

PREFACE

According to the American Public Welfare Association 657,000 children were in the nation's foster care system during 1993. A one-day count of children in foster care in 1993 showed 445,000 children in foster family homes or other group care settings—an increase of about two-thirds over the one-day count 10 years earlier. With these numbers still on the rise, the significance of assisting youth to develop the capacity to handle all aspects of their life before and upon discharge from the system becomes abundantly clear.

The University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRC) is committed to addressing the need for youth to be linked with services that will help them make a successful transition to adulthood. For the past eleven years NRC has been involved in training, technical assistance, and program planning for agencies providing independent/transitional living (IL/TL) programs. These programs offer assistance in the areas of housing, education, employment, life skills development, and support to youth leaving care.

Successful transition to adulthood often depends on the youth's ability to make appropriate decisions regarding his or her case plan. Youth who have a sense of self-esteem and who feel empowered are often better equipped to deal with the barriers as well as the opportunities that arise during and after care. By encouraging youth and adults to become partners in the decisions regarding the youth's treatment or well-being, the youth can begin to learn to take responsibility for themselves and thus feel empowered. This philosophy corresponds with the youth development movement.

Although the idea of youth development has been around for several years, there has not been, until recently, a national movement to encourage agencies to involve youth in the development, implementation, and evaluation of their programs. This is done by creating an environment where young people feel supported and safe in exploring opportunities that will allow them to practice skills, learn about relationships and connect with their community. As a result of this movement, agencies have been better able to utilize youth as a resource while empowering them to be more pro-active in the events that occur before and after care.

Recognizing that youth are a tremendous resource, NRC has provided an opportunity for youth and adults involved in IL/TL programs from across the nation to

come together and discuss ways to improve programming.

Destination: Future, a youth leadership development conference, allows youth to create solutions to issues they identify within IL/TL programs. Youth learn and practice leadership skills, as well as learn what it means to be an advocate for themselves

and others. Youth who attend this conference are not only making the system better for themselves, but they are paving the way for those youth who will follow. This report describes the events of **Destination: Future**. It contains discussions and reports which were presented throughout the conference format.

NRC acknowledges the support of, and extends sincere thanks to, the National Network for Youth. Thanks also to Pamela Johnson, Jake Terpstra and Wilfred Hamm, with the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, and Jonah Edelman with Children's Defense Fund, Stand for

Children. These people attended the conference to listen and respond to the ideas of the youth.

It is the hope of the National Resource Center for Youth Services that this conference facilitates open discussion and enhances the partnership between youth and adults. We also hope this report is a catalyst for change in a system that affects our most precious resource . . . youth.

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CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Youth across the nation are beginning to take an active role in addressing issues that relate to their health, well-being, and safety. More schools are developing youth-led programs that address health issues such as HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and substance abuse. In addition, youth are forming task forces to address safety issues such as guns, violence, and racism.

Youth understand they can be instrumental in planning and implementing programs that affect them.

This is also true with child welfare and youth services programs. Many agencies are developing programs that allow youth to take the lead in addressing issues of youth in out-of-home care. From youth advisory boards to speakers' bureaus, youth in care are actively pursuing ways to enhance the system that raises so many of our youth.

For the fourth year, The National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRC) has provided a forum for youth in out-of-home care to identify the issues that affect them and take the lead in developing strategies for addressing these issues. On September 6-8, 1996, NRC sponsored ***Destination: Future***, a youth leadership development conference.

Held at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C., the conference is the only national event of its kind specifically for youth ages 16-21 who receive IL/TL services.

With the theme, Partnerships for Change, the goal of the conference was to provide the opportunity for youth and adults to build partnerships and to network with each other. It provided a forum for participants to discuss how youth and adults can partner together to solve problems by promoting youth involvement as well as leadership development.

With 22 states represented, 243 youth and adults (140 youth and 103 adults) attended the conference near our nation's capitol. The program was made up of large and small group activities as well as presentations by special guests.

