Outcomes of Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood

A Literature Review

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education
Outcomes of Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood
A Literature Review

2019

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education
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U.S. Department of Education
Betsy DeVos
Secretary

Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education
Scott Stump
Assistant Secretary

July 2019

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Content Contact: Carolyn Lee at Carolyn.Lee@ed.gov
Abstract

Career and technical education (CTE) educators may have little information on youth transitioning from the foster care system to adulthood (transitioning youth), including their circumstances and the effects of leaving their birth family, living in foster care, and transitioning to adulthood. The goal of this literature review is to share useful resources about transitioning youth with secondary CTE educators and other stakeholders, such as administrators, social workers, and caregivers. The method for conducting the review consists of starting and expanding an online search, narrowing the focus, and collecting and organizing the data from 56 resources reviewed in this paper. These 56 resources raise salient issues and challenges associated with transitioning youth and the systems that serve their needs, suggest models and practices that CTE educators can evaluate, and offer supports that educators can access. Findings include salient issues and challenges that affect transitioning youth directly or that arise in systems serving their needs, including their education and employment outcomes, and supports for CTE educators working with youth in foster care. The literature review continues with a discussion of gaps in the literature reviewed for the purposes of this paper and their implications for transitioning youth, educators, and stakeholders. It concludes with a section of annotated resources that educators and stakeholders can access.
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<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AI/AN</td>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CalYOUTH</td>
<td>California Youth Transitions to Adulthood study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBCL</td>
<td>Child Behavior Checklist instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFCIP</td>
<td>John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTE</td>
<td>career and technical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTSO</td>
<td>Career and Technical Student Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERIC</td>
<td>Education Resources Information Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSA</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETV</td>
<td>Educational and Training Vouchers Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHE</td>
<td>Fostering Higher Education intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDTY</td>
<td>Grow Detroit’s Young Talent program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td>General Educational Development test or credential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>high school equivalence test or credential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>independent living program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAG</td>
<td>Jobs for America’s Graduates, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>local educational agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDTAC</td>
<td>National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCTAE</td>
<td>Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perkins V</td>
<td>Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>postsecondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>state educational agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMHCs</td>
<td>serious mental health conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transitioning youth</td>
<td>youth transitioning from the foster care system to adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Uniform Resource Locator (a web address)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>unified school district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPS</td>
<td>United Parcel Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBL</td>
<td>work-based learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Youth transitioning from the foster care system to adulthood (transitioning youth) receive little attention among the resources on youth in secondary education. As youth in foster care prepare to transition, secondary career and technical (CTE) educators and stakeholders may know little about the circumstances or effects of foster care on these youth. Therefore, the goals of this literature review are 1) to share salient issues and challenges affecting transitioning youth (please see Section 2 for a detailed summary of the salient issues and challenges affecting transitioning youth), and 2) to share useful resources with CTE educators and other stakeholders that can help them effectively support transitioning youth.

The methodology for conducting this literature review consisted of an online search of broader literature on youth in foster care, narrowing the focus of the review, and collecting and organizing the data from the 56 resources resulting from the narrowing of the initial search. Beginning from recommended classic and current studies on the topic, three electronic search engines were further queried for book chapters, reports, and articles: Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center ERIC), and Sage Publishing. A 10-year timeframe, from 2008 through 2018, was employed so that resources would be current. In addition to education resources, studies from related disciplines were included, such as social work, sociology, mental health, disabilities, and law. Selected resources supply education and employment outcomes of transitioning youth and effective or promising secondary career-related models.

The 56 resources reviewed raise salient issues and challenges associated with transitioning youth, suggest models and practices that educators can evaluate, and offer supports that educators can access. Findings begin with the synthesis of 10 salient issues and challenges. Five of those salient issues and challenges affect transitioning youth directly: (1) instability that youth in foster care experience; (2) regrouping that they go through in secondary education; (3) preparation that they make for the post-transition future; (4) disabilities and health concerns that they deal with; and (5) the voice that they and their families have. Preparation and instability are the most prominent of the salient issues and challenges affecting transitioning youth in the 56 resources reviewed. The other five salient issues and challenges are related to the systems serving the needs of transitioning youth: (1) awareness of staff and systems of needs; (2) silos within and across systems that serve transitioning youth; (3) professional learning of staff around recognition of salient issues and challenges and variability in policies and practice; (4) funding availability and priorities; and (5) intervention development, implementation, and evaluation. Intervention and professional learning were identified as the most prominent of the salient issues and challenges in the literature reviewed for this paper.

The next subsection of findings includes transitioning youth’s education and employment outcomes. The reviewed literature on youth in foster care focuses on three major education

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1 More information on the literature review methods is provided in Section 4.
2 https://scholar.google.com
3 https://eric.ed.gov/
4 https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam
indicators: high school graduation, postsecondary education (PSE) enrollment, and PSE completion. Most recent studies report high school graduation rates of youth in foster care are between 52 percent and 68 percent. For context, the National Center for Education Statistics data shows that the overall student population’s graduation rate has been above 80 percent since 2012. High school equivalence (HSE) rates for youth in foster care range from 16 percent to 34 percent. Each extra year in foster care after age 18 is associated with a 46 percent increase in likelihood that transitioning youth will progress from high school to a diploma or from a diploma to a year of PSE. Few transitioning youth participate in CTE: 12 percent in courses and 16 percent in counseling. Although nearly half aspire to four-year degrees, the rate of transitioning youth who actually enroll in PSE ranges from 17 percent to 54 percent. Approximately 28 percent enroll by age 25, and 43 percent by age 33. However, completion of PSE is low; 22 percent of youth in foster care earn postsecondary CTE degrees or certificates. Only 3 percent to 8 percent earn an associate degree or higher.

The broader literature on the overall population of youth in foster care, including, but not limited, to the transitioning youth population, offers two major indicators associated with employment of youth in foster care: employment rates and income levels. Employment rates for youth in foster care range from 31 percent to 80 percent, and rates tend to increase with age (see Figure ES.1). Transitioning youth 18 and older report earning an average $13,989 annually. None of the resources reviewed reported average annual income beyond poverty levels for youth in foster care or youth transitioned from foster care.

8 Courtney & Hook 2017, 124.
9 Valentine, Skemer, & Courtney 2015, 53
12 Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes 2018, 726.
13 Pecora et al. 2006, 1470-1471.
15 The studies referenced are about the overall population of youth in foster care and are not part of the 56 resources identified as part of the literature review for this paper.
17 Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 6.
18 Hughes et al. 2008, 13; Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney 2015, 54 and 57; Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 6; Courtney et al. 2018, 61–64; Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes, 726.
A range of supports to CTE educators is identified in the next subsection. While CTE programs consist of comprehensive technical education skills curricula and experiential learning opportunities that are beneficial to all students, CTE educators will often need additional kinds of supports to address the specific needs and skills gaps of students in foster care. Transitioning youth need teachers who are flexible, creative, and sensitive to individual learning needs. CTE educators can add this caring support to that of foster family caretakers. Another strong source of stability and encouragement is mentorship, which includes teachers and other influential adults, such as coaches, ministers, and foster parents. Obtaining transitioning youth’s input about CTE instruction and curriculum and individualizing program requirements make it much more likely that youth transitioning out of the foster care system will successfully complete a CTE program of study and obtain industry-recognized certification. An additional design factor for consideration is the integration of work-based learning (WBL) activities within the CTE curriculum.19 These opportunities support transitioning youth’s abilities to develop a plan while

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19 https://cte.ed.gov/wbltoolkit/
their options are still malleable.

Moreover, CTE educators and policy makers need to factor in any learned helplessness of youth in foster care as they develop programs to build self-reliance. Throughout middle and high school, providing explicit instruction on the employability skills\textsuperscript{20} required by employers can enhance the decision-making skills of youth in foster care in choosing employment or PSE options. Several model programs exemplify instruction of employability skills and other beneficial practices, including extracurricular activities, wraparound supportive services, employment and training models, entrepreneurial education, and apprenticeships.

This literature review continues with a discussion of gaps in the reviewed literature and the implications for youth in foster care that educators and stakeholders can draw on in planning future collaboration, intervention, policy, and services. Gap 1 is in resources specific to CTE. Gaps 2, 3, and 4 are related to systems serving the needs of transitioning youth. Gaps 5 and 6 relate to salient issues and challenges affecting transitioning youth directly. See the section titled “Gaps in the Reviewed Literature” for a more detailed explanation of these gaps.

Gap 1 is in CTE-specific resources; only a handful of resources address CTE. This gap limits opportunities youth in foster care have for advancing in CTE careers and can lead to delays in their financial independence. Missing are guidance on (1) offering meaningful CTE experiences, (2) examples of CTE-specific mentoring programs, (3) evidence-based or promising child welfare programs for youth in foster care that have not yet been tested in CTE, and (4) CTE evidence-based or promising programs\textsuperscript{21} that have not yet been tested with youth in foster care.

Gaps 2, 3, and 4 are related to the systems serving the needs of transitioning youth. Gap 2 entails designing education-focused intervention for transitioning youth and evaluating interventions rigorously. Services need to be grounded in evidence and produce expected outcomes. Including stakeholders from practice and current or former youth in foster care can benefit intervention development and evaluation. However, creating and implementing a solid intervention design, recruiting a sufficient sample, and collecting data on baseline and follow up measures are costly. Given competing priorities for resources, CTE educators and stakeholders considering implementing and evaluating interventions need to identify resources to cover costs, whether through state or local revenues, grant funding, or stakeholder partnerships.

Gap 3 is in approaches validated for rural settings, particularly where resources, such as cellular and internet service, public transportation, or PSE access, are limited. Youth in foster care residing in rural areas tend to have low education aspirations and positive attitudes toward mentors. Evaluating differences in interventions or approaches matters to educators teaching in rural areas and youth in foster care needing alternate solutions.

Gap 4 is in effective ways to enhance collaboration. Several resources offer hints on collaboration, such as including youth in foster care in planning, employing frequent progress reports, and partnering with stakeholders from multiple disciplines, to build buy-in and

\textsuperscript{21} Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 14.
strengthen communication.

Gaps 5 and 6 relate to salient issues and challenges affecting transitioning youth directly. Models that support transitioning youth in foster care who are regrouping as they transition comprise Gap 5. Options include determining academic supports older youth in foster care may need to regroup and preparing transitioning youth for the future immediately before and after graduation. Identifying supports and accommodations for transitioning youth with disabilities or health concerns is Gap 6. Further investigations of promising interventions are recommended.

The review concludes with a section of 56 annotated resources that educators and stakeholders can access. Resource names, dates, and subtopics are summarized in four tables so that interested readers may select which resources to review more closely. Tables include descriptive resources and toolkits, policy papers and reviews, and studies with quantitative, qualitative, or mixed designs. Many of the resources have links to Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) so that CTE educators can access the resources directly from the electronic copy of this document.
Section 1: Introduction

Youth transitioning from the foster care system to adulthood (transitioning youth) form a unique and often overlooked subpopulation of all youth in secondary education and emerging young adults. Career and technical (CTE) educators — including administrators, teachers, and counselors — may be unaware of the foster care status of a youth in the classroom or office. If they do recognize that the student has been placed outside the birth family setting and may soon be transitioning out of the foster care system, the CTE educators may have little information as to the circumstances of that placement, such as any pending change in the transitioning youth’s guardianship or school. Even more significantly, they may not realize the effects of the placement or of the upcoming transition on the student.

Effects from leaving the biological family and entering foster care are not limited to education impacts and can span all facets of a student’s life. Effects may stem, for example, from disabilities, employment limitations, housing needs, mental health concerns, poverty, or substance abuse. The educator may not know if the transitioning youth has recently been placed into the foster care system or has been there for many years, if the transitioning youth has changed school placements or repeated a grade multiple times during his or her secondary career, or even if the transitioning youth is aware that he or she may soon be exiting foster care. Having minimal information can be frustrating to CTE educators as well as to students.

