way that concretely demonstrates the contribution to individual students' education.

- Giving young people the opportunity to share their experiences and aspirations, whether through public education videos or in-person appearances, is likely the most powerful way to engage individuals in contributing to education supports.
- Programs that are using volunteers or interns, particularly if interns and students who are former foster youth are attending the same school, must institute careful screening, training, and procedures regarding confidentiality.
- Many foster youth and former foster youth have had relationships that they could not count on or that were disrupted for one reason or another. One consideration with interns and volunteers is what kind of time commitment is sought from them and what changes in staffing patterns may do to the quality of relationships in a program. Programs that have used interns successfully typically also have permanent staff who serve as a constant for students from year to year.
- When considering which volunteer or intern options may work best, take into account students' needs. If a program is focused on providing academic preparation and support services to middle or high school students, an intern from an

educational psychology discipline could be helpful in assessing and advocating for education services. If a program is serving students who are already enrolled in postsecondary education and

have aged out of care, a social worker who can help with referrals to needed supports and resources may be more appropriate.

## Conclusion

The strategies and examples in this brief highlight the many ways in which state, local, and community leaders are bringing resources together to support education success for foster youth. A number of resources can potentially fund programs and services to promote education stability and success among foster youth, though many of them are not explicitly targeted to this population. A significant emphasis across the strategies presented in this brief is navigating, coordinating, and focusing existing resources so they most effectively meet the needs of foster youth and former foster youth. Coordination of the resources

supporting services in separate systems is a critical factor in successfully coordinating services and addressing gaps. In many cases, innovative efforts to improve the use of existing resources are facilitated through the investment of outside private resources from foundations or fundraising that help to fund enhanced support services, and planning, coordinating and data collection activities. The strategies presented in this brief encourage leaders to work collaboratively across systems to develop a diverse base of support for education success from federal, state, and local governments as well as private sources.





# RESOURCES

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## Organizations

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)  
[www.aacc.nche.edu/](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/)

Casey Family Programs  
[www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)  
[www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)

Council for Opportunity in Education (COE/TRIO)  
[www.trioprograms.org](http://www.trioprograms.org)

Federal Financial Aid  
[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

Lumina Foundation for Education  
[www.luminafoundation.org/](http://www.luminafoundation.org/)

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators  
[www.nasfaa.org](http://www.nasfaa.org)

National Scholarship Providers Association (NSPA)  
[www.scholarshipproviders.org](http://www.scholarshipproviders.org)

Orangewood Children's Foundation  
[www.orangewoodfoundation.org](http://www.orangewoodfoundation.org)

Orphan Foundation of America (OFA)  
[www.orphan.org](http://www.orphan.org)

"Smart Student's Guide to Financial Aid"  
[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

Stuart Foundation  
[www.stuartfoundation.org/](http://www.stuartfoundation.org/)

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)  
[www.naspa.org](http://www.naspa.org)

TeamChild  
[www.teamchild.org](http://www.teamchild.org)

U.S. Department of Education, Portal for Student Aid  
[www.ed.gov/students](http://www.ed.gov/students)

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## About The Finance Project

*Helping leaders finance and sustain initiatives that lead to better futures for children, families, and communities.*

The Finance Project is an independent nonprofit research, consulting, technical assistance, and training firm for public- and private-sector leaders nationwide. It specializes in helping leaders plan and implement financing and sustainability strategies for initiatives that benefit children, families, and communities. Through a broad array of tools, products, and services, The Finance Project helps leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships. To learn more, visit [www.financeproject.org](http://www.financeproject.org).

## Financing and Sustaining Supports and Services for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care

This publication is part of a series of tools and technical assistance resources on financing and sustaining initiatives supporting youth transitioning from foster care developed by The Finance Project with support from the Foster Care Work Group. These tools and resources are intended to help policymakers, program developers, and community leaders develop innovative strategies for implementing, financing, and sustaining effective programs and policies. To access these resources and for more information on this project, visit [www.financeproject.org/special/practice/fcwg.cfm](http://www.financeproject.org/special/practice/fcwg.cfm).

