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Sidney E. Asher

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**A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS  
OF AN INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM**

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**A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work**

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**by  
Sidney E. Asher, Jr.**

**June 1996**

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Sidney E. Asher, Jr.

June 1996

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## ABSTRACT

Adolescents in out of home placements face serious problems when reaching emancipation from the foster care system. This research project addresses some of the issues faced by adolescents.

The project is concerned with the effectiveness of the Independent Living Program (ILP) in assessing the effectiveness of preparing youth for emancipation from the foster care system. Specifically, the project focused on ILP participants' preparedness to live independently as determined by: education, housing, employment/career, and money management skills attained.

An interview questionnaire was given to 51 participants whose ages ranged from 16 to 19 years. The sample was a convenience sample based upon the availability of the participants in ILP; of statistical analysis were used to see if ILP had a positive impact on preparing youth for independence. Although the statistical analysis did not support the study's hypothesis that participation in ILP would better prepare youth for independent living, statistical analysis did show that overall participants who spent substantial time in ILP scores were equal to or better than participants with little or no time in ILP.

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## INTRODUCTION

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Children who are in foster care face serious problems upon leaving the system.

This is especially true for adolescents in care, who upon reaching age 18 or in some cases age 21 are terminated from the foster care system, and set out into the community unprepared and alone. The problems involved with the transition to independent living by these youth are that at the very minimum they have no guarantees of support from adults in getting settled in the worlds of employment, higher education, housing, or child care if they have children (Barth, 1986). These youth have little or no experience on how to live independently of the foster care system. Courtney and Barth (1996) relate:

The post discharge adult functioning of former foster children is troubling and paints a fairly bleak picture with regard to a bright future because of a failure to meet the minimum levels of self-sufficiency and acceptable behaviors (P. 75).

The social service system and other care providers have started to address the needs of adolescents leaving the foster care system. According to Moynihan (1988), "By the time Congress authorized the Independent-Living Initiative in 1986, it had become all too clear that we were failing to prepare older children in foster care for life on their own" (p. 484). Current studies reveal as well as surveys that former children of foster care are showing up in large numbers on public assistance rolls, in homeless shelters, jails and prisons (Moynihan, 1988). According to a study in New York, one third of persons 18-21 terminated from foster care to live on their own ended up on welfare within 15 months (Moynihan, 1988). A survey in California relates that an astounding two-thirds of the

inmates in the State Of California prison system, and one-third of children in the juvenile system, had at one time been placed in foster care (Moynihan, 1988).

The problems and needs of adolescents in the foster care system are numerous. The older youth within this system have deficits socially, educationally, psychologically, and health-wise (Griffin and Ansell, 1992). Some of the youth in foster care have been abused physically, sexually, and emotionally; many lack nurturance and guidance; most have experienced a history of turbulent family life and have had multiple out-of-home placements; and most are functioning below grade level. Bohman and Sigvardsson in a 1980 study reviewed 329 male children who were adopted, raised by their biological parents, or raised in a foster home, it was found that by the age of 18, the children in foster care fell behind the adopted children with regard to intellectual ability (Barth, 1986). In another study done in 1982, Zimmerman found that of 61 former foster children, who were now 19 years to 29 years old, had the poorest education preparation and this was the cause for most problems for them (Barth, 1986).

Also, many youth are having serious behavioral difficulties; and some have much difficulty in developing relationships with others. Other problems faced by youth in foster care are impaired intellect, histories of multiple health problems, rejection of help, histories of drug use, delinquency, and sexual acting out (Griffin and Ansell, 1992).

The role of direct social work, community social work, and administrative social work cannot be underestimated when working in the independent living program and with the development of adolescents that need to be emancipated from foster care system (Griffin and Ansell, 1992). To facilitate foster youth preparedness to live successfully

after emancipation from the foster care system, adequate developmental task achievement must be reached (Salahu-Din and Bollman, 1994). Salahu-Din and Bollman (1994) state:

It is adolescence, then, that provides a transitional period to adulthood and a time of preparation for life which if not successfully completed could mean failure in one's adult life and successful completion could mean happiness as an adult (P. 123).

Research on the independent living program would enhance direct, community level, and administrative level social work practice. Research in these areas are necessary to increase the professional's ability to evaluate and obtain a profile of the youth that are beginning to transition into an independent living status. Research would enhance the areas of direct social work, community social work, and administrative levels of social work practice by facilitating better training for social workers. The research effort would also prepare social workers to become better advocates for foster children through needs assessment, and facilitate and plan more efficient programs. Research would also offer better assessment of the community, and allow all involved to become team players when working toward helping foster youth at all levels of social work practice (Griffin and Ansell, 1992).

With regard to advocacy, this research project will address the need for social workers to advocate for programs and services designed to support the emancipation programs for children 16 and older who receive Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments (Sims, 1988). The current Republican U.S. dominated Congress would love nothing short of getting rid of foster care as we know it and place all these adolescents in orphanages. According to Digre (1996), "The Republican budget slashes child protection

by 20% including funding for foster care, adoption, and investigations of reports of child abuse and neglect" (P. 16).

This research will also assist direct social work, community social work, and administrative social work in needs assessment of foster children. At the direct practice level, it is paramount that youth in foster care are assessed properly when entering independent living programs. These assessment have to be accurate and ongoing until the program is complete. An inaccurate assessment could mean the difference between success and failure toward emancipation (Griffin and Ansell, 1992). Sims (1988) relates, "The evaluation of Oregon's independent living program suggested that caseworkers used different standards of eligibility in referring youth to the program" (P. 154). The workers became selective in referring youth. Those youth who showed an inability to be managed in foster family care were referred less often, whereas other workers referred youth who showed promising signs of making a rapid or sure success of adjusting to independent living (Sims, 1988).

At the community and administrative levels on social work, practice assessment plays a pivotal role in addressing problems of funding for programs related to foster care. Assessing the needs of the communities in which foster children reside should be done on a continuing basis to run parallel with the community's needs and the children's needs. The administration of independent living programs should address ongoing assessment needs when planning to implement program designs (Kahn, 1991).

The need for social workers to become better facilitators in the independent living program and the rendering of services at the direct practice level, community level, and

administrative level can also be enhanced by this research project. It is found that some of the needs are: transitional housing, counseling, employment services, vocational training, medical care, and financial assistance (Irvine, 1988). These needs can and should be addressed at each level of social work practice (Kahn, 1991).

Finally, the three levels of social work practice should work together as a team with the adolescent and all others involved with preparing the adolescent for independent living (Griffin and Ansell, 1992). Individual social workers, community agencies, and administrative functions should work as a team toward emancipating the adolescents from foster care (Griffin and Ansell, 1992). This research project on an independent living program will reveal the need to substantiate equity in decision making, the sharing of information and knowledge, and mutual respect for all those involved with the emancipation of foster care youth.

The research problem that will be addressed in this study is whether or not current programs within a Department of Public Social Service's ILP are effective in helping youth transition toward successful independent living.

### **PROBLEM FOCUS**

This study of the effectiveness on ILP adopts the positivist paradigm. According to Guba (1990), the positivist paradigm focuses on how things really are, and how things really work, which encompasses the search for a known reality or truth. The ontology of the positivist paradigm supports that there is an objective reality out there that is driven by natural laws (Guba, 1990). Once commitment is established to a realist ontology, the

positivist's focus is toward an objective epistemology. This means there are natural laws that the world operates in, and the researcher should not let personal judgements, values, and bias interfere with the process of inquiry and experimental experimentation (Guba, 1990). Often times researcher bias comes into play, therefore, the positivist paradigm must adopt a methodological approach to control for empirical methods that place the point of decision in nature's hands rather than with the researcher (Guba, 1990). The most effective method to do this is through empirical experimentation.