Doubtlessly, CTE educators would respond when they recognized that a student they teach, or counsel is a youth in foster care, but they may not have sufficient information to take appropriate actions to address the student’s unique needs. The goal of this literature review is to share useful resources about transitioning youth with secondary CTE educators, raise salient issues and challenges associated with transitioning youth, offer supports that CTE educators can access, and suggest models and practices that CTE educators can evaluate.

Overview

To meet its goal of sharing useful resources about transitioning youth with CTE educators, this literature review is organized into five sections. Section 1, this Introduction, provides an overview of the contents of each section. It also explains the purpose of the literature review, offers a policy context, and proposes guiding research questions.

Section 2 presents the findings of the literature review. This section starts with a synthesis of salient issues and challenges that youth in foster care face as they transition out of the foster care system to adulthood, and that the systems serving them face as they attempt to support and guide these young adults. The synthesis summarizes the salient issues and challenges identified in the literature review and provides an analysis of their types and frequencies, which the authors identified in the resources reviewed.

Following the synthesis in Section 2 are three subsections of findings. The first subsection pulls

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22 See Section 2 for a description of salient issues and challenges, both those affecting transitioning youth directly and the systems that serve their needs.
together education and employment outcomes for transitioning youth from the literature review. Where feasible, these outcomes are disaggregated by age, education level, and geography. In the second, types and frequency of supports are organized for secondary CTE educators as identified in the literature review. Highlighted as supports CTE educators can consider for their daily use are examples of promising models, procedures, approaches, and policies with potential benefit to transitioning youth. The third subsection concludes with an analysis of gaps in the reviewed literature that CTE educators should be aware of, for planning considerations.

The next section, Section 3, provides an annotated set of four tables with information about the 56 reviewed resources, namely, the author(s), year of publication, and subtopics. Tables are grouped by the type of resource or design of research study that provides details on the ages of youth in foster care in the study and the geographic setting, as available. The four tables are designed to allow CTE educators to quickly skim reports and subtopics to identify those they wish to read in more depth.

To explain the methodology of the literature review, Section 4 discusses the search criteria and review process. The four subsections include starting the search, expanding the search, narrowing the focus, and collecting and organizing the data. This section is designed to familiarize the interested reader with the process the authors used to gather and learn from the resources in the literature review.

The fifth section contains the bibliography. It includes a full list of references for the 56 resources included in this literature review.

Purpose

As noted earlier, sharing useful resources about transitioning youth in foster care with secondary CTE educators is the purpose of this literature review. As CTE secondary educators begin to reflect on the salient issues and challenges, evaluate models and practices, and consider available supports, they may wonder, “Is there really anything my colleagues and I can do to make a difference in the lives of these transitioning youth in our school?” In addressing the guiding research questions that follow, the literature review’s purpose is to answer the CTE secondary educators’ queries in the affirmative. This report does so through identifying salient issues and challenges, outcomes, supports, and gaps in the reviewed literature on youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

Policy Context

The resources about transitioning youth occur in the context of federal policies intended to address needs. Over the past decade, there have been advances in federal policies to address the education and support needs of youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood. These policies are based on the statutory requirements in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (U.S. Department of Education)\(^\text{23}\) the

\(^{23}\) See the joint technical guidance letter issued by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on June 23, 2016.
ESSA contains key protections\(^\text{26}\) for children in foster care that require state and local educational agencies (SEAs and LEAs) to collaborate with child welfare agencies to ensure the education stability of children in foster care. The recently enacted \textit{Perkins V} legislation added youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system to the special populations that should be targeted for improving employment and postsecondary (PSE) opportunities.\(^\text{27}\) \textit{Perkins V} also increased the emphasis on providing work-based learning (WBL), employability skills, and workplace preparation for special populations with more than 30 references relating to special populations.\(^\text{28}\) The Educational and Training Vouchers Program (ETV) was added to the \textit{CFCIP} in 2002 (\textit{Sec. 477(J) of the Social Security Act}). ETV designates resources to meet the education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care. Further details on these policies are presented in the appendix following Section 5.

Several other pieces of legislation have implications for youth in foster care and those transitioning from foster care into adulthood. The \textit{Family First Prevention Services Act of 2017}\(^\text{29}\) (1) provides funding to keep children safe and supported at home by providing in-home supports and services and coordinating education and rehabilitation program services, and (2) emphasizes the placement of children in family foster homes versus group care placements. The \textit{Uninterrupted Scholars Act}\(^\text{30}\) makes changes to the \textit{Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974} so that agencies legally responsible for children in foster care can access the youth’s school records and possibly provide early intervention services to improve the youth’s opportunity to be successful educationally. The \textit{Runaway and Homeless Youth Act}\(^\text{31}\) grant awards, administered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, fund the following: street outreach, basic living needs, and transitional housing. Other tangentially related sources of support for youth in foster care and those systems that serve them include private foundations, AmeriCorps,\(^\text{32}\) and the \textit{Community Reinvestment Act}.\(^\text{33}\) These resources are not


\(^{27}\) https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title04/0477.htm


\(^{29}\) Sec.3. [20 U.S.C. 2302] Definitions. (29)(B) individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including foster children


\(^{33}\) https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/rhy-act

\(^{34}\) https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps

\(^{35}\) https://www.ffiec.gov/cra/
traditionally seen as funding resources for supporting youth in foster care, but many times they are untapped resources that can be leveraged to meet these youth’s needs.

**Guiding Research Questions**

1. What salient issues and challenges for transitioning youth are identified in the literature review?

2. What issues and challenges to transitioning youth, and to the systems that serve them, did authors from the reviewed literature identify?

3. What education and employment outcomes do transitioning youth experience? How do those outcomes differ by age, education level, and geography?

4. As secondary CTE educators work with transitioning youth, what supports — e.g., promising models, procedures, approaches, and policies with potential benefit — does the reviewed literature offer educators?

5. What gaps in the reviewed literature on transitioning youth exist, and what are the implications of those gaps for the transitioning youth, secondary CTE educators, and other stakeholders?
Section 2: Findings

Synthesis of Salient Issues and Challenges Directly Affecting Transitioning Youth

The first two guiding research questions address salient issues and challenges. During analyses of information from the reviewed literature, the authors classified subtopics into broad categories, either concerning transitioning youth themselves or the systems that serve their needs. Ten salient issues and challenges were identified and are synthesized in Section 2. Five salient issues and challenges affect transitioning youth directly. A second set of five salient issues and challenges reflects systems serving their needs, as described in a subsequent subsection. The 10 salient issues and challenges are displayed in Table 2.1, along with their occurrence within the 56 resources reviewed in this paper.

Five salient issues and challenges directly affecting transitioning youth are

- instability that youth in foster care experience before, during, and after transition;
- regrouping that they go through in secondary education while considering transition;
- preparation that they make for the post-transition future;
- disabilities and health concerns that they deal with during transition; and the
- voice that they and their families have in them making the transition to adulthood.

Table 2.1 The percentage and frequency of resources on the salient issues and challenges affecting transitioning youth and in systems serving their needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salient Issues and Challenges Directly Affecting Transitioning Youth</th>
<th>Percent of Resources</th>
<th>Number of Resources</th>
<th>Salient Issues and Challenges in Systems Issues</th>
<th>Percent of Resources</th>
<th>Number of Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instability</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regrouping</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Silos</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Professional learning</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities and Health</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages represent the number of resources addressing the salient issues and challenges within the 56 resources reviewed. The number of resources in the table represent a duplicated count across the 56 resources reviewed; therefore, the percentages in each column do not total to 100 percent.

Instability

The first salient issue and challenge in the reviewed literature is instability of youth in foster care. More than half of the resources in the literature review identify instability of youth in foster care.
care as a salient issue and challenge. Some of the difficulties associated with instability are frequent moves from home to home or school to school (O’Brien et al. 2010, 155; Clemens et al. 2017, 67–73; Rome and Raskin 2017, 8–10), concerns for transitioning youth’s safety (White et al. 2015, 17 and 22), and the vulnerability, if not insecurity, that results (Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 31–33). “[Transitioning youth] are among the most vulnerable young people in the country … Exiting foster care and facing adulthood without strong connections to families, school, employment, and communities [can place] young people at risk in both the short and long term …” (Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 33). As a recent federal report noted (U.S. Departments of Labor and Education 2016, 1), youth in foster care “…are usually in one of three situations: (1) living in a foster family or group home, in custody of the child welfare system; (2) running away from foster care …; or (3) aging out of foster care and most likely homeless.”

While some youth may have been in foster care for a matter of weeks, others have been moved repeatedly for years (Burley and Halpern 2001, 3 and 9; White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 21). In new schools, they may be made to feel different from other students. A student explained, “The newer schools you go to, it’s kind of weird for us because they see [our foster care status] in the system.” The student continued, “They have the mentality, and most of your teachers will kind of act like that towards you, too. But every time you switch a school, the new counselor is like, “Oh, they’re in foster care” (Clemens et al. 2017, 71).

Youth in foster care tend to lack the parental support, emotional resources, and income for successful transitions to adulthood (Pecora et al. 2006, 1469–1478).

Transitioning youth’s eligibility for services in foster care may vary according to their age, local or state policies, or other circumstances beyond their control. Authors of a national review observed, “The way young people experience the transition from foster care to adulthood could vary widely across states not only due to differences in eligibility for extended foster care but also due to differences in the provision of independent living or transitional services and supports” (Dworksy and Havlicek 2008, 17).

Youth in foster care may experience behavioral obstacles (Courtney et al. 2014, 35–42; Lewis and Bullock 2016, 1–17) or become disconnected from decisions about their future (Pecora et al. 2006, 1477; Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan 2008, 3 and 7). Courtney et al. (2014, 85) found youth in foster care “faring poorly” in terms of mental health and exhibiting “risky behaviors.” Lewis and Bullock (2016, 17) saw it as “paramount” for youth in foster care experiencing behavioral obstacles to be “held to high academic standards … [Troubling] behavior among youth in foster care should not be met with reduced academic expectations.”

**Regrouping**

Youth in foster care also tend to find themselves perpetually regrouping, for example, repeating grades, lagging in academic achievement, or trying to recover high school credits. According to Dworsky (2018, 13), “Many youth in foster care … experience frequent school changes, are tracked into basic education, attend low-performing schools, and are in need of remedial coursework.” As a result, transitioning youth may miss out on study skills, time management techniques, and opportunities for Advanced Placement courses that could help them prepare for college and careers (Lovitt and Emerson, 2009, 19–20). High school youth entering foster care
particularly struggle with academic tests following the disruption: “[Those] who had recently entered care tended to score lower on assessment tests (9 to 16 percentile points) compared with youth with previous foster care placements.” (Burley and Halpern 2001, 17). At age 21, a surprising percentage of the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study\(^3\) (CalYOUTH) participants were still in high school (Courtney et al. 2018, 34): “CalYOUTH respondents were more likely than [their peers] to be in secondary education (10.1 percent vs. 1.3 percent).”

### Preparation

The most prominent of the salient issues and challenges for transitioning youth, according to the reviewed literature, is preparation. Becoming prepared for adulthood has major implications for transitioning youth, like the quoted student in grade 12 above, who feel suddenly released from foster care. Obstacles that transitioning youth face include gaining independent living skills, securing and keeping housing, developing parenting skills, and preparing for the world of work. A recent U.S. Department of Education Foster Care Transition Toolkit\(^3\) (2016, 4) explained, “As students prepare to transition to adult life in today’s economy, it’s important to be prepared to independently make decisions, advocate for personal needs, … [and] secure housing and transportation.” Earlier resources tend to emphasize obstacles to graduating from high school and gaining employment, whereas reports within the past 10 years more often focus on college and career readiness. Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan (2008, 7) saw “considerable obstacles” for youth in foster care at “precisely the time when they should be completing their high school education and preparing to join the labor force or pursue higher education.”