Keynote speakers were Michelle Wallis and Robert Little.

Michelle has been the Peer Partner Coordinator at Youth in Need in St. Charles, Missouri since she was 18 years old. She challenged the conference participants to help change the negative attitudes of society regarding youth by getting involved in the world around them.

Among various roles and responsibilities, Robert Little is the former Director of the State of Michigan's Children and Family programs. Mr. Little currently works as a consultant to agencies working with neglected children, juvenile offenders and welfare recipients. He shared stories of his life growing up in foster care.

Participants had an opportunity to site-see and to participate in two large group sessions. Comedy Sportz, an improvisational comedy troupe allowed participants to explore their flair for comedy. Into Afrika Festivals, an African-American dance group provided a cultural experience where the participants could sing and dance.

One session of workshops was offered to provide some opportunities for learning more about leadership and youth involvement programs. The topics included: creating newsletters, a youth advisory board panel, how to run meetings and workshops, developing leadership skills, developing youth and adult partnerships, using games in meetings, working with diverse teams, youth advocacy, and building youth advisory boards.

The core of the conference was facilitated through a three-stage process.

In Stage I, participants, both youth and adults were divided into ten small groups. Each group spent time getting to know each other, discussing a definition of independent living and sharing concerns about moving out on their own.

In Stage II, participants returned to their small groups to discuss the focus question, "Since moving into adulthood can be hard, what can youth and adults do together to make the transition easier?" The groups were asked to brainstorm their ideas for addressing this question, to choose their most important ideas, and to develop a goal for each.

In Stage III, small groups met again to identify specific strategies for addressing their top goals from Stage II. These strategies were developed and reported in the closing session to the large group and panel of adults from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families and Stand for Children. The panelists were allowed to ask questions and respond to each group's list.

The following is a summary of the goals and strategies developed by each small group. This information has been compiled in this report to be distributed or made available to government officials, advocacy groups, leaders in child welfare and youth services and members of Congress.

GROUP REPORTS

The following is each group's top goals and strategies in response to the question, "Since moving into adulthood can be hard, what can youth and adults do together to make the transition easier?"

ONE-DER-FULS

Goal: *Adults can give emotional support to youth, and youth can give the same support to adults.*

Strategies:

1. Smaller case loads.
 - a. So workers can spend more time with their youth.
 - b. Put workers in area where they are more skilled, create internships.
2. Money for peer/adults mentorship program for current or former foster youth.
 - a. Because it would help youth know that the adults trust them and to think that they are important.
 - b. Help by taking some of the load off of the workers.
3. A hotline for the youth.
 - a. So they can talk about the problems without giving their identity.
 - b. So the caller can be anonymous.

Goal: *Helping to identify and manage resources, i.e., (legal, financial, educational, occupational, and medical.)*

Strategies:

1. Local 1-800 info phone number, to help youth with applications, legal papers, etc. (Different languages).
2. Mandate a maximum cap on number of clients per social worker.
3. Resource directory in different languages, (print form or on the internet).
4. Mandatory emancipation start-up kits (include resource directory) when leaving foster care.
5. Mandatory independent living skills programs for each county.

FROM YOUTH 2 LEADERS

Goal: *Listen to each other.*

Strategies:

1. Find a quiet, neutral environment.
2. Keep an open mind.
3. Stickers listening aide.
4. Respect differences.
5. During meetings youth and adults talk to each other more - mingle.
6. Allow each other to complete their thoughts.
7. Practice "test" listening together (youth and adults).
8. Look at each issue from a youth perspective and an adult perspective.
9. Don't let ideas block communication.
10. Workshop, seminar or retreat to teach youth and adults to listen better.

Goal: *Youth mentor other youth and co-train foster parents, adults, and group home staff.*

Strategies:

1. Counties/states to hire and or volunteer youth as mentors, big-brothers/sisters.
2. Create support policies that provide incentives for youth and adults.