The empirical experimentalism methodology allows the researcher to control the environment, so that the natural truth will be revealed, rather than to be plagued with researcher bias. Through the empirical experimentalism methodology, the researcher controls for researcher bias on the one hand by placing the point of decision with nature rather than with the inquirer (Guba, 1990). In this study, questions and hypothesis are stated in advance in a propositional form and subjected to empirical test under carefully controlled conditions (Guba, 1990). The research will follow this framework with a descriptive study of two groups. One group of youths has little or no experience with the ILP. The other group has a great deal of experience with or has completed the program. The study describes the effectiveness of an ILP as determined by youth who recently began, compared to those who had nearly or completed the training program.

The major social work arenas that were evaluated in the study of effectiveness within the ILP are: direct practice, community intervention, and administration and policy planning. The study describes the effectiveness of the ILP for the adolescents who participated in the program. At the direct level of practice, the study will enable social

workers to better plan and assess the participants. Thus, the impact at the community level could be a decrease in the number of ex-foster youth recycling into the social welfare and penal systems in the form of AFDC, General Relief recipients, probation, parole, and prison patrons. At the administrative and planning levels, the research should enhance the future designs and planning aspects of programs that will directly effect the youth that participate in them.

The problems and needs of former foster care youth are numerous and taxing not only upon the foster care system, but the community as well (Irvine, 1988). Some of the specific needs of aftercare services for former foster children are: transitional housing, counseling, employment/career services, vocational training, medical care, and financial assistance (Irvine, 1988).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

By the early 1900s, foster care was considered a short term solution to the problem of children without a home. However, professionals and researchers soon realized that this was not the case. Foster care children who entered the system as young children were still there as adolescents, and to the present day adolescents represent a large portion of foster care clients. Contrary to earlier beliefs, the foster care system is not short term and is also not treatment directed, but instead it has evolved into foster care with tenure (Barth, 1986). When children can no longer return to their biological families, this creates a development handicap for many of them. The foster child has to face not

only the traumatic experience that placed them in foster care, but also the child has to come to terms with foster placement (Euster, Ward, Varner, and Euster, G., 1984).

If foster children are not returned to their biological families, they stay in foster placement until the age of eighteen which is considered age of majority in most states. At age 18, youth age out of the system. After aging out of the system, agency care is simply terminated and the young person is expected to go out into society and function as an adult. Hardin (1988) further states, "Often there are too many restrictions before the young person reaches the specified age, and not enough help and supervision after" (p. 530). Depending on the development and maturing of these adolescents, they are either ready and capable to emancipate from foster care or they are not (Hardin, 1988). This problem develops the need for independent living training or emancipation services. The argument for emancipation services are based on the assumption that children who are discharged to their own supervision and who are expected to assume full adult responsibilities at the age of majority need assistance in making the transition to independent living (Barth, 1986).

Past studies on foster children have elicited mixed results. For example, in an early investigation by Theis in 1924, it was found that three-fourths of the more than 500 adults who were formally in foster care reported they lived competently in their respective communities, but the remaining one-fourth were unable to support themselves, and were labeled as immoral and shiftless.



McCord's study in 1960 found that youths provided with foster care and became delinquent, the foster care did not prevent recidivism in criminal activity. As adults, these youth continued with criminal activity.

Harrai's 1980 study of 34 adolescents who left foster care within five years and had not returned to their foster homes found that their self-reports on a personality inventory were indistinguishable from such reports by the general population. The attributed success of these particular adolescents' adjustment to independent living was inspired by the availability and use of the following services: financial, family planning, substance abuse and, emotional problems, and locating or reuniting with birth parents (Barth, 1986). Barth relates, "Although studies on outcomes for former foster children fall far short of definitiveness, such studies indicate that foster children are not a favored group" (P. 167). The exposure of youth to foster care does not mean they will have a life of failure and despair, but in some cases foster care may be more beneficial than their birth homes. Nevertheless, they are still children placed at high risk of living unsuccessful lives (Barth, 1986).

The proposed study of effectiveness of the independent living program will further implicate and address the need for services to assist foster care youth in emancipation. The current literature illustrates that although there are some successes in the foster care system, far too many foster youth are showing up in homeless shelters, penal systems, and on public assistance (Moynihan, 1988).

The current studies show a trend toward the increased problem situations for this population (Festinger, 1983). Because of this current trend, it is paramount that

continued research be done to evaluate the effectiveness of the current programs that are in place and show how they can better meet the needs of these adolescents.

## **DESIGN AND METHODS SECTION**

### **PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to describe the effectiveness of the relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP) and participants' sense of preparedness to live independently. The study was based on the assumption that the intervention of services provided by ILP would have a positive effect on these youth than if no intervention with regard to being able to live independently after emancipation from foster care. The study also assumed that the youth who participated more in ILP would be better able to live independently than those that had little or no participation. The study was based on rejection of the null hypothesis which infers that no relationship exists between participation in the ILP and sense of preparedness for independent living. The study offered to support the following hypothesis:

By participating in an Independent Living Program, foster youth are more prepared to become independent of the social welfare system in relation to the categories of educational skills, housing, career/employment skills, and money management.

The study has a positivist, correlational descriptive research design. The study gives a description of the relationship between the variables involved. The outcome of the study will allow researchers and others to better understand the ILP process and the participation of foster youth as they age out of the foster care system. The study will

provide insight for DPSS to better prepare adolescents in foster care to live independently once emancipation takes place.

There are different purposes in evaluating programs such as an ILP. There are three broad classifications for program evaluation which are: (1) the ultimate success of programs, (2) problems in how programs are being implemented, and (3) information needed in program planning and development (Rubin and Babbie, 1993). Rubin and Babbie (1993) indicate two terms that are common when classifying alternative purposes in evaluation literature: they are summative and formative evaluations (Rubin and Babbie, 1993). Summative evaluations are based with the first of the three purposes which involve the success of a program. The results of this type of evaluation relate a sense of finality (Rubin and Babbie, 1993). Depending on how the results imply whether or not the program succeeded, the program may or may not survive (Rubin and Babbie, 1993). On the other hand, formative evaluations are focused on providing information that is helpful in program planning and improving implementation and performance (Posavac and Carey, 1985).

The study sought to evaluate the effectiveness through a posttest design with non-equivalent groups. It is a pre-experimental, descriptive design. An interview questionnaire was given to two groups of participants affiliated with ILP. The first group had little or no involvement with ILP (3 or less camps). The second group had either completed ILP or had significant involvement (4 or more camps). To divide the groups by camp involvements was an arbitrary assignment decided upon by ILP staff, Cal State staff advisement, and the researcher. The design was correlational and, therefore, had low

internal validity. In regard to threats to internal validity, the design addressed testing, instrumentation, and experimental mortality. The design, however, did not address the threats of history, selection bias, and maturation.

### **SAMPLING**

The population of interest was selected from both past and present participants in ILP. A convenience sample was used because of the population available to participate in the study. A systematic random sample was first undertaken, however, it was unsuccessful because most of the participants that were selected from DPSS agency files were unavailable.

The sample was obtained from youth who were participating at ILP camps where the researcher was in attendance. The sample was also obtained from staff members referrals. The sample used was present and former youth in ILP. The age range of the sample population was from 16-19 years. These youth were in out of home placements in Riverside County DPSS. Once the sample was selected, it was divided into two groups of a total of 51 participants. The first group (Group 1) consisted of 25 participants with little or no participation in an ILP. The second group (Group 2) had more participation in an ILP, or had completed the program.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND INSTRUMENTS**

The data was gathered from a self-administered interview questionnaire designed specially for the study. The purpose of the study was to describe relationships between

the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables was the group level of participation in ILP, and measured in one of two ways: The first group (Group 1) was considered ILP participants who had little or no involvement with the program; these participants had 3 or less camps. The second group (Group 2) was considered ILP participants who had completed or had 4 or more camps. The camps are a 1 to 3 day series of classes or seminars taught to prepare foster youth in ILP with life skills (e.g. finding housing, finding a job, and/or opening a bank account). The dependent variables were the adolescents' responses to preparedness to live independently as determined by readiness in education, housing arrangements, employment/career, and money management.

The dependent variable was gauged by rating the participants' answers to various Likert scale questions (see Appendix A). The interview questionnaire consisted of both closed and open ended questions. The closed ended questions were recorded on a rating sheet. The data was then simplified and coded numerically for input into SPSSPC. Closed ended questions were used to ascertain uniform responses. Care was taken in designing questions to make sure that the response categories were exhaustive and mutually exclusive.