This readiness includes setting goals, accessing financial aid, and having the skills to manage finances. “Many experts believe that college affordability is not a serious problem for former foster youth [youth in foster care] because of so much available federal, state, and institutional financial aid. [Yet] many still have more of a gap between college costs and financial aid than they could cover through a reasonable amount of work.” (Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz, 2009, 16). Reporting that most participants in CalYOUTH foster care were still in care through age 21, Courtney et al. (2018, 160) found, “despite the help they received, on average these young people are faring poorly compared to their age peers across many measures of well-being, including their educational attainment, employment, [and] economic self-sufficiency.” Building on the work of Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan (2008, 4 and 14) and Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull (2009, 141), resources have also recommended that transitioning youth understand connections between training and employment. “Equipped with the experiences and skills of organizing — along with support to translate these experiences to potential employers — [transitioning youth] may be competitive in a job market that is increasingly seeking candidates” like them (Rosen, Gennari, and Mandic 2018, 13–14). Table 2.2 lists the types of challenges associated with preparation, as reviewed from the 56 resources.

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\(^3\) [https://www.chapinhall.org/research/calyouth](https://www.chapinhall.org/research/calyouth)

\(^3\) [https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/foster-care/youth-transition-toolkit.pdf](https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/foster-care/youth-transition-toolkit.pdf)
Table 2.2 Preparation challenge types for transitioning youth among the 56 reviewed resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Preparation Challenges for Transitioning Youth</th>
<th>Available Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent living skills</strong></td>
<td>Stoner 1999, 159–174; Lemon, Hines, and Merdinger 2005, 251–256 and 258–268; Pecora et al. 2006, 1459, 1466, 1469, 1471, and 1477–1478; Dworsky and Havlicek 2008, 1, 2, 7, 9–11, and 16–21; Kirk and Day 2011, 1174; Day et al. 2012, 4 and 6; Day and Preston 2013, 14–18, 25, and 27; Edelstein and Lowenstein 2014, 1–4, 9, and 10; Wieland and Nelson 2014, 1120–22 and 1127; Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, and Haggerty 2016, 2, 5, 7, 8, and 10–17; Courtney and Hook 2017, 125; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 35–37; Rome and Raskin 2017, 6, 9, 13, and 15; Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes 2018, 740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.2 Preparation challenge types for transitioning youth among the 56 reviewed resources (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Preparation Challenges for Transitioning Youth</th>
<th>Available Resources</th>
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</table>
Table 2.2 Preparation challenge types for transitioning youth among the 56 reviewed resources (continued)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Preparation Challenges for Transitioning Youth</th>
<th>Available Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career pathways training</strong></td>
<td>Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan 2008, 12, 14, and 15; Hilliard 2011, 16 and 35; Kirk and Day 2011, 1174 and 1179; Barnow et al. 2013, 1; Day and Preston 2013, 26; Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 8 and 33; Haxton and O’Day 2015, 45–50; U.S. Departments of Labor and Education 2016, 3; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 35–38; Fein and Hamadyk 2018, 1–3, 8, 14, 17, 18, 23, 25, 32, 42, 56, 67–73, and 90–93; QuirinMa, Henricks, and Denny 2018, no page numbers</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Table 2.2 Preparation challenge types for transitioning youth among the 56 reviewed resources (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Preparation Challenges for Transitioning Youth</th>
<th>Available Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial aid</strong></td>
<td>Lemon, Hines, and Merdinger 2005, 257, 259–265, and 268; Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz 2009, 2–19; Lovitt and Emerson 2009, 20–21; Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 3, 6, and 8; U.S. Department of Education 2016, 16–21; Courtney and Hook 2017, 125; Fein and Hamadyk 2018, 12, 14, 17, 20–21, 38, and 64</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: Each of these references can be found in the Bibliography, Section 5.

## Disabilities and Health Concerns

with children with disabilities. “Resource constraints and lack of cross-cutting knowledge in and collaboration between special education and foster care programs” were reported in Geenen et al. (2013, 93).

The U.S. Department of Education Foster Care Transition Toolkit pointed to the importance of transitioning youth being able to “independently make decisions” and manage health concerns (2016, 4). Multiple resources point to the mental health needs of youth in foster care (Koyanagi and Alfano, 2013, 1, 6, and 24; Courtney et al. 2014, 32, 40–42, 85; Geenen et al. 2014, no page numbers; Clemens et al. 2017, 75–76). Youth in foster care frequently experience trauma and neglect (White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 18 and 21), and children of color are overrepresented. In a study of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children in foster care, O’Brien et al. (2010, 149) found “AI/AN children had one of the highest substantiated rates of child abuse and neglect: 15.9 per 1,000 children.” The consequences of trauma and neglect are intellectual, behavioral, and emotional (Clemens et al. 2017, 65–75). Three consequences in particular — (1) parental substance abuse, (2) youth in foster care use of substances, and (3) how to reduce the effects of trauma and neglect — form a theme throughout the reviewed resources (Stoner 1999, 163–173; White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 18–21; Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, and Haggerty 2016, 23–34; Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe 2016, 3–15; Lovett and Xue 2018, 4, 12, and 21).

Voice

The fifth salient issue and challenge directly affecting transitioning youth is voice. Encouraging transitioning youth to share perspectives on the future, voice their wishes and concerns, and take the lead in planning for adulthood is a challenge for those that work with them (Hughes et al. 2008, 18 and 26; Gomez et al. 2015, 510, 514–515). Within the foster care system, where legal requirements and system constraints take priority over transitioning youth wishes, transitioning youth’s wariness and mistrust of adults is common (Hilliard, 2011, 5), even though, like other young adults, they desire independence (Hughes et al. 2008, 11–16). Gomez et al. (2015, 513) posit that learned helplessness can result: “These [foster care system] experiences may contribute to a perception of learned helplessness that may impact their ability to take initiative to affect future outcomes.” An interviewee in Gomez et al. (2015, 511) said,

“Living on your own in foster care you depend on people to do things for you. When they throw you out into the world, you are confused and lost. Foster mom was always saying things for me. I was 20 so I need to say things for myself.”

Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull (2009) point to a lack of studies that include youth currently or formerly in foster care as participants. In addition, they advocate for specific policies on including transitioning youth’s wishes and perspectives during transition: “Empowerment of youth in and transitioning out of [foster] care is essential and should be overtly facilitated through policy and program development” (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 133).
As another way to encourage voice in education settings, Palladino (2006, 22–31) points to the benefits of foster parents and teachers collaborating. A resource teacher in his study emphasizes collaborating with parents who provide foster care and transitioning youth to get “the transitional goal figured out in [grade nine].” The resource teacher admits that “it is hard to get kids to say what they want to do, want to be. But we have to get the ball rolling” (Palladino 2006, 27).

A final perspective on the voice of transitioning youth is a view that they have only token representation in the systems that serve them (Rosen, Gennari, and Mandic 2018, 3 and 30). “If young people continue to be unorganized, systems will have little pressure to make the kinds of changes that move the needle on outcomes for youth leaving care.” By expanding “opportunities for youth [in foster care] engagement … [they build] power to achieve transformational changes that go beyond the limited reforms that systems would prefer” (Rosen, Gennari, and Mandic 2018, 3).

**Synthesis of Salient Issues and Challenges in Systems Serving Needs of Transitioning Youth**

In addition to the salient issues and challenges that affect transitioning youth directly, five other salient issues and challenges relate to the systems that serve the needs of transitioning youth (see Table 2.1). These salient issues and challenges are

- **Awareness** of staff and systems of the needs of youth in foster care,
- **Silos** within and across systems that serve youth in foster care,
- **Professional learning** of staff around recognition of challenges, advocacy, variability in policies and practice, and accountability,
- **Funding** availability and priorities, and
- **Intervention** needs, development, implementation, and evaluation.

**Awareness**

An underlying salient issue and challenge for systems is lack of awareness and information. Staff in one system (e.g., education) may not have access to information from another system (e.g., child welfare) because of data sharing policies, data management and monitoring approaches, or confidentiality concerns (Institute for Educational Leadership 2008, vi, xi, 38, 40–41; Hilliard 2011, 7, 33, and 36; Barnow et al. 2013, 10; Jordan, Fryar, and DeVooght 2017, 3). “Without effective information and data sharing across child welfare and education agencies, it will be difficult to capture critical information to assess the impact of the educational provisions” (Day and Preston 2013, 19). Not having access to critical information can be multi-directional among systems, hampers awareness, and curtails collaboration. Geenen et al. (2013, 93) cite barriers of “resource constraints and lack of cross-cutting knowledge in and collaboration between [education] and foster care programs.” The authors continue (93), “Educators need to have a greater understanding of the transition barriers …, which have a direct impact on a [transitioning] youth’s education and ability to stay in school.”

Data could be shared through technology, but few systems employ the requisite technology.
Haxton and O’Day (2015, 34) describe a counseling resource data system that Fresno Unified School District (USD) developed to serve transitioning youth who are homeless or in foster care. With the push of a button, a counselor can access multiple sources of status, demographic, credit, and grade information on a youth in foster care. To support a young man in foster care who was falling behind because of multiple placements, the Fresno counseling team employed this data-sharing technology and “worked together to identify his risk factors, get him on-track to graduate, and, upon graduation, to enroll him in a local community college.” (2015, 43). One of the Fresno counselors spoke with pride about being the envy of counselors in other districts, who spend hours researching separate sources to piece together data to assist a single student in foster care (Haxton and O’Day 2015, 34).

In addition to access through data, face-to-face accessibility becomes necessary for staff to develop awareness of and respond to youth’s needs. A staff member in Year Up, a national sector training program for urban young adults, recommended, “[You] need real people that care enough to do these programming pieces well, and I think it’s really the staff that it boils down to” (Fein and Hamadyk 2018, ES-xiii). Institute for Educational Leadership (2008, iv and 33) named staff accessibility as a key component in a transition demonstration project. “No single program component rose to the level of importance in the young person’s life than having a caring adult who guided and supported the youth through this transition” (Institute for Educational Leadership 2008, 33).

Silos

One reason for lack of awareness and information is the existence of silos (Hilliard 2011, 33) that occurs across disparate systems that serve youth in foster care (Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 16–32; U.S. Departments of Labor and Education 2016, 3–4; Clemens et al. 2017, 65 and 74; Jordan, Fryar, and DeVooght 2017, 26 and 38). Systems of education, child welfare, healthcare, employment, housing, and law have been developed and enhanced distinctly apart from families and each other and struggle to collaborate (Hilliard 2011, 33, 35–37; Edelstein and Lowenstein 2014, 10–12). Getting staff in systems to collaborate may hinge on agency capacity, policies, and limitations (Hughes et al. 2008, 21–23), such as the caseload of social workers or counselors (Institute for Educational Leadership 2008, 7 and 34). The creation of silos has far-reaching consequences for transitioning youth: “One stakeholder reflected that ‘by the time the kids [children] age out, they are the product of system failure’ that continues to affect them into their maturity” (Hughes et al. 2008, 15).

36 For more information on Year Up, see the Supports for CTE Educators subsection, pages 21–28.
The youth-oriented workforce development system provides resources targeted to the needs of disadvantaged youth. But the youth development system is far too small to meet the need for its services, and youth [in foster care] with the greatest needs have difficulty accessing some programs. The public education system seeks to ensure that all youth obtain the educational skills and credentials needed to compete in a 21st century economy. However, the system does not provide services specifically tailored to the needs of foster youth [youth in foster care]. The needs of foster youth [youth in foster care] are too complex for any one agency to meet them. Our research suggests that only a collaborative effort by key stakeholders, strategically directed, can move the needle in any measurable way.” (Hilliard 2011, 19)

The challenge is “strengthening collaboration and alignment across the systems that influence foster youth [youth in foster care] outcomes” (U.S. Departments of Labor and Education 2016, 5). Hilliard writes that since no single system can meet the needs of transitioning youth, collaboration is imperative (2011, 19). Both researchers and transitioning youth identify a need for collaboration. “At all levels, there also needs to be more collaboration across the different systems that touch the lives of these individuals [transitioning from foster care], especially between mental health and secondary education, and between both of those systems and employment agencies” (Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 33). In a report including youth who had transitioned from foster care, the youth interviewees recommended “more coordination among the school, child welfare system, and home, such as using frequent progress reports.” An adult formerly in care said, “I also think that something that’s missing in the system is that the foster care system and the education system don’t really work in a collaboration” (Clemens et al. 2017, 74).