Goal: *Plans for financial support system in emergencies.*

Strategies:

1. Create an emergencies help fund.
2. Building in "safety" for people who might abuse the fund.
3. Maybe a loan system (w/low interest).

Goal: *Strive to make one another comfortable*

Strategies:

1. Sharing commonalities (things in common).
2. Less formal meeting locations (parks, restaurants).
3. Sincerely talk and visit person to person before getting to business.

Goal: *Do not assume you know a youth by just reading their file.*

Strategies:

1. No pedestal "one-upisms" or putdowns.
2. Have an equal view of our relationships (two way respect - equal ground).
3. More casual dress when we can.
4. Build in fun often (all lighten up).

GUARDIAN ANGELS & 3 WISE MEN

Goal: *Turning responsibility's and decisions to youth with trust and respect of each other's judgments.*

Strategies:

1. Training adults to "let go" and include youth in decision making.
2. Trust: Youth can be able to earn trust back if or when lost.
3. Open-mindedness, willing to try new things.
4. Adults involved with youth should believe in youth empowerment; develop youth empowerment programs and experiences.
5. Letting youth learn things for themselves before leaving care.

Goal: *Social workers/providers/foster parents to serve as resource specialists and youth peer mentoring and scholarships.*

Strategies:

1. Scholarships for college.
2. Traveling and exploring different colleges.
3. Shopping together.
4. Job shadowing.
5. Independent living training for social workers/foster parents/providers.
6. Social workers should be updated with community resources.
7. Looking for housing together.
8. Develop and further peer/youth helper programs.
9. Independent living/resource specialist positions in each state.

Goal: *Effective Communication.*

Strategies:

1. Including youth in staff and foster parent training/judges, attorneys, casa volunteers, legislators, etc.
2. Youth training youth.
3. Basic communication skills training for youth and adults (listening, eye contact, body language, respect, speaking, etc.)
4. A mechanism for ongoing youth participation with decision makers, through: committees, advisory boards, newsletters, etc.
5. Self-esteem development in order for communication to be possible.
6. Allowing time for youth to get used to new environment.

Goal: *Partnerships which commit to developing healthy relationships (going that extra mile...) between youth/providers/workers/youth to youth.*

Strategies:

1. Take time to get to know each other.
2. Establish a trusting relationship.
3. Family/caseworker monthly meetings.
4. Training classes for providers/youth in human development.
5. If possible - pre-placement visits.
6. Counseling for providers/youth.
7. Providers/youth should be mandated to attend court dates.
8. Youth should be allowed to read their files.
9. Provide an advocate for the youth (casa, big brother/sister).
10. Show caring feelings for the youth (genuine).
11. Share activities with the youth (shopping, homework, quality time, etc.).
12. Have family nights at home (at least once a week).
13. Keep in contact with family (biological or foster care).
14. Youth to attend family classes (foster parents also).
15. Youth driven transitional living plans with the caseworker/provider "Enforced Consistently."

REALITY 4 YOUTH

Goal: *Communication.*

Strategies:

1. Youth on any board that serves youth.
2. Compromise.
3. Work together to change mind sets.

Goal: *Halfway programs.*

Strategies:

1. Support physically, emotionally, mentally.
2. Peer support and advice.
3. Utilizing adults who were in foster care.

Goal: *Independent Living skills.*

Strategies:

1. Someone to help with saving, checking, loans, interest.
2. IL skills - to help with college and job skills.
3. Mentor with good morals and standards.
4. Youth training for future foster caring

FUTURE LEADERS

Goal: Educate decision makers; establish national standard for TL/IL and after care programming.