The participants were asked to answer several open ended questions which allowed them to give personal insights and perceptions that were not addressed in the closed ended questions. Both groups were also asked to respond to three additional open ended questions which were: A) In what ways can the Independent Living Program be

more helpful to you? B) How can the Department of Public Social Services better assist you in preparing for independence or independent living? C) Any additional comments?

The advantages of giving a questionnaire are that it is inexpensive; interviewer bias is avoided; less pressure is placed on the respondent; it is easily administered; and respondents can remain anonymous. The disadvantages are that all respondents may not respond to all questions; they may not return the questionnaires, and respondents' misinterpretations of the questions may not be corrected.

To test the validity of the interview questionnaire, several DPSS, ILP Coordinators and a supervisor with a great amount of experience evaluated the instrument. They were also asked to give input and feedback on phrasing and question structure. One coordinator gave suggestions on how and where to administer the test instrument. One coordinator commented that a large number of the youth may not be able to respond to the questions appropriately because of literacy problems and mental instability. The participants that were too deficient in literacy and emotional areas were excluded from participation in the study.

## **PROCEDURE**

The test instrument was a self-administered interview questionnaire which was given to each participant and returned after completion. A cover letter was also given to each participant explaining what the study was about and that their participation was strictly voluntary. Although DPSS provided a signed letter of consent as the legal guardian of each of the minors (see Appendix B), a letter of consent for each individual

was provided to explain confidentiality in regards to their responses (see Appendix D). This letter also served as a debriefing letter that was kept by the respondents. The letter provided phone numbers for the respondents, in case they had any questions about the study.

Permission was obtained from the supervisors and coordinators of the Independent Living Program to administer the test instrument on site at two of the camp retreats. Also, permission was given to administer the test instrument to after-care youth at their respective places of residence.

The questionnaire took approximately thirty minutes for each participant to complete. The data collection was done from February 1, 1995 through March 31, 1996.

### **PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS**

In the study, the participants' rights and welfare were protected with the utmost regard to confidentiality. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary, and each participant was given a letter of consent to read and signature was required. Because the participants were minors and dependents of the court, an additional informed consent was required from the Department of Public Social Services which acts as the participants' legal guardian. Again, all information was confidential, and each participant's identity will not be revealed to DPSS or any other person or agency. A copy of the study was given to the Department of Social Services for a guide to benefit youth in out of home placements, for improvement of ILP services, and for on going research.

## **RESULTS**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The interview questionnaire was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on two comparison groups. The results of this study was organized through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program for compilation of the quantitative data. The procedure used for the qualitative procedure was summarization of responses to questions.

Tables were created displaying frequencies for each variable within the four categories of interest. Measures of central tendencies were also calculated with regard to mean, median, and mode for description of the two group responses to the four categories.

The data was also analyzed through the use of cross tabulation for each group to show the relationship between the independent variable. The independent variable was the group level of participation in the Independent Living Program. The dependent variables were the variables that described the responses as to their level of preparedness to live independently with regard to the four measured categories. Preparedness to live independently was measured by the level of either certainty, awareness, or preparedness with regard to the task work effort.

The cross tabulation tables were developed through use of the following variables: awareness of G.E.D. or high school diploma requirements, awareness of requirements for entrance into college or trade school, preparedness to complete a college application; certainty of housing arrangements (2 measures), preparedness to locate and maintain



housing; certainty of employment arrangement (2 measures); awareness of the steps needed to achieve career goal, preparedness to participate in a job interview, preparedness to complete a job application, preparedness to obtain employment that will meet basic financial needs; preparedness to effectively use a checkbook, preparedness to organize a household budget, preparedness to effectively open and close and use a checking or savings account, and preparedness to effectively establish and use a credit card.

T-tests were also used to analyze the two non-equivalent groups in the study. The T-test was used to test the hypothesis which states that by participating in the Independent Living Program, foster youth are more prepared to become independent of the social welfare system in relation to the areas of educational skills, housing, career/job skills, and money management. The null hypothesis tested whether or not participants in ILP are prepared to live independently after leaving the social welfare system.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

There was a total of fifty-one participants selected as a convenience sample for this study. The fifty-one participants were divided in two groups. Group 1 participants had little or no involvement with ILP (i.e. 3 or less camps). While Group 2 participants had significantly more involvement with ILP (i.e. 4 or more camps). Each of the fifty-one participants completed most of the interview questionnaire. The demographic information included are sex, age, ethnicity, months in DPSS, type of residence, placement status, type of residence, primary language spoken, and region of the county in which they live.

The participants' sex were as follows: in group 1, there were 12 males and 13 females - 48% and 52% respectively. In Group 2, there were 9 males and 17 females - 35% and 65% respectively. The age range of the participants of both groups were 16 to 19 years. The various ages were as follows: 17 participants were 16 years old, 19 participants were 17 years, 11 participants were 18 years, and 4 participants were 19 years.

Table 1: Respondents' Age By Group

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
16 Years	12 48%	5 19%
17 Years	8 32%	11 43%
18 Years	5 20%	6 23%
19 Years	- -	4 15%

Table 2: Respondents' Sex By Group

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Male	12 48%	9 35%
Female	13 52%	17 65%

Table 3: Respondents' Ethnicity

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
African American	20%	32%	7%
Caucasian	35%	32%	39%
Latino/Hispanic	16%	12%	19%
Asian American	2%	0%	3%
Native American	6%	8%	3%
Multi-ethnicity	22%	16%	27%

The participant population was represented by all the major racial groups and also a group of multiethnic persons (e.g. Caucasian and African American, Caucasian and Hispanic American, et. al.). Although there was diversity within the population, a slight majority of the respondents were Caucasian (See Table 3).

Table 4: Months In DPSS

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
0 - 12 Months	28%	44%	14%
1 - 5 Years	40%	28%	59%
5 - 10 Years	8%	12%	14%
11+ Years	22%	16%	14%

Number of Missing Observations: 4

Table 5: Respondents' Placement Program

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Family Maintenance	8%	21%	10%
Family Reunification	8%	29%	
Permanent Placement	31%	50%	90%

Missing cases: 27

The majority of participants were in permanent placement (Group 1 at 50% and Group 2 at 90%) which means these respondents will not be returning to their biological parents.

Table 6: Respondents' Placement Status

if in Permanent Placement

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Long Term Foster Care	31%	64%	50%
Guardianship	10%	-	36%
Adoption	2%	7%	-
Not Applicable	12%	29%	14%

Missing Cases: 15

For participants in Permanent Placements, the majority were considered in a Long Term Foster Care status (See Table 6) for both Groups 1 and 2. There were relatively no differences in placement status for the two groups in terms of permanent placement except in the category of Guardianship where Group 1 had zero (0) responses, while Group 2 had 36% of group samples in a Guardianship.

Table 7: Respondents' Type of Residence

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Foster Home	43%	44%	42%
Relative's Home	2%	4%	-
Group Home	29%	35%	27%
Youth Home	4%	4%	4%
Other	12%	13%	12%

Missing cases: 4

The distribution of participants in out of home placements was largely foster home or group home (See Table 7). Residential comparison for the two groups was nearly evenly distributed (See Table 7).

Table 8: Primary Language of Participants

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
English	98%	96%	100%
Spanish	2%	4%	-
Other	-	-	-

In terms of primary language, both groups 1 and 2 were predominately English speaking (see Table 8). In comparison of the groups, 4% of Group 1 spoke Spanish compared to 0% in Group 2.