Professional Learning

Challenges occur within systems, including education, as well as across them, and the reviewed literature indicates professional learning can make a difference. One of the challenges associated with professional learning is educator recognition of and response to the difficulties that transitioning youth face. Courtney et al. (2014, 85) see as a challenge the “inappropriateness of a one-size-fits-all approach to extended foster care.” Given the many “hardships that may affect a [transitioning] youth’s educational outcomes … educators need to provide high-quality education services to provide a counterbalance to these challenges” (Gonsoulin, Griller Clark, and Rankin, 2015, ii) but may not be adequately prepared to do so. Pecora et al. (2006, 1476) suggests educators would “benefit from more training about the challenges that youth in foster care face, and ways they can advocate for these youth.” Foster Youth in Action also recommends “intensive training of support staff and lead youth [in foster care] organizers, shared learning opportunities for practitioners, and dedicated curriculum which speaks to the unique challenges and diverse experiences of youth” in foster care (Rosen, Gennari, and Mandic 2018, 32). Within-state and across-state variability in policies and practices for serving transitioning youth is also associated with professional learning. Case workers and educators typically participate in professional learning that reflects policies and practices of their local regions or districts. When
youth in foster care experience multiple placements, their transition experience can vary from place to place. “The way young people experience the transition from foster care to adulthood could vary widely across states … due to differences in the provision of independent living or transitional services and supports” (Dworsky and Havlicek 2008, 17).

For example, Lewis and Bullock (2016, 7–17) found differences in internalizing behavior of youth in foster care by age and gender that are associated with increased rates of suspension and expulsion from school. They recommend that “teachers, caregivers, and caseworkers who interact with boys residing in [out-of-home placements] need to be trained to identify … and to address internalizing behaviors with evidence-based practices” (2016, 16).

Transitioning youth may also know little about accessing or paying for PSE opportunities. Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz (2009, 18) recommend that states provide staff “training on college opportunity and affordability.” However, “adults that foster youth [youth in foster care] interact with most frequently have neither been tasked nor trained to provide this information to youth [in foster care], and many youth miss out on it as a result.” Staff working with transitioning youth “should receive training from the state on college options for foster youth [youth in foster care], including financial aid availability” (2009, 18). Professional learning is also integral to overall school initiatives affecting transitioning youth in foster care, such as school climate improvement or entrepreneurial education. A review of research on empowerment of youth in foster care points to high school entrepreneurial educational programs and suggests “training of teachers to provide curricula on enterprise and entrepreneurship programs that assist [transitioning] youth with business startup, small business placements, and the support of youth enterprise” (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 141–142. Researchers studying the relationship of school climate with family structure also note the importance of professional learning for school staff in efforts to benefit school climate. They “suggest that school climate improvement efforts,” such as “staff trainings on communicating effectively to build healthy relationships with youth [in foster care],” may be useful interventions in supporting youth in foster care (O’Malley, Voight, Renshaw, and Eklund 2014, 13).

Funding

Creating awareness of transitioning youth challenges, bridging silos, and providing professional learning all have funding implications for education and other systems. Gonsoulin, Griller Clark, and Rankin (2015, 10, 13-15) make the point that accountability requirements and competing school priorities limit available funding. Urban programs for transitioning youth, for example, may have little funding available from city governments. Hilliard (2013, 5) describes how some successful programs benefitting youth in foster care have no government support and are funded “by patching together grants from private funders.” He challenges the city of New York to “change the trajectory of the most vulnerable youth [in foster care] from adult wards of the state to self-sufficient taxpayers” by supporting the “fairly modest cost” of successful programs (Hilliard 2013, 5). In Detroit, the Grow Detroit’s Young Talent (GDYT) evaluation team “recommends that the revenue streams for GDYT be diversified and additional local and state streams of revenue be explored” (Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 5).
Intervention

Ideally, funding can be made available for systems to determine the needs, development, implementation, and evaluation of effective interventions for transitioning youth. Intervention is the most prominent salient issue and challenge in systems serving transitioning youth, according to the 56 available resources. Table 2.3 displays information on resources that discussed salient issues and challenges associated with effective intervention.

Table 2.3 Available resources on salient intervention issues and challenges for transitioning youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Salient Intervention Issues and Challenges for Transitioning Youth</th>
<th>Available Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need for models</strong></td>
<td>Dworsky, Smithgall, and Courtney 2014, 6–10; Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, and Haggerty 2016, 1–3 and 17–18; Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink 2016, 41–43; Fein and Hamadyk 2018, 11–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring and Tutoring</strong></td>
<td>Institute for Educational Leadership 2008, 34; O’Brien et al. 2010, 152 and 155; Kirk and Day 2011, 1175 and 1179; Greeson 2013, 44–48; Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe 2016, 6 and 14; Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes 2018, 738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case management</strong></td>
<td>Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan 2008, 13; White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation rigor</strong></td>
<td>Dworsky, Smithgall, and Courtney 2014, 7–11; Edelstein and Lowenstein 2014, 2–12; Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink 2016, 40–41 and 47–49; Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 3, 26–28, and 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: Each of these references can be found in Section 5 Bibliography.

According to the reviewed literature, the need for beneficial models is strong. Dworsky, Smithgall, and Courtney (2014, 6–10) found only two high school completion programs designed for youth in foster care. Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink (2016, 41–43) found limited studies of natural mentoring for youth in foster care. “Given the dearth of evidence-based programs available to support the goals of youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood, intervention development and testing … is greatly needed,” wrote Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, and Haggerty (2016, 18). Effective programming for broader populations in urban areas, such as Year Up (Fein and Hamadyk 2018, 11–12), is needed for youth in foster care, as well as in other geographical settings.
Collaboration and joint decision-making are challenges associated with interventions as well as with systems. Writing about five urban demonstration projects on youth in foster care, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration’s Institute for Educational Leadership (2008, 36–40) found ongoing partner support and sustaining services over the long term to be a challenge. Lack of joint decision-making may have made some potential participants ineligible and kept some transitioning youth from receiving all services of a transitional living program (Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney 2015, 31, 39, 41, 99–105). Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe (2016, 12 and 14) express concern about college collaboration in developing a postsecondary education (PSE) access intervention called Fostering Higher Education (FHE). Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght (2017) call for “creating and continuing partnerships and collaborations with other employment assistance agencies” as an area of “innovation and success related to [transitioning] youth employment” (2017, 13).

Challenges in how interventions are designed can also hamper their effectiveness. Overall a lack of research occurs on the effectiveness of intervention (Greeson 2013, 46–47). Few studies researching intervention include youth currently and formerly in foster care as participants (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 148). Intervention studies frequently lack a comparison group and common outcome measures across programs (Barnow et al. 2013, 10). Retaining disconnected transitioning youth in programs can also be a challenge during research (Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan 2008, 12–13). Sample size, small cell sizes, and contextual factors (Geenen et al. 2014, no page numbers; Courtney et al. 2018, 12, 38, 44, 45, and 139), length of intervention and data collection schedules are further challenges (Day and Preston 2013, 7, 9, and 28; Williams, Baker, and Williams-Devane 2018, 171–172). Barnow et al. (2013, 10) and Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan (2017, 61–62) also cite weak performance measures as a challenge. For instance, “the main performance measures used for summer youth employment programs in large cities are (1) the number of youth who participate and (2) reported satisfaction among youth and employer participants.” (Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 61).

Institute for Educational Leadership (2008, 34), Kirk and Day (2011, 1175 and 1179), and Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes (2018, 738) cite mentoring as a positive component of intervention. O’Brien et al. (2010, 152 and 155) add the benefits of tutoring and remediation of skills to this component. Mentoring offers the transitioning youth opportunity to interact with a stable adult, often somebody already in his or her life (i.e., a natural mentor), who can provide guidance and encouragement. Still, mentoring is not without challenges. “Although natural mentoring for foster youth [youth in foster care] makes sense theoretically and conceptually, there is the concern that the process could result in yet another failed relationship, particularly for those youth for whom building meaningful connections is difficult” (Greeson 2013, 45). As a key component of the FHE intervention, Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe (2016, 6 and 14) plan to have volunteers serve as group and individual mentors. If the volunteers leave, the effectiveness of the intervention is threatened.

Lack of case management is another challenge. White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher (2015, 22) ask intervention planners to “rethink the foster care service delivery model and roles of case managers.” Even though child welfare systems “should assume a centralized role” in case management, “other service delivery systems must be engaged,” including mental health, education, and juvenile justice (White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 22). “Comprehensive case management can also help reduce program attrition.” (Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and
A final challenge in intervention is evaluation rigor. Dworsky, Smithgall, and Courtney (2014, 7) observe, “To date, there has been little progress in developing an evidence base for education-focused programs that target youth in foster care.” Furthermore, “none of the programs [in the report] have been rigorously evaluated.” (Dworsky, Smithgall, and Courtney 2014, 7). They and Edelstein and Lowenstein (2014, 2) note “the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs is still the only rigorous evaluation of independent living programs (ILPs) for youth transitioning from foster care. Thus, we still know little about which ILPs are effective, for which transitioning youth they can be most effective, and which program components are essential” (2014, 2). Simply offering “services and supports is not enough: states need to make sure that those services are firmly grounded in evidence and produce the desired outcomes…” (Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 33).

Education and Employment Outcomes of Transitioning Youth

The third guiding research question addresses the education and employment outcomes that transitioning youth in foster care experience. According to a newly published review (Dworsky 2018, 12), their education outcomes tend to be low. “Compared to their non-foster care peers, youth in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school, less likely to enroll in college if they complete high school, and less likely to graduate from college if they enroll. Between 1 percent and 11 percent of foster youth [youth in foster care] graduate from college … by comparison, approximately 42 percent of young adults under age 25 have at least an associate degree and nearly one third have at least a bachelor’s degree.” (Dworsky 2018, 12). Youth in foster care tend to have lower grade point averages than their peers (O’Malley, Voight, Renshaw, and Eklund 2014, 8). Employment opportunities go hand in hand with education, for transitioning youth in secondary education and beyond. “Youth in out-of-home care who had extensive employment experience while in high school were more than four times as likely to graduate as those who lacked this experience” (Hughes et al. 2008, 21). Pecora et al. (2006) predict, “By increasing access to supplemental educational services and tutoring, and by minimizing the number of school changes, alumni employment and financial outcomes will be improved, along with completion rates for post-secondary education and training” (2006, 1478).

Education outcomes of transitioning youth

The reviewed literature on youth in foster care cites a variety of education outcomes but tends to focus on three major indicators: (1) high school graduation, (2) PSE enrollment, and (3) PSE completion. High school graduation rates range from 23 percent to 86 percent, as displayed in Figure 2.1. In ten of the 15 resources indicating high school graduation rates, however,
between half and two-thirds of youth in foster care graduated from high school. For context, the National Center for Education Statistics data shows that the overall student population’s high school graduation rate has been above 80 percent since 2012.\footnote{NCES Fast Facts, \url{https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=805}.}

Figure 2.1 High school graduation rate percentages, by oldest reported age for youth transitioning from the foster care system to adulthood.


Not surprisingly, urban graduation rates tended to be lower; for example, the resources reporting 23 percent graduation rates were both in urban areas (Institute for Educational Leadership 2008, 15–20; Barnow et al. 2013, 6). The resources reporting the highest graduation rates tended to have older participants (i.e., at least 18 years or older), likely because more time had gone by so that youth in foster care could complete high school requirements or, if beyond high school age, take high school equivalence (HSE) tests. Seven of the nine studies within the past five years\footnote{Barnow et al. 2013, 6; Geenen et al. 2014, no page numbers; Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney 2015, 53; White et al. 2015, 20; Clemens et al. 2017, 68; Courtney and Okpych 2017, 3; Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 5; Jordan, Fryar, and DeVooght 2017, 4; Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes 2018, 726.} reported graduation rates between 52 percent and 68 percent.