Strategies:

1. More funding.
 - a. For after care, and transition living. Independent living.
2. Mandatory workshops.
 - a. Youth having input on the subjects and problems in everyday life. Youth training adults.
3. Consistent training: Foster parents and homes have training throughout the years. All over the USA.
4. Earlier training youth: Can't expect youth to cram how to live and operate their life in two years of a PAL (IL) Class.
5. *National* Develop youth advisory board: Using not just certain states but every state; not every state has the same problems.
6. *National* Newsletters: Stating the areas of the system that definitely need help and circulate ideas.
7. Advocacy: Foster youth organize efforts to present before decision makers issues of concern, and decision makers make themselves available for presentations and open to new ideas and opinions.

Goal: Communication, honesty, trust, commitment, listen, keep promises, cooperation, support, carry out responsibility.

Strategies:

1. Agencies hire staff/foster parents with specialized training and/or provide once hired on communication/commitment skills.
2. Educate and involve kids in the process of their case individually with worker and those associated with case.
3. Should be mandated in policy and enforced - staffings treatment plans/goals, written documentation, psychological testing/treatment.
4. Involve youth in training staff/workers/foster parents.
5. Involve youth in evaluating programs, policies, foster parents, caseworkers, administrators, treatment providers, etc.
6. Mandate limits on caseload size.
 - a. Funding match numbers and limits (support from workers limited by caseload size).
7. Flexibility of agency rules (liability, FLSA, etc.) to allow for more supportive forms of contact.
8. Match abilities of workers to client needs.
9. Built-in agency policies (Employee Assistance Programs, time-off, picnics, retreats, cost of living raises, etc.) for support to workers to support clients.
10. Enforce current policies, regulations and rights that are already in place. These need to be communicated to youth.
11. Consequences if these aren't enforced.

6TH SENSE

Goal: Youth need a recognized voice. Youth often feel powerless about the decisions made regarding their lives. We need a voice and some measure of control.

Strategies:

1. Mandatory youth advisory boards.
 - a. Youth need to be informed of all resources.
 - b. Youth need to have opportunities to get involved.
 - c. Participation by youth is mandatory.
2. Create statutes (law) that give youth the right to speak on their own behalf.
 - a. Case plan conference/staffing.
 - b. Citizen review.
3. Write.
 - a. Letters to judge
 - b. Supportive references from employers, teachers, friends, family, guardians.
4. Present yourself appropriately. (Practice/learn how)

Goal: Follow up/aftercare.

Strategies:

1. Keep in contact
2. Therapeutic staff support (TSS).
3. Knowledge and creation of community resources.

Goal: Life skills classes/youth independence.

1. Schedule and attend mandatory classes once per week/same day every week.
2. Team teaching and co-facilitation.
3. Start classes at 14 or 15.

Goal: What youth and adults can do together to make the transition easier:

1. Follow up aftercare (medical/college/work).
2. Life skills - preparing youth for life after care (early on).
3. Youth being able to depend on self.
4. Flexibility.
5. Respect with both.
6. Communication.
7. Honesty and trust between worker, agency, and youth.
8. True respect with both without stereotyping.
9. Stereotyping of and by youth and adults.

EACH ONE REACH ONE

Goal: *Relationships: Equality can be achieved through open communication between youth and adults based on respect, compromise, trust and support while respecting one another's boundaries.*

Strategies:

1. Workers should have lower caseloads to devote more time to individual clients and reduce turnover rates.
2. More training for direct-service employees and volunteers to communicate better with young people
3. Study why turnover is so high with direct level staff and how to reduce it
4. More federal monitoring (surprise visits) of state agencies and foster homes

Goal: *Empowerment: Youth and adults should become empowered and organized so they may identify, create and utilize all community resources.*

Strategies:

1. More time and money for conferences at local, state, and national levels.
2. Youth involvement in contracts, decision making.
3. Federal Youth Service Bureau (FYSB) youth advisory board.
4. Window to leave care and come back if needed (re-entry).
5. More info on preventative measures (i.e., birth control).
6. Federal foster care bill of rights.
7. Keep young people aware of changes in agencies.
8. Caseworkers need to be more accurately informed of policy changes.
9. Channels for young people to access administrators.