Table 9: Respondents' Region

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Riverside Region	75%	84%	65%
Hemet Region	8%	8%	8%
Corona Region	8%	-	15%
Banning Region	8%	4%	12%
Out of County	-	4%	-

The County of Riverside divides its service area into four regions: Riverside, Hemet, Corona, and Banning. The Greater Riverside Region encompasses Riverside proper, Mira Loma, and Rubidoux. The Hemet Region encompasses Helmet proper, Moreno Valley, Perris, San Jacinto, Idlewild, and Murietta. The Corona Region encompasses Corona proper, Narco, and Elsinor. The Banning Region encompasses Banning proper, Beaumont, Palm Springs, Indio, and Temecula. The two groups were not distributed equally in the various regions. Group 1 had 84% from the Riverside Region, and Group 2 had 65% from the Riverside Region (see Table 9).

### **RESPONSES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

The questions on the interview questionnaire were made up of four categories for which ILP gives camp retreats that are important for independent living. The categories responded to were: Education, Housing Arrangements, Employment/Career, and Money Management. These categories are regarded as important life skills for independent living by ILP staff. Table 10 reports the percentage scores that were selected from each of the four categories that were formatted from a comparable Likert Scale. The scores were separated into the two group percentage scores labeled Group 1 and Group 2 (see Table 10).

**Table 10: Selected Responses by Participation Level in Education**

	Don't Know N/A	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Well	Very Well
2. To what extent are you informed of the requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma.						
Group 1	4.0%	0.0%	8.0%	16.0%	20.0%	52.0%
Group 2	3.8%	3.8%	0.0%	11.5%	19.2%	61.5%
3. To what extent are you informed of the requirements needed to obtain a G.E.D.						
Group 1	23.5%	11.8%	17.6%	23.5%	17.6%	5.9%
Group 2	3.8%	3.8%	0.0%	11.5%	19.2%	61.5%
4. To what extent are you informed of the requirements that you need to enter college or a trade school.						
Group 1	4.0%	20.8%	8.3%	25.0%	20.8%	25.0%
Group 2	0.0%	11.5%	11.5%	23.1%	34.6%	19.2%
5. How prepared are you to complete a college application?						
Group 1	3.8%	11.5%	15.4%	26.9%	15.4%	26.9%
Group 2	8.0%	12.0%	12.0%	32.0%	8.0%	28.9%

**Table 11: Selected Responses by Participation Level in Housing**

	Don't Know N/A	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Well	Very Well
4. Overall, how prepared are you to locate housing after emancipation?						
Group 1	8.3%	8.3%	12.5%	29.2%	16.7%	25.0%
Group 2	4.0%	8.0%	0.0%	36.0%	28.0%	24.0%
5. How prepared are you to maintain housing, after emancipation?						
Group 1	4.2%	4.2%	20.8%	25.0%	8.3%	37.5%
Group 2	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	44.0%	28.0%

**Table 12: Selected Responses by Participation Level in Employment/Career**

	Don't Know N/A	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Well	Very Well
7. How well do you know what steps are needed to achieve your personal career goal?						
Group 1	4.2%	4.2%	0.0%	37.5%	8.3%	45.8%
Group 2	0.0%	3.8%	15.4%	19.2%	23.1%	38.5%

**Table 12: Selected Responses by Participation Level in Employment/Career (Continued)**

	Don't Know N/A	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Well	Very Well
8. How prepared are you to participate in a job interview?						
Group 1	4.0%		12.5%	33.3%	16.7%	37.5%
Group 2	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	19.2%	38.5%	34.5%
9. How prepared are you to complete a job application?						
Group 1	4.0%		12.5%	33.3%	16.7%	37.5%
Group 2	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	19.2%	38.5%	34.5%
10. How prepared are you to obtain employment which will meet your basic functional needs?						
Group 1	4.2%	4.2%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	25.0%
Group 2	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	26.9%	38.5%	26.9%

**Table 13: Selected Responses by Participation Level in Money Management**

	Don't Know N/A	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Well	Very Well
1. How prepared are you to use a checkbook?						
Group 1	8.3%	16.7%	12.5%	20.8%	8.3%	33.3%
Group 2	0.0%	3.8%	15.4%	19.2%	26.9%	34.6%
2. How prepared are you to organize a household budget?						
Group 1	4.2%	16.7%	0.0%	41.7%	20.8%	16.7%
Group 2	3.8%	7.7%	3.8%	26.9%	26.9%	30.8%
3. How prepared are you to effectively open, close, and use a checking or savings account?						
Group 1	4.2%	16.7%	12.5%	16.7%	20.8%	29.2%
Group 2	3.8%	7.7%	0.0%	26.9%	26.9%	34.6%
4. How prepared are you to effectively establish and use a credit card?						
Group 1	20.0%	31.8%	4.5%	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%
Group 2	11.5%	12.5%	20.8%	33.3%	12.5%	16.7%

In regard to selected responses with participation level, Group 1 (3 or less camps with ILP) fared less than Group 2 (4 or more camps) with regard to percentages for individual

variables when compared (see Tables 10-13). With regard to education, the percentages for Group 2 were higher overall than the percentage responses for Group 1 in the Somewhat, Well, and Very Well category responses. Questions 2, 3, and 4 related to how informed a participant was with regard to requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma (Question 2), to what extent are you informed of requirements to obtain a G.E.D. (Question 3), and to what extent are you informed of the requirements that you need to enter college or a trade school. (Question 4) (See Table 10). Question 5 asked: how prepared are you to complete a college application? Group 2 fared better than Group 1. These questions related requirements for college, trade school entrance, and college applications. In response to question 1, concerning the highest level of education the participants planned to achieve, there was no difference between the two groups. In Group 1, 80% wanted to go on to college; and for Group 2 77% wanted to go on to college.

For the housing arrangement category, the participants were asked: where they would live after emancipation from the foster care system; then they were to rate how probable and certain these arrangements would happen. The largest responses in both groups were where would they live after emancipation was in the other section Group 1 40% and Group 2 31%. Will this housing arrangement probability and certainty of happening, both groups responded to probably will happen, will happen almost definitely, will definitely happen overwhelmingly in these response sections. The level at which the housing arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged Group 2 percentages were in the highest to levels of certainty than Group 1. In regard to question 4, "Overall, how



prepared are you to locate housing after emancipation,” the combined percentages Somewhat prepared, Well, and Very Well - Group 2 scored higher 88% than Group 1 at 71% (See Table 11). With regard to question 5, “How prepared are you to maintain housing after emancipation” with combined responses of Somewhat prepared, Well prepared, and Very Well prepared, Group 2 responded 92% and Group 1 responded 70.8%. (see Table 11).

For the Employment/Career category, participants were asked questions regarding career goals, preparedness in job interviews, preparedness to complete job applications, and preparedness to obtain gainful employment. Question 7 asked: “How well do you know what steps are needed to achieve the above career goals?” With the combined responses of Somewhat, Well, and Very Well, Group 2 had a 92% response rate compared to Group 1 with a 81% response rate. (See Table 12). Question 8 asked: “How prepared are you to participate in a job interview?” For the combined responses Somewhat prepared, Well prepared, and Very Well prepared, Group 2 had a 91% response rate compared to Group 1 with a 71% response rate (see Table 12). With regard to the question: “How prepared are you to complete a job application?” Group 2 responded slightly higher at 96% compared to 96% for Group 1. The last question in this series was: “How prepared are you to obtain employment which will meet your basic financial needs?” Again, Group 2 responded higher with 92% compared to Group 1 with 75% (see Table 12). Overall Group 2 had a higher percentage of preparedness for the Employment/Career Category.

In the money management section, participants were asked questions regarding money management. The questions that were asked had to do with preparedness to use a checkbook, preparedness to organize a household budget, preparedness to open, close, and use a checking and savings account, and preparedness to effectively establish and use a credit card. Question 1 asked: "How prepared are you to effectively use a checkbook?" For the combined responses Somewhat prepared, Well prepared, and Very Well prepared, Group 2 percentage response was 81%, compared to Group 1 with 62% (see Table 13). For question 2: "How prepared are you to organize ..." revealed the following percentages 85% for Group 2 and 79% for Group 1, respectively. For question 3: "How prepared are you to effectively open, close and use a checking or savings account?" Group 2 had 88% and Group 1 had 67%. For question 4: "How prepared are you to effectively establish and use a credit card?" Group 2 response was 63% while Group 1 had 55%. In all four categories in this section, Group 2 responded at a higher percentage rate than Group 1.