While multiple resources reported rates for high school diplomas and HSE combined, five reported on HSE rates alone (Hughes et al. 2008, 21; O’Brien et al. 2010, 150 and 155; Hilliard, 2011, 10; Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney 2015, 53; White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 20). The HSE option referred to in these resources is the General Educational Development (GED\textsuperscript{®}) test, as the resources rely on data collected before other HSE options were available in
2014. In studies from mixed settings, HSE rates ranged from 16 percent to 34 percent. An urban report (Hilliard 2011, 7) cited an HSE rate of 50 percent among 16- to 24-year-old youth in foster care.

A few additional striking high school outcomes are revealed in the reviewed literature. Nearly half (48 percent) of youth in foster care participate in tutoring or other supplemental education services (Pecora et al. 2006, 1470). Courtney and Hook (2017, 124) report that each additional year in foster care after age 18 is associated with a 46 percent increase in likelihood that former youth in foster care will progress to the next level of education attainment — for example, from high school to a diploma or from a high school diploma to a year of PSE. QuirinMa, Henricks, and Denny (2018, no page numbers) find that completion of at least three credits in CTE halved the likelihood of dropout from high school. Still, small proportions of youth in foster care participate in secondary CTE opportunities: 12 percent in courses and 16 percent in counseling for CTE careers (Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney 2015, 53). The 12 percent of youth in foster care participating in CTE courses compares to 88 percent of all high school students taking any CTE credits.

A second indicator is PSE enrollment. Nearly half of youth in foster care aspire to get four-year degrees (Kirk et al. 2013, 313; Courtney et al. 2014, 26). The rate of transitioning youth enrolling in PSE ranges from 17 percent to 54 percent, as displayed in Figure 2.2.

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Figure 2.2 Transitioning youth postsecondary education (PSE) entry percentage rates, by oldest reported age


The lowest rates (17 percent each) come from reports in urban settings, reflecting urban youth in foster care ages 16–24 years and 17–23 years, respectively (Institute for Education Leadership 2008, 15–20; Barnow et al. 2013, 6). In mixed settings, enrollment rates varied from one fourth to one half of transitioning youth (see Figure 2.2).

PSE entry rates also vary by age, with youth in foster care delaying enrollment in PSE. Courtney et al. (2018, 33–35) reports a fourth of youth in foster care (26 percent) enrolling in PSE by age 21, with most attending two-year colleges. As time passes and transitioning youth finish high school requirements and prepare for PSE, the rate of young adults entering PSE rises. Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes (2018, 726) cite 28 percent enrolling by age 25, and Pecora et al. (2006, 1471) cite 43 percent by age 33. O’Brien et al. (2010, 150 and 155) report half of former youth in foster care (54 percent) entering PSE between age 20 and 49.

A third major indicator is PSE program completion. Resources indicate small proportions of former youth in foster care completing any PSE certificate, diploma, or degree: 21 percent in a study of adults 20–33 years of age (Pecora et al. 2006, 1471), 22 percent among interviewed 23- and 24-year-olds (White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 20), and 35 percent in a report on adults age 20–49 years of age (O’Brien et al. 2010, 150 and 155). Transitioning youth earned postsecondary CTE degrees or certificates at the rate of 17 percent in 2006 (Pecora et al. 2006, 1471) and 22 percent in 2018 (Courtney et al. 2018, 33–35). Rates of more advanced PSE degree completion are very small, with only 3 percent to 8 percent receiving an associate degree or higher (O’Brien et al. 2010, 150 and 155; Courtney et al. 2011, 20). This is significantly lower
than the labor force at large; in 2016 over 50 percent of the labor force received an associate degree or higher.42

Employment outcomes of transitioning youth

Employment provides a reliable avenue of support for youth in foster care as they transition. “In states that have expanded foster care eligibility to age 21, two ways youth are eligible to remain in care past age 18 are by working at least 80 hours per month, or by participating in a program that promotes employment or removes employment barriers. Employment programs serve an important function by helping [transitioning] youth stay in care in participating states. “… Even for [transitioning] youth who do not stay in care past 18 …, effective employment activities are likely to help the transition to adulthood.” (Edelstein and Lowenstein 2014, 1). Like youth in general, however, if youth in foster care do not have skills for employment, they need training to get skills; to get the skills, they need resources to pay for training, which are often scarce. How can they avoid this Catch-22 situation? Employment programs are one solution. “One employment program that has shown great promise in helping foster youth [youth in foster care] secure employment is the United Parcel Service (UPS) School-to-Career Partnership Program implemented in Maryland.” This program “provides [transitioning] youth paid work, health care benefits, and reimbursement for college tuition and vocational training. Once stable employment has been obtained, it becomes much easier for [transitioning] youth to conquer other difficulties” (Day and Preston 2013, 26).

The broader literature on youth in foster care offers two major indicators associated with employment: employment rates and income levels. Eighteen resources cited rates of employment for transitioning youth. As with education indicators, rates vary widely. From 31 percent to 80 percent of youth in foster care are employed, and rates of employment tend to increase with age, as shown in Figure 2.3. The highest rate, 80 percent, occurred shortly before the 2008 recession and included adults up to the age of 33 (Pecora et al. 2006, 1471). No differences occurred by setting. All but three of the resources providing employment rates wrote about transitioning youth not older than 24 years.

Figure 2.3 Transitioning youth employment percentage rates, by oldest reported age


The second indicator is youth income. Hughes et al. (2008, 13) reported that “aged out” 18-year-old youth in foster care in Massachusetts earned an average $642 monthly, in part because approximately half were in PSE; this very low income annualizes to approximately $7,700.

Four of the five resources reporting on income of youth in foster care were written since 2015. Nationally, transitioning youth 18 and older report earning an average $13,989 annually (Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 6). In Tennessee Youth Villages, 18- to 24-year-old transitioning youth saw an annual increase in income of $611 during participation, bringing their average income to $4,099 annually (Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney 2015, 54 and 57). In California, 16- to 21-year-old transitioning youth earned an average $11,904 (Courtney et al. 2018, 61–64). In Wisconsin 19- to 25-year-old transitioning youth averaged $2,008 annual earnings (Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes 2018, 726). The Wisconsin study also estimated earnings without including students enrolled in PSE and found “the results are qualitatively similar”; a silver lining was, the longer transitioning youth spent in care, the more they earned (Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes 2018, 734). Regardless of location, though, none of the resources reviewed reports average annual income beyond poverty levels for transitioning youth.
Supports for CTE Educators

CTE programs in secondary and postsecondary offer the opportunity for youth in foster care to develop industry awareness, explore career options, and prepare for skilled occupations in high-demand industries. While CTE programs consist of comprehensive technical education skills curricula and experiential learning opportunities that are beneficial to all students, CTE educators will often need additional kinds of supports to address the specific needs and skills gaps of students in foster care. The literature reviewed for this paper shows it is most helpful when those supports come from caring adults (Institute for Education Leadership 2008, 33; Day et al. 2012, 4 and 6; U.S. Departments of Labor and Education 2016, 2) and include extended learning opportunities and employability or “soft” skills contextualized within the CTE curriculum (Edelstein and Lowenstein 2014, 12; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 17–18; Fein and Hamadyk 2018, 12, 21–22; Rosen, Gennari, and Mandic 2018, 13–14).

Support from Caring Adults

All youth are most receptive to information from an adult with whom they have a stable relationship. The most stable relationship for these transitioning youth is likely with their foster family caretaker with whom they have the most contact and from whom they likely receive a strong source of encouragement. Hence it is important that the caretakers are trained and knowledgeable about college and career pathways for the transitioning youth. Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz suggest they “should receive training from the state on college options for foster youth [youth in foster care], including financial aid availability” (2009, 18). When youth caretakers are informed about career training options, high-growth jobs, and available financial aid, they can influence the transitioning youth in their care in their college and career decision-making. Transitioning youth also crave caring support from their teachers. Courtney et al. (2014, 27) reported that most youth in foster care from their study received much encouragement from high school teachers, principals, and counselors to continue education past high school to college or CTE training. Transitioning youth in Clemens et al. (2017, 74) valued encouragement from school staff and positive messages that inspired hope. “Make the best of it, and maybe we need more encouragement in that way in the schools. Maybe that’s what the teachers can do” (2017, 74). Youth in foster care want caring and competent teachers who are aware of their personal challenges and available during the school day. They need teachers who are flexible, creative, and sensitive to individual learning needs (Day et al. 2012, 5). CTE educators can add this caring support to that of foster family caretakers. Another strong source of stability and encouragement is mentorship. Naturally occurring mentors, including teachers, but also extended family members, neighbors, coaches, and religious leaders, are particularly promising for steering youth away from poor life outcomes (Greeson 2013, 40). These natural mentors provide “the places, in addition to their relationships with significant adults, where youth learn important life skills” (Hughes et al. 2008, 19). Natural mentors have the following characteristics: acceptance of youth, constant encouragement, reliability, and ability to assist where needed (Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink 2016, 44).

Youth in foster care need encouragement to prepare for the future and are likely to seek it from their caretaker who provides foster care and other natural mentors. A recent study found that
natural mentoring was associated with a greater likelihood of completion of high school or GED® programs; it is also associated with a greater likelihood of plans to pursue PSE. Similarly, there is a strong correlation between natural mentoring and improved adjustment among youth in foster care (Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink 2016, 45).

Design Considerations for CTE Programs Serving Youth in Foster Care

Input from Youth in Foster Care

Some of the most valuable guidance for CTE educators about the program’s design and instruction delivery will come from the students themselves (Day et al. 2012, 4–5). Perkins V identifies youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system as one of nine special populations that must receive attention and support from states and local subrecipients. In developing the state plan that a state must submit to receive its formula allotment of Perkins V funds, the state agency administering Perkins V is required to consult with members and representatives of special populations. At the local level, subrecipients must consult with representatives of special populations in carrying out the comprehensive needs assessment that they conduct every two years.

Obtaining transitioning youth’s input about the design and delivery of CTE instruction and curriculum and the flexibility of the program of study requirements based on an individual student’s needs make it much more likely that transitioning youth will successfully complete a CTE program of study and obtain and industry-recognized certification (Institute for Educational Leadership 2008, 34–35).

Integrating Work-Based Learning Activities

An additional design factor for consideration is the integration of WBL activities within the CTE curriculum. Aligning classroom and workplace learning is the hallmark of CTE programs (See Figure 2.4) and is helpful in providing youth guidance in making future education and career choices by engaging them in real work situations to gain experience. Research has shown that a student’s college expectations are often set by grade eight (Kirk et al. 2013, 319). Embedding WBL opportunities for youth in foster care with activities in the community and the workplace as early as the middle school or even elementary level, enables youth in foster care to explore a wide swath of options, gain information about industries and careers, and be exposed to postsecondary education and training. These opportunities support their ability to develop a plan, while their options are still malleable. By the time they enroll in a secondary CTE program, they will have had opportunities to explore the possibilities and develop greater confidence in their own capabilities.
While exposure to CTE education opportunities is crucial for most students to develop a career interest and career plan, it is especially important for youth in foster care who have low self-confidence and a learned sense of helplessness. Gomez et al. (2015, 511–513) write that experiences in the foster care system may contribute to youth exhibiting learned helplessness that reduces their initiative to plan. CTE educators and policy makers need to factor in learned helplessness as they develop programs to build self-reliance. “Campus visits, college preparatory services … and career apprenticeships are all ways of connecting youth in foster care with meaningful experiences that can spark an interest in higher education or a career/vocational path” and increase confidence in their ability to make it on their own (Gomez et al. 2015, 514). A Massachusetts state study of 17- to 18-year-olds found that youth in foster care with “extensive employment experience while in high school were more than four times as likely to graduate as those who lacked this experience” (Hughes et al. 2008, 21). Additionally, close to half were enrolled in college.