Goal: *Esteem: Through positive, individualized youth and adult partnerships, a higher sense of self is achieved by both parties.*

Strategies:

1. More funding for transitional living programs.
2. Have service recipients help the community by volunteering with those agencies that helped them.

THE VOYAGERS

Goal: *Promote youth/adult partnerships.*

Strategies:

1. For youth empowerment in agencies.
 - a. Educate youth on system (using videos, pamphlets, etc.).
 - b. Youth involved in training of foster parents and case workers.
 - c. Youth should be more prevalent in the social work office.
 - d. Youth could intern at government agencies.
2. In businesses to have access resources and opportunities.
 - a. Form partnerships with Chamber of Commerce.
 - b. Employment training for kids in care.
 - c. Financial support/donations.
3. In community services/activities.
 - a. Adults encourage and support youth's speaking out and being leaders in the community.
 - b. By having youth volunteer in the community with adults.
 - c. Reciprocity agreements with agencies and youth/adults.
 - d. Promote youth/adult partnerships with community leaders, i.e., talk to city councils, schools, churches, county supervisors, etc., charities, focus groups and invite discussion with youth and adults.
 - e. Educate the community that youth are the future and need partnerships to show our positive successes.
4. In the legislatures.
 - a. Create a regular forum for youths to bring up concerns and issues related to being in care.
 - b. Create and support bills that will benefit the well being of children in care.
 - c. Provide legislatures with the opportunity to experience what being in care is really like (visits of foster homes and programs, etc.).
 - d. Develop resource information for youth in care on how to have a political impact.

CLOUD 9: FUTURE IS FREEDOM, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Goal: *More money for job training/college.*

Strategies:

1. As youths in foster care we do not have the emotional and financial support of a family, therefore, it is critical that we have job training and/or a college education.
2. Matching federal funds for companies, businesses, and corporations that create apprenticeship positions for foster care youth.
3. Ear-mark federal funds for scholarships for foster care youth.

Goal: *Better regulate how money is spent in foster homes/more money allowance for clothes/know where money is going.*

Strategies

1. Eliminate the \$1,000 savings cap so that youth can have more than \$1,000 when they leave.
2. Federal funds to match a percentage of what a youth has in savings when they leave care.
3. Foster care youth need to have money in savings in order to be successful when they leave care.

Such as how it is spent in foster homes or allowances for clothes. Is the money that is given to the caretaker really used on the child like it should? Our group believes we should regulate the money better. Many children are neglected or not tended to properly with the money that is given to the caretaker. Our group has come up with three solutions. Having receipts to show how the money is spent on the child such as: clothes, personal items, and school activities, for example: prom expenses, class rings, and graduation cost. Send a portion of the foster care payment to the youths in their teens directly. By doing this helps us learn responsibilities and how to budget our money for adult life. A mandatory clothing allowance of \$150 at least once every three months.

Goal: *Youth opinions valued same as adults.*

Strategies:

1. Adult advocate or speaking for youth ideas.
2. Understanding each other's stance.
3. Youth and adults empowering each other to deal with daily challenges.
4. Workers and youth realizing that they can learn from each other.

THE PERFECT 10: THE JOURNEY OF CHALLENGES

Goal: *Youth involved in decision making.*

Strategies:

1. System changes that allow youth to provide input into setting their goals for the plan of care and reviews (beginning with the first plan).
2. System changes that enable youth to meet with case workers at a minimum of monthly.

We recognize that many states have policies that require these things, but they are not being enforced.