In each section of the interview questionnaire the participants were asked to what extent ILP had most influenced their current level of preparedness in education, housing arrangements, employment/career, and money management. Table 14 indicates the percentage responses for each category.

In regard to the responses for each of the six questions, Group 2 had the highest percentage of participants who answered Strongly Agree and Agree in comparison to Group 1. On the reciprocal side of this section, Group 1 had the highest percentage of

participants who answered Strongly Disagree, and Disagree with each category as compared to Group 2 (see Table 14 for percentage comparisons).

**Table 14: Perceived Influence of ILP by Participant Groups**

The Independent Living Program has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding... regarding...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know N/A
<u>Education</u>					
Group 1	13.0%	34.8%	17.4%	0.0%	17.4%
Group 2	44.0%	32.0%	4.0%	12.0%	8.0%
<u>Locating Housing</u>					
Group 1	4.3%	26.1%	26.1%	13.0%	30.4%
Group 2	26.9%	42.3%	11.5%	7.7%	11.5%
<u>Maintaining Housing</u>					
Group 1	4.5%	27.3%	27.3%	13.6%	27.3%
Group 2	25.0%	45.8%	4.2%	12.5%	12.5%
<u>Regarding Employment</u>					
<u>Overall</u>					
Group 1	19.0%	33.3%	23.8%	14.3%	9.5%
Group 2	37.5%	37.5%	16.7%	0.0%	8.3%
<u>Regarding Career</u>					
<u>Goals Overall</u>					
Group 1	15.0%	40.0%	25.0%	5.0%	15.0%
Group 2	30.4%	43.5%	13.0%	4.3%	8.7%
<u>Regarding Money</u>					
<u>Management</u>					
Group 1	14.3%	33.3%	19.0%	19.0%	14.3%
Group 2	37.5%	33.3%	20.8%	0.0%	8.3%

Table 15 reports T-Test conducted on the various variables in the study on effectiveness of ILP. The T-Test was done on the observed means in the two non-equivalent groups to test the hypothesis that the two population means are not equal, therefore giving support to the hypothesis previously stated that by participating in ILP, foster youth are more prepared to become independent of the social welfare system in relation to four categories: education, housing, employment/career, and money management.

The T-Test was ran for each category in the study and the results appear in Table 15.

**Table 15: Comparison of T-Test for Independent Samples of Groups in Education**

	F-Value	2 Tailed Significance	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	P=<.05	Result
1)	Highest level of education plan to obtain					
	.031	.183	-.05	48	.874	Insignificant
2)	Informed requirements need for high school diploma.					
	.047	.604	-.52	49	.829	Insignificant
4)	Informed requirements needed to enter college or trade school.					
	.746	.652	-.45	48	.392	Insignificant
5)	Preparedness to complete college application.					
	.013	.729	-.35	49	.909	Insignificant
6)	ILP influenced current level of preparedness regarding education.					
	.062	.465	.74	46	.805	Insignificant

**Table 16: Comparison of T-Test for Independent Samples of Groups in Housing**

	F-Value	2 Tailed Significance	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	P=<.05	Result
1)	Where will you live after emancipation?					
	.196	.998	.00	49	.660	Insignificant
2)	Certainty of above housing arrangement.					
	10.186	.022	-2.39	36.10	.002	Significant
3)	Housing arrangement had been discussed.					
	.097	.332	-.98	49	.757	Insignificant

**Table 16: Comparison of T-Test for Independent Samples of Groups in Housing (Continued)**

	F-Value	2 Tailed Significance	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	P=<.05	Result
4)	Preparedness to locate housing after emancipation.					
	.684	.396	-.86	47	.413	Insignificant
5)	Preparedness to maintain housing after emancipation.					
	2.413	.401	-.85	47	.127	Insignificant
6)	ILP most influenced current level of preparedness regarding locating housing.					
	3.693	.783	.28	47	.061	Insignificant
7)	ILP most influenced preparedness to maintain housing.					
	1.816	.670	.43	44	.670	Insignificant

**Table 17: Comparison of T-Test for Independent Samples of Groups in Employment/Career**

	F-Value	2 Tailed Significance	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	P=<.05	Result
4)	Certainty of employment arrangement.					
	.196	.207	-1.28	47	.660	Insignificant
5)	Certainty of arrangement and discussion of employment.					
	.012	.716	-.37	47	.912	Insignificant
7)	Informed on steps needed to achieve career goal.					
	.212	.952	.06	48	.647	Insignificant
8)	Preparedness to participate in a job interview.					
	.870	.679	-.42	48	.356	Insignificant
9)	Preparedness to complete job application.					
	.010	.645	-.46	48	.922	Insignificant
10)	Preparedness to obtain employment.					
	.383	.297	-1.05	48	.539	Insignificant
11)	ILP influenced current level of preparedness regarding employment.					
	1.312	.102	1.67	43	.258	Insignificant
12)	ILP influenced current level of preparedness regarding career goals.					
	.197	.615	.51	41	.660	Insignificant

**Table 18: Comparison of T-Test for Independent Samples of Groups in Money Management**

	F-Value	2 Tailed Significance	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	P=<.05	Result
1)	Preparedness to effectively use checkbook.					
	3.987	.111	-1.62	48	.052	Insignificant
2)	Preparedness to organize household budget.					
	.109	.219	-1.24	48	.742	Insignificant
3)	Preparedness to open, close, and use checking or savings account.					
	1.714	.259	-1.14	48	.197	Insignificant
4)	Preparedness to establish and use a credit card.					
	2.456	.413	-.83	44	.124	Insignificant
5)	ILP influenced current preparedness regarding money management.					
	1.867	.162	1.42	43	.179	Insignificant

### **QUALITATIVE RESPONSES**

The participants were asked to respond to three open-ended questions at the end of the interview questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questions were asked for criticism the youth had with the ILP. The questions were also used to solicit information for suggestions as to how ILP could improve existing services. The open coding process was used to break down the respondents' answers, examine what they said, compare their answers with one another, conceptualize of similar events or phenomenon, and finally categorize their responses (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

The responses were mixed. Some of the participants had little or nothing to say, while others gave constructive criticism and praise for ILP. The participants' responses to the questions stayed within the categorical areas of the study (i.e. education, housing, employment/career, and money management). However, there were specific areas of

concern for the participants which included financial assistance, transportation, and womens' issues. Also there were concerns of commitment by ILP staff, and working out or discussing problems faced by youth of today.

### Education

The respondents felt the education seminar process could be enhanced. Overall, they stated that ILP had influenced their educational goals and the ILP was doing a good job. One student stated that ILP has influenced her to pursue a career in psychology. She plans to obtain a BA and MA in Psychology. She indicated that she plans to be a child psychologist.

### Housing

With regard to housing, some of the participants wanted to find affordable housing. Also, the participants indicated that assistance is needed from DPSS in helping them acquire housing.

### Employment/Career

One of the main concerns by the youth in this category was the need and help in getting jobs. One youth stated she feels very fortunate to have taken seminars in the ILP that focused on career goals. She said that ILP, however, could offer more camps in career goals.

## Money Management

Most responses to the money management category were favorable. The respondents stated that thanks to the training in ILP, they can make financial budgets; and they also currently have bank accounts. Some of the participants stated that ILP should offer more seminar camps on money management.

### **PRAISE AND CRITICISM OF ILP**

For the most part, the participants held ILP in the highest regard. Their overall response was positive regarding the running of program activities. One youth responded, "ILP has helped me a lot. It has taught me better study skills and how to improve my grades through the tutorial program." She also stated, "ILP has helped me prepare for the real world."

Another adolescent stated that ILP camps have helped her personally, internally. She went on to say that due to the camps and therapy, she is now a better person.