**Employability Skills Explicit Instruction**

Another example of a WBL activity is teaching employability skills within the CTE program. Explicitly teaching transitioning youth throughout middle and high school the employability skills demanded by employers can facilitate the development of the transitioning youth’s independent decision-making skills. As indicated in the literature we reviewed, youth in foster care lack the skills needed for not only navigating their transition out of foster care to adulthood, but also in moving forward with developing the technical skill sets needed for PSE, postsecondary training, or a career. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Career and Technical Education’s (OCTAE’s) Common Framework for Employability Skills (see Figure 2.5) reflect the critical skills needed when preparing youth to be college and career ready. The framework advances a set of skills that cuts across the workforce development and education sectors based on an inventory of existing employability skills standards and assessments.
Two model programs, from Baltimore and Hartford, exemplify instruction of employability skills (Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 9, 18, 21–22, 33–34, 37, 41, and 73–77). Baltimore’s Youth Opportunity Bridge to Career Success provides a “comprehensive menu of career development, job readiness, literacy and support services” (Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 37) to 16- to 21-year-old youth over a 16-month period. Youth Opportunity Bridge to Career Success offers individually focused planning for academic and employment goals, job readiness, career preparation and work experience in several occupational areas with a focus on high growth industries. In Hartford, the Connecticut Opportunity Project\(^43\) offers youth ages 14–21 support in making a successful transition from foster care to adulthood by providing them with opportunities to enhance their financial acumen through the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Opportunity Passport\(^44\). Participants in Connecticut

\(^{43}\) More information on the Connecticut Youth Opportunity Project is at [https://ctopportunityproject.org/home/](https://ctopportunityproject.org/home/).

Youth Opportunity Strategy also “benefit from a menu of services and supports” including pre-employment training, work readiness, internships and job retention with on-site job support” (Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 37–38).

Extended learning opportunities (i.e., extracurricular activities, such as those engaged in through career and technical student organizations (CTSOs)) take place after the school day or during the summer and supplement the CTE curriculum. These opportunities provide extended and applied learning of interdisciplinary themes and build transferable core skills necessary for career success (Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan 2008, 12 and 15; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 18). Such programs as ILPs, internships, job shadowing, or summer youth employment programs can supplement the employability and technical skills that CTE instructors focus on teaching. These “extracurricular activities provide the added benefit of helping youth build interpersonal and social skills, meet other developmental needs, and generally enjoy a well-rounded life” (Hughes, et al. 2008, 19).

Wrap-Around Supportive Services

Greater coordination between and support from other programs, such as the child welfare system, school health services, and employment assistance agencies, can also help CTE educators better serve youth in the foster care system (Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 24 and 33; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 23–26, 32, and 56). Establishing communication and information/resource sharing across a network of services providers can help identify and track the individual needs of each student, including mental health, housing, medical, and others. Having staff within the CTE programs designated to navigate among the many service providers is an effective way for schools to ensure that coordination and collaboration is regularly taking place (White et al. 2015, 17 and 22). In California, for example, every community and technical college is required by law to designate a staff person as a transitioning youth liaison (Dworsky 2018, 16–17).

Promising Models and Approaches to College and Career Readiness

Extending Foster Care Program Services

Extending foster care programs to serve all transitioning youth beyond the age of 18 has observable benefits. States that extend foster care beyond age 18, typically, provide the extension with a stipulation that they need to finish high school, successfully complete a CTE program of study and enroll in postsecondary training or other training program. Courtney and Hook conducted a longitudinal study of youth who transitioned to adulthood from foster care; the study found that the more time a youth in foster care spends being cared for by the system, the more likely they are to finish school (2017, 124). The state of Minnesota, one of several states that extended its foster care program to serve young adults 18–21 years old, takes on the responsibility of working with these young adults to develop an out-of-foster home placement plan and independent living plan. This typically includes enrollment in college or technical college and teaching transitioning youth financial literacy (Wieland and Nelson 2014, 1120–1121).
Other successful models focus on providing transitioning youth with benefits or supports in exchange for participating in some form of work-readiness activities or PSE. These incentives provide much-needed stability and independent living skills. One of the biggest incentives some states are offering is for a youth to stay in foster care to remain in the system after aging out if they are participating in some level of PSE (Dworsky and Havlicek 2008, 1–2). This type of program incentivizes youth in foster care to invest in longer term career goals and reduces the stress of covering their basic needs so that they can focus more on their career.

Better Futures Model

Many states have used the supports described above to implement promising models in CTE to target adults transitioning out of foster care. Several states have adopted mentoring programs with great success. One example is the Better Futures model (Geenen et al. 2014, no page numbers) focused on improving the PSE preparation and participation of youth in foster care who have mental health challenges by supporting them through individual coaching, mentoring workshops, and a summer institute when all participants are brought together on a college campus to interact with the whole community. The intervention group that participated in the Better Futures model showed positive improvement in high school completion and career development measures (Geenen et al. 2014, no page numbers). Fostering Higher Education, a two-year intervention approach still under development that helps youth in foster care make the transition from secondary to postsecondary, also uses one-on-one and group mentoring as one of its three main components. The other two components are higher education goal planning and action and the Top 6 Potential Pitfalls for Higher Education curriculum. Both transitioning youth and practitioners responded positively to all three components (Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe 2016, 13–15).

"...participants who received job preparation services were statistically significantly more likely to be employed or enroll in postsecondary education [PSE] than participants who did not receive these services." (Barnow et al. 2013, 6–7)

Employment and Training Incentives

Some successful youth employment programs across New York City offer stipends to cover transportation and other basic needs during the programming period and/or provide rewards for accomplishing certain behavioral or academic milestones, such as regular attendance, satisfactory performance, or the achievement of short-term goals towards employment (Hilliard 2013, 3–7). While not as intensive as the Better Futures program described in Mentorship Models, these types of models also give transitioning youth the support they need to focus on a long-term career goal (Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan 2008, 15).

Similar successful initiatives have come from the private sector. UPS’ School-to-Career Partnership Program is an example of a successful private sector partnership that creates stability for transitioning youth while they work for UPS. “The UPS program provides [transitioning]
youth paid work, health care benefits, and reimbursement for college tuition and vocational training” (Day and Preston 2013, 26).

**Entrepreneurial Programs**

Entrepreneurial educational training programs are also offered in some high schools (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 141–142; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 18 and 59). Entrepreneurial education is part of a broader movement in U.S. schools to weave “21st century interdisciplinary themes into curriculum: global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy” (Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 18). These programs train teachers to provide curricula “on enterprise and entrepreneurship programs that assist youth with business startup, small business placements, and the support of youth enterprise by independent community organizations” (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 141–142).

**Jobs for America’s Graduates**

Jobs for America’s Graduates, Inc. (JAG) provides comprehensive services intended to prevent youth from dropping out of high school as well as to improve their success in postsecondary education and the labor market. The most commonly implemented JAG model serves a cohort of students identified as being at risk of dropping out, beginning in ninth grade and continuing for the entire four years that students are enrolled in high school. A JAG specialist delivers 810 hours of classroom instruction to help students develop a career plan, learn employability skills, and prepare for postsecondary education and employment after high school graduation. Additionally, the JAG specialist mentors and advises JAG participants during high school and for 12 months after high school graduation and helps them secure employment during the summer and after graduation (*JAG: Delivering on the Promise* 2014, 12-13).

**Youth Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship programs are designed to connect youth’s academic and workplace skills in secondary education to opportunities to further their education or enter careers. Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are effective in preparing youth to pursue a career pathway that leads to higher wages and skilled work (Wyckoff et al. 2008, 13; Gomez et al., 2015, 514; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 31–32 and 87–89). “The lessons that young people have learned on the streets and through off-the-books employment can translate into valuable career skills such as networking or understanding the laws of supply and demand. Job shadowing, informational interviews, service-learning projects, internships and apprenticeships can help young people make informed, personal choices” (Wyckoff et al. 2008, 13).

**Year Up**

The Year Up program was founded in 2000 to serve economically disadvantaged, urban “opportunity youth” between the ages of 18–24. Though not specifically designed for youth in foster care, completion of the Year Up program increased receipt of industry certifications and licenses by 18 percentage points (Fein and Hamadyke 2018, ES-xi). “Employed treatment groups in the 18-month follow-up survey earned nearly $4 per hour more than employed control group members and were substantially more likely to be working in information technology (37 percent
versus 4 percent) and in business and financial occupations (23 versus 14 percent)” (Fein and Hamadyk 2018, ES-x).

YouthBuild

YouthBuild offers programs targeting low-income youth ages 16–25 through competitive matching grants (Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 8, 22, 27, and 31). The program provides the opportunity to obtain a high school diploma or HSE credential at the same time as they are gaining skills in construction. YouthBuild serves youth facing multiple barriers to their education and employment success as they transition to adulthood. “The program promotes leadership skills and asset development, offers counseling, and assists participants seeking post-secondary education and financial aid, internships and other related experiences” (Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 8).

Gaps in the Reviewed Literature

Section 1 opened with a goal of sharing useful resources about transitioning youth in foster care with secondary career and technical education (CTE) educators. In Section 2, this report has identified salient issues and challenges that transitioning youth and the systems that support them face, transitioning youth education and employment outcomes, and supports CTE educators can employ to benefit transitioning youth. Although many resources are available, multiple gaps occur in the literature reviewed. To conclude this section, it is crucial to examine these gaps in the literature on youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood. In recognizing the implications of gaps in the reviewed literature for transitioning youth, secondary CTE educators and other stakeholders will have available concepts and ideas from which to draw in planning future collaboration, intervention, policy, and services.

Gap 1: Resources Specific to Secondary Career and Technical Education

A first gap in the reviewed literature is in CTE-specific resources. Although many resources touch on aspects of career readiness and employment preparation, only a handful of resources address CTE specifically. This gap limits opportunities youth in foster care have for advancing in CTE careers and can lead to delays in their financial independence (Stoner 1999, 172). Missing are guidance on offering meaningful CTE experiences, examples of CTE-specific mentoring programs, evidence-based or promising child welfare programs for youth in foster care that have not yet been tested in CTE, and CTE evidence-based or promising programs that have not yet been tested with youth in foster care. Part of the gap has to do with offering meaningful experiences, such as through mentoring, internships, and apprenticeships, that spark the interest of transitioning youth in career pathways that could support them (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 141–142; Gomez et al. 2015, 514). Very few studies mentioned, let alone tested, the importance of internships and apprenticeships in CTE fields to transitioning youth. If transitioning youth and stakeholders are unaware of the benefits of internships and apprenticeships in CTE, transitioning youth are not likely to pursue them, and stakeholders will not know how to guide youth or assist them in finding supports to participate in these opportunities. CTE educators can create awareness of internships and apprenticeships, even using that heightened awareness in messaging to youth who may not have previously considered entering a CTE field. The CTE educator role in mentoring and advising youth in foster care also
presents a gap. The extremely limited evidence base on mentoring says little about educators in that role but suggests CTE educators could serve as a stable influence, a source of encouragement, and a role model for youth to gain enough confidence to move forward to independence (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 135 and 137–140; Gomez et al. 2015, 514). A challenge, of course, is in customizing services in response to situation-specific needs of individual transitioning youth (Williams, Baker, and Williams-Devane 2018, 170–172). CTE educators who can develop strong mentoring relationships with transitioning youth (Institute for Educational Leadership 2008, 9 and 34; Wieland and Nelson 2014, 1128) can potentially make a profound impact on the youth’s future. It is not a coincidence that the success of the foster care demonstration project programs Institute for Education Leadership (2008, 33) evaluated hinged on “having a caring adult who guided and supported the youth through this transition period.” Identifying examples of promising CTE educator mentoring programs, then, would be fruitful. The mentoring responsibility does not need to fall on the shoulders of a single CTE educator. Models could be considered, such as Montana’s CTSO mentoring program, with positive peer networks and networks of adult mentors (QuirinMa, Henricks, and Denny 2018, no page numbers). CTE stakeholders with capacity to partner with CTSOs can contribute to mentoring efforts as well. Stakeholders and transitioning youth can also be involved in designing and evaluating a model (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 147; Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, and Haggerty 2016, 2 and 10; Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe 2016, 4–15). The potential benefits to transitioning youth include increasing engagement in school, improving attendance and academic performance, and lowering behavior referrals (QuirinMa, Henricks, and Denny 2018, no page numbers).