Goal: *Workshop Training.*

Strategies:

1. Who: Youth that are involved in the system would train foster parents. Youth and adult staff developers will train new staff. Adults will train the youth to train these other people.
2. What: Training for trainers.
 - a. Discuss what to do if foster parents have problems with youth.
 - b. How does it feel to be a foster kid.
3. When: State social worker training sessions.
 - a. County foster parent training sessions.
 - b. Conferences or retreats (if money is there to furnish these).
4. Where: County based.
 - a. State based.
5. How: Do segments in the social worker training and in the foster parent training.
 - a. Have support groups or hot lines for these people to deal with problems after training.

SUMMARY

Although the groups addressed many topics, the issue of communication, trust and respect came to the forefront in virtually every group. The youth expressed a need to feel as though the adults are listening to their concerns. They want the adults to work with them. As one youth reporting for his group said, "Youth and adults need to come together, unify, and break down the barriers that separate, creating a system that is in tune with what those in care really need."

Youth would like to be more involved in the discussions and decisions that involve their care. Providing them with a forum to share their stories can give workers and foster parents an opportunity to hear from the youth. It also gives the adults and youth a chance to engage in a dialogue regarding the youth's care, thus, promoting a partnership. Many of the strategies listed to address this problem included involving the youth in training of workers, foster parents, and other youth.

The issue of after care services was also addressed in many of the groups. The youth stated in several cases, they are not aware of services that are available or often do not know how to access them. They cited the issues of emotional support as a significant component of after care.

According to a recent independent living survey by The University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Development, 96% of the states who

responded to the questionnaire reported providing aftercare services to youth after the age of emancipation. It appears that the problem lies with getting the information communicated to the youth regarding the services and how to access them.

The youth also feel they need to be more informed of their rights and services available to them. There are inconsistencies among states regarding services that the youth feel should be standardized. Some of these inconsistencies include: clothing allowance, life skills training, resources, foster parent training, employment opportunities, and how independent living funding is spent.

In addition to providing a forum for discussion, the conference provided an opportunity for travel and education to which many youth had never been exposed. Many of the youth had never flown or traveled to a city such as Washington, D.C. This trip provided ample opportunities to practice life skills.

The significance of this national conference was evident. As the youth reported for their groups, the level of energy and passion was obvious. They are committed to addressing the issues that affect them every day of their lives. This conference continues to help provide the needed opportunities for youth to come together to explore and develop strategies to improve the child welfare and youth services system.

STATES

California

Colorado

Florida

Hawaii

Illinois

Kentucky

Massachusetts

Maryland

Michigan

Missouri

Mississippi

Nevada

New Mexico

North Carolina

North Dakota

Oklahoma

Pennsylvania

Tennessee

Texas

Virginia

West Virginia

Wisconsin

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Youth across the nation are beginning to take an active role in addressing issues that relate to their health, well-being, and safety. More schools are developing youth-led programs that address health issues such as HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and substance abuse. In addition, youth are forming task forces to address safety issues such as guns, violence, and racism. Youth understand they can be instrumental in planning and implementing programs that effect them.

This is also true with child welfare and youth services programs. Many agencies are developing programs that allow youth to take the lead in addressing issues of youth in out-of-home care. From youth advisory boards to speaker's bureaus, youth in care are actively pursuing ways to enhance the system that raises so many of our youth.

For the second year, NRC has provided a forum for youth in out-of-home care to identify the issues that affect them and take the lead in developing strategies for addressing these issues. On September 8-11, 1994, NRC held "Destination: Future" a youth leadership development conference. The conference was held at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland just outside Washington, D.C. The conference, for youth ages 16-21 who receive IL/TL services, is the only event of its kind specifically for this population. The goal of the conference is to provide the opportunity for youth and adults to build partnerships and to network with each other, provide a forum for participants to address important issues related to IL/TL programs and promote involvement as well as leadership development.

More than 280 youth and adults from 21 states (see appendix) attended the conference near our nation's capitol. The conference program was made up of large and small group activities as well as special guests.

Seventeen-year-old Charlotte Lopez, former Miss Teen USA 1993, inspired the participants with her own story of being a foster child. Miss Lopez has lived most of her life in foster care. She shared with the participants her struggles and her achievements emphasizing the importance of believing in yourself and setting goals.