Some responses criticized the ILP. Several youth stated that the staff was not keeping commitments. Several youth had concerns regarding transportation. They had problems in obtaining adequate transportation to places because of where they lived and inadequate public transportation. One of the female participants stated that ILP needed to focus and talk more about womens' issues. Several adolescents also stated that ILP along with DPSS could give more financial assistance. Although the focus of the study was on education, housing, employment/career, and money management, there were several miscellaneous areas of living skills that were discussed. Particular attention was focussed



on the need to talk out personal problems. One participant focussed on addressing personal problems because often times youth, themselves, had no answers or solutions other than getting into trouble. Trouble meant drinking, using drugs, and illegal ways of making money.

Another miscellaneous area that was explored was manhood and womanhood. Many youth expressed concerns of learning what it would take to fulfill definitions of these roles. They expressed a need for understanding and focusing more attention on youth and elders relationships. "Times have changed," one participant stated. "Many older people do not understand youth or problems they face today."

#### **LITTLE OR NO PARTICIPATION IN ILP**

The youth that were placed in Group 1 had little or no experience with ILP. The same test instrument was administered to this group as with Group 2. Group 1 felt they needed more training in the categories that were discussed (i. e. education, housing, employment/career, and money management). One participant stated, "ILP should show them all there is to know about independent living."

#### **COMMENTS ON THE SURVEY BY PARTICIPANTS**

Several respondents had mixed feelings about participation in the survey. Some did not want to participate. However, the majority participated with little or no hesitation. Several of the participants stated that the interview was interesting and were happy to

participate. Others felt it was a chore because of the length of the questionnaire. The overall responses were positive.

## DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was to measure the effectiveness of an ILP as perceived by individual participants with regard to preparedness for living independently. The categories that were measured included education, housing, employment/career, and money management. The findings do not support rejecting the null hypothesis. Since the observed significance level for the measured variables is non-significant overall, one cannot reject the null hypothesis (See Tables 15-18 ). Therefore, since one does not find overall support of the stated hypothesis, one remains undecided. On the other hand, the statistical analysis shows that the participants in Group 2 had higher scores than Group 1 for most variables (See Tables 10-14). Although the T-Test yielded no significant differences, early analysis using descriptive measures suggest that participation in an ILP enhances foster youth's preparedness for the independence in the categories measured.

### Education

With regard to the category of education, Group 2 was slightly more informed than Group 1 with requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma. Group 2 scored higher than Group 1 in the requirements needed to get a G.E.D. Group 2 scored higher than Group 1 in preparedness needed to fill out a college application. Group 2 also scored higher in the category of requirements needed to enter college or trade school. These

measures were calculated from the combined Somewhat, Well, and Very Well Informed categories for each group. These findings support that ILP does motivate and draw up service plans to help youth prepare for college and trade school. The program also offers incentives (i.e. scholarships for college, and uniforms for work or training). The fact that the service plans and motivation to pursue higher education from ILP could be one reason Group 2 scored higher than Group 1, overall.

The qualitative responses reflected a concern for obtaining higher education and a need for financial support. The staff of ILP strongly encouraged youth to pursue college degrees and certification for career and vocational development.

### Housing

The focus on housing is another important element for youth emancipating from foster care. The findings in the study for housing greatly favored Group 2 compared to Group 1. Total responses for preparedness to locate housing after emancipation for Group 2 was 92% compared for 70% in Group 1. Respondents who had more involvement with ILP were better prepared to look for a house or apartment and maintain a house. They were also able to complete a rental agreement. In the qualitative responses, several of the participants stated they have their own apartments and are doing fine maintaining them.

## Employment/Career

In the category of employment/career, the respondents appeared to be equal. This could have more to do with the need for jobs. Youth from both groups responded relatively similar regarding job applications and obtaining employment.

A crucial point in a foster youth's emancipation or aging out of the system is finding a job. Teenage unemployment rates have always been higher and a very critical focal point in why youth go astray. With the current climate of gang affiliation and drug dealing, youth are at a very high risk for a life of crime. A significant number of qualitative responses focused on the needs for more jobs and training for young people.

## Money Management

With regard to money management, Group 2 scored higher than Group 1. In using a checkbook, Group 2 overall said they could establish and use a checkbook more often than did Group 1. In organizing a household budget, it was shown that Group 2 was better prepared than Group 1 at this task. Group 2 also scored higher in task; of preparedness to effectively open, close, and use a savings or checking account.

Finally, in the last tasks of preparedness to establish and use a credit card, Group 2 scored higher than Group 1. Money management is a critical life skill that must be learned by young people. The improper management of one's financial resources can create great turmoil in a person's life. Often times maintenance of financial resources dictate the overall success of a person's life.

## **PERCEIVED INFLUENCES OF ILP**

In this section of the study, both subgroups were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a statement claiming that the ILP had most influenced their level of preparedness regarding education, housing arrangements, employment/career, and money management (See Table 14).

In tabulating the group responses, Group 2 had more respondents that said ILP had influenced their current levels of preparedness. From these responses, Group 2 is better prepared than Group 1 in the categories of education, housing, employment/career, and money management. Although Group 2 responded more favorable than Group 1 with perceptions of preparedness, the results of the study do not warrant rejection of the null hypothesis.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Based on the results of the study and studies cited in the literature, I cannot state whether they support or do not support the findings. The statistical analysis using the T-Test specifically show that the observed significance levels for each of the variables when comparing Group 1 and 2 is non-significant overall. On the other hand, other descriptive analysis support the hypothesis that the intervention of ILP better prepares youth for living independently for the categories measured.

When a researcher makes a decision to not reject the null hypothesis, he or she has the chance of making a type II error. Norusis (1991) states that a "Type II error is one that you are not tempted to make, saying nothing is happening here, when there is a

difference in the population” (P.223). In this instance, the researcher can reject the null hypothesis, however, it also does not prove that the hypothesis is false. Based upon the analysis, this researcher remains undecided, since the null hypothesis could not be ruled out, nor could the hypothesis be accepted because it lacks the level of probability required before chance can be ruled out as a reasonable possibility of the findings. According to Rubin and Babbie (1993) too small of a sample could be a reasonable cause of non-significance.

The sample size of the study consisted of 51 adolescents divided into two non-equivalent groups. Group 1 had 25 participants who had little or no participation with ILP (3 or less camps). Group 2 had 26 participants who had a great deal of participation with ILP (4 or more camps). All of the participants answered the questions to the best of their ability. When working with a small sample size, chances increase the probability of error (Norusis, 1991). Also, it is important not to generalize findings from this study.

The ILP focuses on a broad range of topics selected to give adolescents needed life skills to be successful. This study, however, focused on only four categories associated with these needs. Most of the participants did answer most of the questions, however, there were missing data in some of the categories that were measured.

It is very important to point out that implications of this study on the effectiveness of ILP cannot be generalized to the entire population. As previously stated ILP has training in other areas such as: life skills, leadership, values, substance abuse, and problem solving.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

Children that are placed in the foster care system are in need of various services. Children are placed in foster care for short and long-term care for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons are sexual abuse, physical abuse, substance abusing parents, parents involved in prostitution, and emotional and general neglect. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of agencies like DPSS (specifically the ILP) to care for these children and prepare them to become productive citizens in society. Based upon the literature and problem focus of this study, more research on ILP is needed. Although the findings of this study do not overwhelmingly support the hypothesis, the findings have some important implications. A more indepth study should be taken of the existing program to evaluate it's effectiveness.

Several topics from the qualitative data should be addressed. First, participants showed a concern regarding staff not keeping commitments. A great concern for many adolescents was the coordinators' efforts to stay in touch with them. They felt these constant contacts are vital and paramount to their success. At the direct level of social work, consistency in scheduling is very important to keep clients interested in the program.

Financial assistance was another topic that was addressed often in the qualitative responses. Many respondents stated that resources were needed to better assist them in establishing themselves once emancipated. Again, to be successful at the direct practice level, the social worker in the capacity as a case manager has to be knowlegeable about resources. Clients need concrete resources such as food, shelter, clothing, and

transportation before they can focus on college or training. A positive suggestion, in terms of financial support, is that DPSS could institute programs that link adolescents with community resources or individuals who are interested in investing in their future. Some resources already exist. However, there is a tremendous need for more. These are issues that could also be addressed at the macro and mezzo levels of social work practice. With more funding and future policy changes, the ILP could be even more successful.