Another part of the CTE-specific gap relates to missing programs and practices. As Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght (2017, 14) note, child welfare agencies in about one-fourth of U.S. states currently employ “evidence-based, evidence-informed, promising, or emerging programs or practices to support employment and career development efforts with transition-age youth.” CTE educators need to know if they are in this small proportion of states, what the evidence-based or promising programs are, and how they can connect transitioning youth in their school to the programs. Those in the 37 states without evidence-based or promising programs and practices could connect with a state that reported excelling in this area (Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght, 2017, 14).

In addition, CTE programs and practices that are successful with disadvantaged youth overall could be considered for use with youth in foster care. An example is Year Up training in such fields as IT, business operations and communications, and customer support. Starting or expanding partnerships with employers and with local colleges, CTE programs would enable youth in foster care to gain experience in writing, presenting, critical thinking, and interacting with clients (Fein and Hamadyk 2018, 10, 41, 46, and 52). Youth in foster care who age out of secondary services could apply to receive extended time to finish high school and CTE (Day and Preston 2013, 3 and 18).

**Gap 2: Interventions with Rigorous Designs and Evaluations**

Another gap in the reviewed literature entails a salient issue and challenge of systems serving the needs of transitioning youth identified in Section 2: designing education-focused intervention for transitioning youth and evaluating the education-focused interventions rigorously (Dworsky,
Smithgall, and Courtney 2014, 2, 7, and 9). Services need to be grounded in evidence and produce expected outcomes (Fryar, Jordan, and DeVooght 2017, 3, 11, 14, and 33) in settings that work for transitioning youth. For instance, in addition to the question earlier about its utility for urban youth in foster care, does a promising urban intervention like Year Up (Fein and Hamadyk 2018, 11–12), also function well with transitioning youth in suburban or rural areas?

Furthermore, information is missing on which interventions are effective, for which youth they can be most effective, and which components are essential (Greeson 2013, 43 and 46–47; Edelstein and Lowenstein 2014, 2 and 12; Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink 2016, 41, 44, and 47). Do interventions focus on connections with youth in foster care, collaboration with foster families, and increasing preparation for future education (Lemon, Hines, and Merdinger 2005, 267 and 268; Palladino 2006, 30–31; Day and Preston 2013, 11)? “Given the dearth of evidence-based programs available to support the goals of youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood, intervention development and testing … is greatly needed” (Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, and Haggerty 2016, 18). Including stakeholders from practice as well as current or former youth in foster care can benefit intervention development and evaluation and ensure the intervention is responsive to transitioning youth needs as well as an activity they want to participate in (Kaplan, Skolnik, and Turnbull 2009, 18 and 20; Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe 2016, 11). Staff willingness to develop relationships of mutual respect, honesty, trust, and openness is also key to being responsive (Wieland and Nelson 2014, 1127).

Other important intervention design and evaluation features are the use of comparison groups and measures sensitive to intervention (Barnow et al. 2013, 10; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 61–62) rather than participant counts or satisfaction questions. Intervention designers also need to decide which transitioning participants will get which services consistently (Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney 2015, 77–83), especially within disparate areas of states (Jordan, Fryar, and DeVooght 2017, 15, 21–43, and 49–50). Determining an optimal length of an intervention is important for allowing enough time to see effects from the intervention, as is a feasible data collection schedule, for estimating baseline and repeated measures across time (Barnow et al. 20136, 8, and 10; Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 14, 63, and 76; Font, Berger, Cancian, and Noyes 2018, 736 and 740; Williams, Baker, and Williams-DeVane 2018, 171–172).

Creating and implementing a solid intervention design, recruiting a representative sample size, and collecting data on baseline and follow up measures are costly (Geenen et al. 2014, no page numbers). Given competing priorities for resources (Greeson 2013, 46), CTE educators and stakeholders considering implementing and evaluating interventions need to be prepared to identify resources to cover the costs, whether through state or local revenues, grant funding, or partnerships with stakeholders. As a starting point, links to Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) with ideas and state-by-state models are in more than 10 tables in Jordan, Fryar, and DeVoght (2017, 18, 22–28, 31, 34–35, 36–40, 42–44, and 47–48).

**Gap 3: Interventions for Rural Settings**

A gap in approaches exists that are validated for rural settings. This gap also reflects a salient issue and challenge in systems serving the needs of transitioning youth, as identified in Section 2. Twenty resources describe programming or intervention in urban settings and 29 in mixed (primarily statewide) settings. Only five resources specifically mention potential differences in rural areas (Kirk et al. 2013, 308 and 317; Courtney et al. 2014, 86; Valentine, Skemer, and
Courtney 2015, 82 and 102; Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink 2016, 44–46; Jordan, Fryar, and DeVooght 2017, 15). Courtney et al. (2014, 86) note the importance of examining whether “youth from urban counties [are] more or less likely than those from rural counties to report a dearth of particular kinds of services?” Addressing this question “can help inform development of services and training of child welfare workers and other professionals who provide support to foster youth.” Additionally, Valentine, Skemer, and Courtney (2015) note differences in rural services and resources. This variability matters to rural youth in foster care in that “resources, such as cell phone service and access to the Internet, public transportation, and PSE institutions are less prevalent” (2015, 82).

Two studies found variable effects for rural youth in foster care: lower education aspirations and more positive attitudes toward mentors. One study reported lower aspirations among rural youth in foster care (Kirk et al. 2013, 317). The other study found “foster youth [youth in foster care] with natural mentors, or with more positive attitudes toward natural mentoring, were more likely to be … living or have lived in a rural area” (Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink 2016, 45). Being able to evaluate differences in interventions or approaches that work in some settings and not in others is important to rural CTE educators and youth in foster care who may need access to services and require alternate solutions.

**Gap 4: Reducing Silos and Strengthening Collaboration**

A fourth gap, identified as a salient systems issue and challenge in Section 2, is in effective ways to enhance collaboration among the many siloed agencies that work with youth in foster care. Many resources call for collaborative effort among agencies, schools, transitioning youth, foster families, and stakeholders to support transitioning youth yet supply few details on how to accomplish collaboration (Hilliard 2011, 19, 21, 33, and 36; Geenen et al. 2013, 93; Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 3, 7, 13, 19–21, and 25–33; U.S. Departments of Labor and Education 2016, 1–6; Clemens et al. 2017, 65 and 74). Critical is “strengthening collaboration and alignment across the systems that influence foster youth [youth in foster care] outcomes” (U.S. Departments of Labor and Education 2016, 5).

Several resources offer hints on collaboration, such as including transitioning youth in planning, employing frequent progress reports, and involving stakeholders from multiple disciplines as partners. Geenen et al. (2013, 93) recommend meaningful involvement of transitioning youth in planning their education. Transitioning youth suggest regular use of progress reports to facilitate coordination among all those involved in supporting them (Clemens et al. 2017, 74). The reviewed literature supports collaboration with and support of partners across disciplines (Edelstein and Lowenstein 2014, 11–12), and especially employment partners, to connect training with employment (Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, and McClanahan 2008, 14–15). Collaboration across systems implies finding common ground, reviewing agency or district policies that support or hamper meeting transitioning youth’s needs, collecting and responding to transitioning youth’s insights, and making joint decisions on solutions and positive ways to move...
forward. The Child Welfare Information Gateway\(^{45}\) offers more guidance on cross-system collaboration to support transitioning youth.

Even within education systems, collaboration may be difficult. Fresno USD’s approach appears promising to align “participation, persistence, and course grades in career pathway courses” as transitioning youth determine a career focus area and complete career pathway and PSE entry requirements (Haxton and O’Day 2015, 50). The authors explain, “Linked Learning pathways create articulated course sequences in specific career fields that are aligned to industry-recognized certificates or credentials or provide transferable credits to a PSE degree program” (2015, 48). Furthermore, “Linked Learning combines rigorous academics with career-based learning in the classroom, WBL win professional settings, and supports to ensure that students are successful in both settings” (Haxton and O’Day 2015, 48). While Fresno USD’s approach is counseling-oriented and sensitive to Fresno-area employment and PSE offerings, CTE educators could investigate how Fresno USD works with CTE educators and stakeholders to determine which components of the system and potential system changes could benefit transitioning youth in their local district.

**Gap 5: Models that Support Youth in Foster Care to Regroup**

Models that support transitioning youth as they go through the regrouping process, described in Section 2 as a salient issue and challenge affecting transitioning youth directly, comprise a fifth gap in the reviewed literature. Even though youth in foster care change schools, repeat grades, score lower on standardized tests, and enroll in special education at twice the rate of mainstream students (Burley and Halpern 2001, 1), the reviewed literature does little more than acknowledge challenges and offers extremely limited advice to mitigate challenges. A first option is determining academic supports older youth in foster care may need to regroup. Observing that “older participants may have had longer periods of exposure to adversity,” Lewis and Bullock (2016, 17) write, “they must be supported academically to mitigate the effects of the distress leading up to and during placement outside of their homes.” Transitioning youth may also need assistance with planning, time management, decision making, study skills, and communication (Stoner 1999, 167; Lovitt and Emerson 2009, 20–22). Youth in foster care recommended that placement testing would be helpful whenever they switched schools so that they could regroup and identify what they still needed to do in the new school or district to complete a high school diploma (Clemens et al. 2017, 74–75). CTE educators can help youth in foster care make connections to school colleagues, or referrals to partner agencies and other stakeholders, for testing, planning, and advising that will move them forward.

A related option is preparing transitioning youth to look ahead to the future immediately before and after graduation. The *Foster Care Transition Toolkit* (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, 1–66) is a direct resource transitioning youth can access and employ. Williams, Baker, and Williams-Devane (2018, 172) advise offering transitioning youth more information and counseling on college and career readiness programming. Haxton and O’Day (2015, 45–47) reports that the Fresno USD co-located counseling, CTE, and credit recovery programs in the same division of the district to strengthen communication and ensure disadvantaged students,

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\(^{45}\) For more information on Child Welfare Information Gateway, visit [https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/youth/collaboration/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/youth/collaboration/)
including youth in foster care, can make up credits as needed and stay on track to graduate. Even if co-location is not feasible, the reviewed literature supports additional services, including alternative secondary education, contextualized learning, work readiness training, individual coaching, and work-based opportunities such as job shadowing and community service (Robinson, Shanks, and Meehan 2017, 36). CTE educators can work with district staff and partner agencies to identify existing resources, communicate options to transitioning youth, and co-develop services to fill gaps.

**Gap 6: Disabilities, Health Concerns, and Trauma**

With the overrepresentation of youth in foster care within special education (Burley and Halpern 2001, 1; Kirk and Day 2011, 1173), special education teachers are likely not the only secondary educators needing awareness of and interventions for related foster care issues (Palladino 2006, 30). Identifying supports and accommodations for transitioning youth with disabilities or health concerns, another salient issue and challenge issue affecting transitioning youth directly, is a sixth gap in the reviewed literature of youth in foster care with implications for CTE educators and stakeholders. Beyond acknowledging the needs for resources and collaboration (Geenen et al. 2013, 93), the reviewed literature offers few insights for CTE educators working with youth with disabilities or health concerns who are in foster care.