Adding to the excitement of the conference was Tyrone Wilkerson an African-American storyteller. Tyrone's songs, poetry and stories allowed him to share

with the participants his culture and the challenge he faced as a youth. Tyrone's unique presentation was moving and motivational.

Participants had time to site-see and the opportunity to participate in two other large group activities, True Colors and Bridging Generations. Both activities promoted the importance of understanding differences and building youth and adult partnerships.

The core of the conference was facilitated through a three-stage process. In stage I, participants, both youth and adults, were divided into ten small groups. Each group decided on a name and developed a banner that represented the personality of the group. The groups were asked to respond to the question, "What should be included in IL/TL programs to help youth prepare for adulthood?" Although each group had two facilitators, a youth and an adult, the youth group members were encouraged to take an active role in the development of their ideas.

Groups brainstormed recommendations (See appendix for each group's complete list of recommendations) to address the above question and presented one to three of their most important ideas to the panel of Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families officials. The panelists were allowed to ask questions and respond to each groups list.

In stage II, participants returned to small groups and prioritized their ideas. After developing a goal statement, strategies were developed for their top ideas. These strategies were then reported to the large group.

In stage III, participants were grouped according to their states. Each state had a facilitator and was given the task of developing an action plan for their home state or agency. Each group discussed ideas that had been shared throughout the conference and identified areas that needed to be addressed in their state. The groups were given a year long action plan format to follow.

The following is a summary of the ideas, solutions and action plans developed by both small groups and state groups. This information has been compiled in this report to be distributed or made available to government officials, advocacy groups, leaders in child welfare and youth services and members of Congress.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

JOY WARREN

Joy Warren, age 25, is in her first year at Yale Law School. Ms. Warren is a former foster child who lived in foster care in California from the ages of thirteen to eighteen. After emancipation from the system, Ms. Warren attended the University of California, Berkeley, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in History in 1995.

Following graduation, Ms. Warren worked for the Youth Law Center as a Legislative Analyst focusing on foster care issues. She also worked for the California Youth Connection, an organization made up of current and former foster youth, ages fourteen to twenty-four, who work to improve foster care.

Opening session

S: /HOME/DEBBIE/DOCS/BIOWARREN.DOC
9/98

2 pm

- I Jim Walker -
- II Carol Williams
HHS -
- III Jay Warr
- IV IIRC

→ intern
workshops -

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

ERYCA KASSE

Many of us are familiar with Eryca Kasse's reputation as a community advocate. For several years, she has stood in the forefront of the feminist movement and has been particularly active as a proponent of equal rights for gays and lesbians. She has also been an outspoken member of the National Coalition Building Institute, an organization dedicated to eliminating all vestiges of homophobia and oppressive attitudes that continue to threaten our democratic values.

Last Spring, Eryca earned her Bachelors degree in Social Work, with a minor in Women's Studies, from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. She now serves as the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender representative to the National Council on Youth Policy and interns with the National Network for Youth in Washington, DC. She enjoys biking and Chinese food, and she looks forward to moving to Seattle in October, where she plans to continue working in the youth services field.

The Casey Family Program.

COPY

July 27, 1998

Letter to the Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20071

Dear Editor:

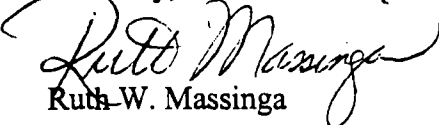
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The Washington Post uncovers a serious issue with its excellent front-page story, "At 18, It's Sink or Swim For Ex-Foster Children, Transition Is Difficult" (July 21, 1998). The increasing numbers of children entering the foster care system has kept policymakers' attention focused on who's coming into the foster care system, but not enough on who's leaving and how they are leaving care. Current national and state policy and program dollars devoted to independent living and youth development are too little and too unfocused to adequately address the needs of the approximately 25,000 youth who leave state foster care systems each year with too little preparation to lead productive lives as adults.