Other concerns of the youth were jobs, personal problems, gender issues, and counseling. Again these are areas that could be addressed in all levels of social work, particularly at the direct level of practice. The staff of ILP are program coordinators and often times their schedules do not permit a lot of individual time at a one-on-one basis for addressing intra and interpersonal problems these youth face. One suggestion DPSS should take into consideration is hiring more staff for the ILP program to deal with personal problems youth are having. One concern with high-risk youth is their avoiding a life of crime or substance abuse. These suggestions are valid and should be given serious consideration. One child's life saved is a soul redeemed.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS**

There is not enough literature available on Independent Living Programs. Because of the serious problems these youth face and the present system structured to transcend them from foster care to independent living, more research is needed. Additional research is needed to re-evaluate the existing system to tailor it for even more success in helping this population. There is an important need for society to respond to the concerns of these



foster children with desirable results. In talking with many of these children, they do not see a future. Some expressed a need for a job. Jobs just are not there. It is important that society invest in the future of these children, for they are the tomorrow for all.

The Independent Living Program is a good program to transition foster youth to independent living. The program has been in existence in Riverside County DPSS for about 10 years. The program offers both soft skills (i.e. self-esteem, social skills, and the like) and hard skills (i.e. employment/career, money management, et. al.) and other subjects which are vital life skills needed for youth. Based on the implications of this study more resources are needed to assist these youth in transitioning to independent living.

## **CONCLUSION**

Society has taken on the task of intervention when children are abused in their biological families. Once a child is removed, DPSS becomes the guardian of that child. Therefore, the system has an ordained legal responsibility for the positive growth of that child. If Child Protective Services is not providing a better environment for foster children to grow and nourish, then simply, the system is not properly serving its constituency. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that social workers involved in Child Welfare function at an appropriate level of competency by making sure children receive on-going educational training to deal with the many and new problems and challenges they will face. Our youth need to be prepared to deal with problems and challenges. A child's life often depends on preparedness.

The Independent Living Program is very worthwhile, in my personal opinion. The government at federal, state, and local levels needs to better fund programs of this nature, because everyone has a personal stake in the development of all children. As the African Proverb states, "It takes an entire village to raise a child." In summary, it is strange how money can be found to build weapons of mass destruction, but when it comes to investing in human lives and well-being, funds seem to disappear or get cut back.

**Appendix A: INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM INTERVIEW  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Sex:** (1) Male\_\_ (2) Female\_\_

**B. Age:**\_\_

**C. Date of Birth:**\_\_\_\_\_

**D. Ethnicity:**   \_\_ (1) African American    \_\_ (2) Caucasian  
                  \_\_ (3) Latino/Hispanic        \_\_ (4) Asian American  
                  \_\_ (5) Native American  
                  \_\_ (6) Multi-ethnicity (Please specify):\_\_\_\_\_

**E. Months in DPSS System:**\_\_ Months

**F.-H. Type of Current Placement:**

**F. (Mark One:)**

\_\_ (1) FM:  
    Family  
    Maintenance

\_\_ (2) FR:  
    Family  
    Reunification

\_\_ (3) PP:  
    Permanent  
    Placement

**G. (Mark One:)**

\_\_ (1) Foster Home  
\_\_ (2) Relative Home

\_\_ (3) Group Home  
\_\_ (4) Youth Home

\_\_ (5) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**H. (Mark One:)**

\_\_ (1) Long Term  
    Foster Care

\_\_ (2) Guardianship

\_\_ (3) Adoption

\_\_ (4) Not Applicable

**I. Primary Language:** (1) \_\_ English, (2) \_\_ Spanish, (3) \_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_

**J. Region:** \_\_ (1) Riverside Region    \_\_ (2) Hemet Region

          \_\_ (3) Corona Region        \_\_ (4) Banning Region

# I. EDUCATION

## 1. What is the highest level of education you plan to obtain?

- (1) G.E.D.
- (2) High School Diploma
- (3) Some College
- (4) A.A. Degree (2-year college degree)
- (5) Completion of a Trade School Program
- (6) B.A. or B.S. Degree (4-year college/university degree)
- (7) Post-graduate Degree (Master's, Doctorate, etc.)

## 2. To what extent are you informed of the requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
I don't      Not at all      Very little      Somewhat      Well      Very well      Not  
know          informed          informed          informed          informed          informed          Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 3. To what extent are you informed of the requirements needed to obtain a G.E.D.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
I don't      Not at all      Very little      Somewhat      Well      Very well      Not  
know          informed          informed          informed          informed          informed          Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**To what extent are you informed of the requirements that you need to enter college or a trade school, whichever is more applicable for you?**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
I don't      Not at all      Very little      Somewhat      Well      Very well      Not  
know      informed      informed      informed      informed      informed      Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. How prepared are you to complete a college application?**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
I don't      Not at all      Very little      Somewhat      Well      Very well      Not  
know      informed      informed      informed      informed      informed      Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:**

"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding education."

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
I don't      Not at all      Very little      Somewhat      Well      Very well      Not  
know      informed      informed      informed      informed      informed      Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on educational goals or requirements?** \_\_\_\_\_

## II. HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

1. **Where will you live after emancipation? (Mark one only).**

- (1) Remain in current foster home, group home, or youth home.
- (2) Remain in current relative's home?
- (3) Live with other relative (that I am not currently living with)?
- (4) Live with mother or father? (Specify which: \_\_\_\_\_)?
- (5) Live with natural or step-siblings? (without parents)?
- (6) Live with other emancipated foster care adolescents?
- (7) Live with friend(s) who are less than 5 years older than me?
- (8) Live with older friend(s) or adult(s)?
- (9) Live with boyfriend/girlfriend?
- (10) Live in shelter?
- (11) Live in school dorm or residence?
- (12) Other? (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

2. **Complete the following statement by circling the most appropriate number:**  
**"The above housing arrangement..."**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
I don't      will not      may or may      probably will      will happen      will  
definitely      happen      not happen      happen      almost definitely      happen  
know

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Circle the number below indicating the level at which the above housing arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:**

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----
I don't know	I probably will never bring it up to the others involved	I have not brought it with the others involved yet	I have talked about it a little bit with the others involved	The others involved have somewhat agreed to this arrangement	This arrangement has been agreed upon by myself and all others involved

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Overall, how prepared are you to locate housing after emancipation?**

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. How prepared are you to maintain housing after emancipation?**

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:

**"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding locating housing."**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----N/A  
I don't Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Not  
know Agree Disagree Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:

**"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding maintaining housing."**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----N/A  
I don't Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Not  
know Agree Disagree Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. **How many ILP courses, classes, workshops have you taken that focused on locating housing arrangements?**

\_\_\_\_\_

9. **How many ILP courses, classes, workshops have you taken that focused on maintaining housing arrangements?**

\_\_\_\_\_



### III. EMPLOYMENT/CAREER

1. **Currently, I am:**                    \_\_ (1) unemployed  
  \_\_ (2) employed part-time  
  \_\_ (3) employed full-time
2. **After I emancipate, I plan to be:** \_\_ (1) unemployed  
  \_\_ (2) employed part-time  
  \_\_ (3) employed full-time
3. **After emancipation, I will most likely be employed at:**  
  \_\_ Not applicable  
  \_\_ Specify type or place of employment: \_\_\_\_\_  
  \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Complete the following statement by circling the most appropriate number:**  
**"The above employment arrangement..."**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
I don't            will not            may or may            probably will            will happen            will definitely  
know            happen            not happen            happen            almost definitely            happen

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Circle the number below indicating the level at which the above employment arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	I probably will not seek employment there	I have not yet applied there but plan to	have applied or discussed this with employer, but have not received any offer yet	The employer has somewhat agreed to this arrangement	The employer has already hired me or has promised to, and I already work there or have promised to	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

6. My career goal is: \_\_\_\_\_

7. How well do you know what steps are needed to achieve the above career goal? (such as experience, education, etc.).

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Well	Very well	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

8. How prepared are you to participate in a job interview?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Well	Very well	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

**9. How prepared are you to complete a job application?**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not  
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**10. How prepared are you to obtain employment which will meet your basic financial needs?**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A  
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not  
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**11. Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:**

**"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding employment overall."**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----N/A  
I don't Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Not  
know Agree Disagree Disagree Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**12. Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement?**

**"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding career goals overall."**

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----N/A  
I don't Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Not  
know Agree Disagree Disagree Applicable

**13. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on employment or career goals?**

\_\_\_\_\_

## IV. MONEY MANAGEMENT

1. How prepared are you to effectively use a checkbook?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How prepared are you to organize a household budget?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How prepared are you to effectively open, close, and use a checking or savings account?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. How prepared are you to effectively establish and use a credit card?**

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:**

**"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding money management."**

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not Applicable

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on money management?**

\_\_\_\_\_

## V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A. In what ways can the Independent Living Program be more helpful to you?

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B. How can the Department of Public Social Services better assist you in preparing for independent living?

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C. Any additional comments?

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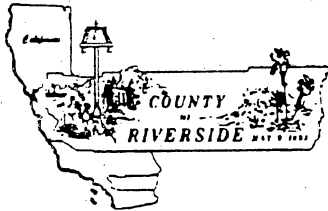
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Please use the back of this paper if more space is needed.

***THANK YOU!***

*Permission to use Research Instrument was granted by Trina Van Staeinwyck  
11/29/95*

Appendix B: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DO STUDY FROM DPSS



**Department of Public Social Services**

Administrative Office: 4060 County Circle Drive, Riverside, CA. 92503  
Telephone Number: (909) 358-3000 FAX Number: (909) 358-3036

Dennis J. Boyle, Interim Director

Paul A. Rout, Assistant Director  
Social Services

Ronald G. Merrill, Deputy Director  
Income Maintenance

December 14, 1995

Sidney Asher  
25795 Basil Court  
Moreno Valley, CA 92553

Re: Research Project

Dear Mr. Asher,

We received your proposal to do a research project utilizing participants of Riverside County DPSS's Independent Living Skills Program. We are in support of your doing this research project and will aid you in identifying youth to be surveyed and what ILS activities these youth have participated in.

To facilitate your access to needed information, please contact Sandee Binyon at (909) 358-3009 for an appointment to work out the details.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

*Paul A. Rout*

Paul A. Rout, M.S.W.  
Assistant Director

PAR/ps

## **Appendix C: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH APPROVAL**

December 12, 1995

Department Of Public Social Services,  
County Of Riverside  
10281 Kidd Street  
Riverside, CA 92503

To The Department Of Public Social Services:

I am writing this correspondence to ask for permission to conduct a research project entitled "Effectiveness Of The Independent Living Program Toward The Emancipation Of Foster Care Youth". This research project is a requirement for graduation for the Masters of Social Work program at California State University, at San Bernardino. I am a second year MSW student interning at the Independent Living Program at the Arlington office of the Department Of Public Social Services. My supervisor is Sandy Binyon.

The purpose of the study is to measure the relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP) and the adolescents ability to live on their own once emancipated from the foster care system. The preparedness to live on their own will be measured in terms of the following categories: education, housing, decision making skills, social skills, employment/career, and money management. An interview questionnaire will be administered to one group of participants in out of home placements under the jurisdiction of Riverside County DPSS: adolescents who participated in the program, and adolescents who did not complete the program. Through self-administered interview questionnaires, information will be gathered which identifies the participants' ability for preparedness to live on their own from their participation in the program activities (e.g. seminars and classes in ILP camps). Also their opinions will be asked on how the Independent Living Program can better help them to prepare to live on their own. The participants in the study will be randomly selected from the data base records of the Independent Living Program.

Each interview questionnaire will take approximately twenty minutes for the participant to complete. The data gathering period of this study will occur between January 8, 1996 and April 31, 1996. The results of the study will be available after June 17, 1996.

The rights and welfare of all participants will be protected and kept confidential with regard to this study. Participation will be voluntary, and all participants who decide to participate will be required to sign a letter of informed consent. Because the participants will be minors and dependents of the court, an additional informed consent will need to be signed by DPSS, acting as their legal guardian. No significant risks are apparent in this



study. This study is a nonmanipulative, nonstressful study of individual responses. DPSS will be provided with a copy of this study's results. However individual information given by the participants will be confidential, and each participant's identity will not be revealed to DPSS nor any other person or agency. The findings of this study , in aggregate or anonymous data only, will be shared with DPSS in order to benefit adolescents in out of home placements through improved programs and future research. Any information that would link data with an identity will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project, no later than July 1,1996.

A copy of my research proposal will be submitted upon request. If the department has any other questions or concerns, I may be contacted at 924-6204. The department may also contact my supervisor, Sandy Binyon at \_\_\_\_\_, or my research advisor Dr. Ira Neighbors at 880-5501.

I am requesting that I obtain written consent from the Department by December 22,1995. Your immediate attention to this request would greatly be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Sidney Asher  
25795 Basil Court  
Moreno Valley, CA 92553

## **Appendix D: INDIVIDUAL CONSENT FORM/DEBRIEFING LETTER**

### **Letter of Explanation and Consent Form Please read and sign this form**

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to examine the relationship of how prepared you are for living independent before entering the Independent Living Program, and after participation in ILP. In this study you will be asked to answer questions about preparedness for living on your own before and after participation in an Independent Living Program. The questions that will be asked in regard to preparedness for independent living will relate to housing, education, employment/career, money management, social skills, and decision making skills. You will also be given the opportunity to share your opinions regarding what needs you feel are most relevant in preparing you for emancipation of the social service system.

This study is being conducted independently by Sidney Asher, an MSW Student at California State University at San Bernardino and an intern at DPSS County of Riverside Independent Living Program, under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Morris, and the advisement of Dr. Ira Neighbors. Your input and feedback is important. The Department of Public Social Services will be provided with a copy of the results of the study. You can be reassured that all of the information given will be confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed to DPSS nor any other person or agency. The Identification Number on your interview questionnaire will only be known and used by Sidney Asher to keep track of the interview questionnaires that have been returned.

If there are any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Sidney Asher, Dr. Morris, or Dr. Neighbors at the Department of Social Work

at California State University, San Bernardino at (909)880-5501. If you have any questions regarding the Independent Living Program or concerns related to preparing for independent living, please contact your social worker or the ILP Coordinator with the Department of Public Social Services, Sandy Binyon or Craig Johnson at (909)358-3781.

Please acknowledge that your involvement in this study is completely voluntary, and that your involvement or lack of involvement will not hinder or help with your participation with the Department of Public Social Services or the Independent Living Program.

Please answer all the questions. Be honest as possible and feel free to give your opinions and explanations in the spaces provided below.

**\*\*** Please return the signed, bottom portion of this consent form with the completed questionnaire at the end of the group session.

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I acknowledge that I have been informed, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

## **Appendix E: PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The methodology on the proposed study on the Effectiveness of the Independent Living Program will be within the positivist paradigm. It will be a descriptive study to ascertain the preparedness of youth that are slated to emancipate from foster care.

The study on the Effectiveness of the Independent Living Program will be a preexperimental one-group-pretest-posttest design. The pretest will evaluate the preparedness of the youth to live independently before participation in the program with regard to the following categories: education, housing, social skills, decision making skills, employment/skills, and money management. The posttest will be done after completion of the program. The posttest will measure the effectiveness of participation in classes and seminars that are offered the youth in the program.

The collection of the data will be done by myself and the staff of the independent living program. The data to be collected for the pretest will be done from client records that are logged in the data base at the Department of Public Social Services in the County of Riverside. An test instrument consisting of a interview questionnaire will be designed and administered by myself to ascertain the information from the records. The collection of the data for the posttest will be gathered from a test instrument administered to the sample population consisting of 100 youth that participated in the program. The posttest will ascertain after the intervention (e.g. classes and seminars) the adolescents preparedness to live independently in regard to the categories of education, housing, social skills, decision making skills, employment/career, and money management.

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