A recent Greenberg Quinlan Research poll found that a majority of Americans want more resources devoted to help former foster care children make it on their own. The majority of respondents (79%) said they were willing to pay an extra \$2 in state taxes to provide extended help, including job training and placement services, tuition assistance at state universities, and housing until the teen is able to live independently. We need national leadership, just as there has been for adoption, on the issue of children in foster care transitioning at 18 out of the system to live on their own.

Becoming a responsible adult is not an easy road for many American youth, and for too many teens who leave foster care at 18 to live on their own, clear guidance and adult champions are not available. Without effective new approaches, too many of these young people will continue to fall between society's cracks and all the investments made to help them reach age 18 may be lost. All those involved in foster care from state to federal governments, from local agencies to non-profit organizations, need to focus our resources on providing more potent ways to help launch these young people into successful futures.

Sincerely,


Ruth W. Massinga

Ruth W. Massinga is Chief Executive Officer of The Casey Family Program, an operating foundation headquartered in Seattle. Established by United Parcel Service's co-founder Jim Casey in 1966, the Program now serves more than 1,600 children in long-term foster care through its 27 offices in 14 states.

People do
care
more
about
helping
kids
leave
foster
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and
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own

Independent Living

Purpose:

The Independent Living program provides services to youth, age 16 and over, who are in foster care or who were in foster care after the age of 16, to help them make the transition to independent living. Activities include educational and employment assistance, training in daily living skills, individual and group counseling, coordination of services, outreach programs, and the development of individualized transitional living plans.

This is an entitlement program with a fixed funding level. Funds are awarded to States in the form of grants. Each State is eligible to receive a portion of the funds appropriated that is equal to each State's proportion of the national total of foster children that received maintenance payments under the IV-E Foster Care program in fiscal year 1984. For example, if 10 percent of the foster children who received maintenance payments under the Foster Care program resided in a particular state in FY 1984, then that state is eligible for 10 percent of the funds available. States are required to provide a 50 percent match for the funds over their share of \$45,000,000.

Authorizing Legislation:

Sections 470 and 477, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as amended.

Appropriations:

FY 1996 Appropriation: \$70,000,000

<u>FY</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1992-95	\$70,000,000
1991	\$60,000,000
1990	\$50,000,000
1989	\$45,000,000
1988	\$45,000,000



Please send all comments and questions on this subject to CB Comments. Please send all technical questions to Webmaster.

This document was last modified on Wednesday, 27-Nov-1996 09:35:38 EST

Carl Williams/HHS

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

JAMES M. WALKER

California

James M. Walker is Director of the National Resource Center for Youth Services of the University of Oklahoma located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Mr. Walker, who holds an M.A. Degree in Human Relations Studies from the University of Oklahoma, has been providing training and consultation to juvenile justice, runaway youth and child welfare agencies for the past 23 years. Prior to joining the staff of the University, Mr. Walker served as the Executive Director of Youth Services of Stephens County, Duncan, Oklahoma, and as Director of Tillman County Youth Services in Frederick, Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma Association of Youth Services, Inc. (OAYS) honored him with the Youth Advocate of the Year Award in 1986.

Mr. Walker served six years as a Board member with two terms as the Chair of the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services. The NNRYS represents approximately 1000 runaway and homeless youth services agencies nationwide. He was honored by the National Network, receiving the 1990 National Volunteer Leadership Award. He served for four years as the Chairperson of the Southwest Network of Youth Services representing the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico and Louisiana. He also has served on the Board of Directors of the National Assembly of Voluntary Health and Social Services. Currently he serves on the National Staff Development and Training Association of APWA.

Locally, he served on the Board of the Parent Child Center for Tulsa and on the Board of Youth Services of Tulsa for six years.

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