Disabilities and health concerns include “physical and intellectual health issues and disabilities, as well as the presence of many mental health and behavioral issues” (Lovett and Xue 2018, 19) such as bipolar disorder, developmental disabilities, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression (Stoner, 1999, 165; Geenen et al. 2013, 84). Solutions are particularly critical for mental health needs of youth in foster care (Koyanagi and Alfano, 2013, 16 and 30; Courtney et al. 2014, 32, 40–42, and 85; Geenen et al. 2014, no page numbers; Clemens et al. 2017, 75). Since youth in foster care frequently experience trauma and neglect (White, O’Brien, Pecora, and Buher 2015, 21), CTE educators need to be prepared to respond to any potential effects of trauma (O’Brien et al., 2010, 155), which are especially prevalent in youth of color (e.g., American Indian, Hispanic, or African American students). They also need more detailed information on and interventions for intellectual, behavioral, and emotional consequences of traumatized youth (Clemens et al. 2017, 75).

One rigorously evaluated option is intervention via self-determination skills. Geenen et al. (2013, 93) propose coaching and mentoring in self-determination skills as “effective approaches to promote education and transition success for youth in foster care and special education.” Another option for CTE educators is to encourage career counseling for transitioning youth with serious mental health conditions (SMHC). “Career counseling in schools addresses the specialized needs of youth with SMHCs. Students with SMHCs may not be thinking about future plans and engagement strategies will be important to reach those who are unlikely to seek services.” (Koyanagi and Alfano 2013, 20). A deeper investigation of promising interventions and issues associated with disabilities and health concerns of transitioning youth in foster care is recommended.
Section 3: Bibliography

The 56 reviewed resources include reports, book chapters, papers, and articles. One of the purposes of the literature review was to summarize resource names and dates and to identify subtopics so that interested readers could determine which resources they might review more closely.

The tables that follow are grouped by the type of resource or design of research study. Within each table, resources are listed in date order, beginning with the oldest. Table 3.1 provides detail on 14 descriptive resources, including practice guides, toolkits, and descriptive reports and summaries. Three federal practice guides and toolkits are included in Table 3.1. Most of the resources report on youth in foster care in a mixture of settings; nine of them report on transitioning youth who are at least 17 years of age.

Table 3.2 offers annotated information on 12 policy papers and reviews. The table contains seven reviews and five policy papers. Since they tend to review a variety of studies or focus on general policies, few of the resources report on age of transitioning youth. Geographically, resources are split among urban or mixed settings or do not refer to any location settings.

A large group of resources are quantitative studies (see Table 3.3), including research with experimental or longitudinal designs. Another group of research studies is primarily qualitative in design (see Table 3.4). Interestingly, all but one of the 30 research studies in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 represent the work of teams rather than single authors. The teams often include scholars from multiple disciplines.

Table 3.3 contains 20 research studies with quantitative, experimental, or longitudinal designs. These studies cover a broad range of ages, with some youth in foster care as young as 5 years and some adults who were in foster care as old as 49 years. Fourteen of the 20 studies were conducted in areas of mixed geography and were frequently statewide studies; six were primarily urban studies. Five of the studies are experimental, meaning that they employed random assignment so that some youth in foster care would receive an intervention and others would serve in a control group. Eight studies are longitudinal; five of the eight longitudinal studies came from Chapin Hall at University of Chicago and were led by Mark Courtney.

Table 3.4 contains 10 studies with qualitative or mixed designs. These studies were conducted with youth in foster care beginning primarily in their late teens. Eight of the 10 studies occurred in urban areas. Nearly all studies in this table are qualitative; only one of the studies, from 2018, employed a mixed methods design (i.e., research with both quantitative and qualitative methods).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year published</th>
<th>Youth age (in years)</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Subtopic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burley &amp; Halpern</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5–17</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>Authors analyzed Washington's public school system data on education attainment of foster youth. The outcomes of youth in long-term foster care are compared with the state's school-age population, including achievement test scores, grade repetition, and school completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dworsky &amp; Havlicek</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17 and older</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>As part of a national review of transitioning youth in foster care, the state of Washington commissioned a national survey of child welfare staff on “eligibility requirements for continued foster care, age thresholds for transitioning services, types of services provided, and use of state funds.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes et al.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17–18</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>&quot;Preparing Our Kids for Education, Work and Life: A Report of the Task Force on Youth Aging Out” contains a summary of the first ever study of transitioning youth in Massachusetts and a set of recommendations that create policy, practice and resource conditions for youth to achieve these outcomes.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovitt &amp; Emerson</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>22–23</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>The report, titled “Foster Youth Who Have Succeeded in Higher Education,” summarizes lessons learned from eight Casey Family Programs’ interviews with young adults who transitioned from foster care and graduated from college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilliard</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16–24</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>“This study [Fostering Careers] takes an in-depth look at the challenges foster youth have in getting and keeping jobs as adults and examines” what New York’s systems “are—and aren’t—doing to help young people transition” into adulthood. It offers recommendations to improve employment and education outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk, Lewis, Nilsen, &amp; Colvin</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>11–19</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>The purpose of the study, titled “Foster Care and College: The Educational Expectations of Youth in the Foster Care System,” was to contrast “differences in educational aspirations and expectations” for foster care and other youth and predict differences. Youth in foster care “report lower educational aspirations and expectations.” Academic self-perception and parental support were predictors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonsoulin, Griller Clark, &amp; Rankin</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“This [National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth] NDTAC practice guide examines the principle that quality education services are critical” for youth in foster care. To address challenges that may “affect a youth’s educational outcomes—trauma, changes in placement, family mobility, disabling conditions, economic disadvantage, involvement in the justice system—educators need to provide high-quality education services to provide a counterbalance to these challenges.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year published</td>
<td>Youth age (in years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>White, O’Brien, Pecora, &amp; Buher</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>23–24</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“This study [“Mental Health and Educational Outcomes for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care in Michigan”] examines foster care experiences and adult functioning of 65 alumni (ages 23–24) of Michigan foster care, using data from case records and in-person interviews.” These alumni had “significantly worse outcomes than their peers in the general population” in mental health and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Department of Education</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>18 and older</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>The <em>Foster Care Transition Toolkit</em> was developed “to help youth access the resources needed to successfully transition into adulthood, continue on to postsecondary education (PSE), and meaningful careers.” Topics include transition planning, education, jobs, housing, and health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Departments of Labor and Education</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>This document, titled &quot;Supporting the Educational and Career Success of Foster Youth Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,&quot; offers examples of practices from research and the field to impact “educational, employment, and general welfare of foster youth.” Youth need 1) support and trauma informed care; 2) connections to caring adults; 3) agencies working together to meet needs; and 4) transition support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fryar, Jordan, &amp; DeVooght</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>18 and older</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td><em>Supporting Young People Transitioning from Foster Care: Findings from a National Survey</em> reports on a national survey highlighting state trends of serving youth in foster care and examples of innovation in six major service areas: 1) PSE; 2) employment and career development; 3) financial capability; 4) safe, stable, and affordable housing; 5) health and mental health care; and 6) permanent relationships with supportive adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan, Fryar, &amp; DeVooght</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>18 and older</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“This report [Supporting Young People Transitioning from Foster Care Virginia-Specific Finding from a National Survey and Policy Scan] describes recent research findings about the landscape of programs, policies, and practices in Virginia supporting youth aging out of foster care,” including services and supports for youth in education, employment, financial capability, housing, health care, and permanency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QuirinMa, Henricks, &amp; Denny</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>17–18</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>The authors “suspected that students identified as homeless who were Career and Technical Education (CTE) Concentrators (taking three or more CTE courses) would have lower drop-out rates. We also suspected that students identified as homeless who were involved in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) would have the lowest drop-out rates.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2 Publication and topical information for policy papers and reviews: transitioning youth in foster care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year published</th>
<th>Youth age (in years)</th>
<th>Geography</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stoner</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>This journal article, titled “Life After Foster Care: Services and Policies for Former Foster Youth,” “presents a profile of emancipated foster youth; focuses on their service needs; and, describes three [urban housing] program models addressing these.” Data sources are “a synthesis of previous research on independent living programs (ILPs) and findings” about recent programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaplan, Skolnik, &amp; Turnbull</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“This paper [“Enhancing the Empowerment of Youth in Foster Care: Supportive Services”] reviews the research on youth empowerment in seven child welfare programmatic areas. A lack of studies specifically focused on the empowerment of youth in foster care was found.” Empowering youth “transitioning out of care is essential and should be overtly facilitated through policy and program development.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day &amp; Preston</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“Fostering Connection” provides large, sweeping changes that impact foster care children from birth to age 21. The scope of this [policy] analysis is limited to the provisions of the Title II subsection of Fostering Connections affecting older youth who are aging out of the foster care system.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeson</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Applying a “life course perspective” this article, titled “Foster Youth and The Transition to Adulthood: The Theoretical and Conceptual Basis for Natural Mentoring,” describes the “theoretical and contextual foundation” explaining hardships transitioning foster youth experience. “[The] theoretical basis for natural mentoring among foster youth is explored” and current research on natural mentoring is reviewed. The article shares implications for practice and policy to improve outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilliard</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>14–21</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>“In this policy brief, [the author lays] out six achievable and low-cost recommendations that city officials could take to connect more foster youth to the workforce and increase their chances of leading productive lives.” The brief is titled Foster Youth and the Workforce: Next Steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koyanagi &amp; Alfano</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>14–30</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“This publication [Promise for the Future] examines various federal programs that can aid in meeting the educational, vocational and basic supports needs of youth and young adults… with serious mental health conditions (SMHCs). It briefly examines the breadth and scope of available assistance and offers recommendations to improve state, local and federal policy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edelstein &amp; Lowenstein</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>multiple</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>Urban Institute researchers developed a typology to categorize ILPs. Supporting Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Issue Brief 3: Employment Programs focuses on reviewing independent living programs that aim to improve employment outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2 Publication and topical information for policy papers and reviews: transitioning youth in foster care (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year published</th>
<th>Youth age (in years)</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Subtopic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wieland &amp; Nelson</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>18–21</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>&quot;Aging out of Foster Care: How Extended Foster Care for Youth Eighteen to Twenty-One Has Fostered Independence&quot; is a legal review that discusses the extended foster care program in Minnesota which serves young adults 18–21 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Greeson, &amp; Brunsink</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>multiple</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“Natural Mentoring Among Older Youth in and Aging Out of Foster Care: A Systemic Review” is the “first [review] to comprehensively identify, synthesize, and summarize… theories, concepts, and research findings” on natural mentoring with youth in foster care. This “literature suggests that natural mentoring is a promising practice for youth in foster care.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, Shanks, &amp; Meehan</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>“This report [Hallmarks of Effective Youth Employment Programs from Research and Programs Across the United States: Implications for Detroit] makes recommendations to improve the operations and outcomes of Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GDYT).” The report also “urges greater tailoring of program components and activities to meet the diverse needs of the thousands of youth who enroll in GDT each year.” “It is essential that a close ongoing relationship and coordination with all schools who serve Detroit youth be developed,” and stakeholders convened “to oversee the development and implementation of a common vision, synchronization, and facilitation of a stronger agenda for young people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dworsky</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>16–21</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“This chapter [of “Improving the Postsecondary Educational Attainment of Youth in Foster Care&quot;] examines what we know about the disparity in postsecondary educational attainment between youth in foster care and their non-foster care peers, the reasons for it, and the policies and programs that have been developed to address that disparity.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosen, Gennari, &amp; Mandic</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“Foster Youth in Action argues that [a] youth organizing strategy should be embraced within the area of engagement with youth and young adults who are impacted by the foster care system.” The report, titled “Youth-Led Organizing: A Strategy for Healing and Child Welfare Systems Change,” shares “a set of practices that underpin youth organizing with current and former foster youth.” The report closes with “some general directions that stakeholders could take to advance this approach.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 Publication and topical information for quantitative, experimental, and longitudinal studies: transitioning youth in foster care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year published</th>
<th>Youth age (in years)</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Subtopic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lemon, Hines, &amp; Merdinger</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>21 (mean)</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>This article, titled “From Foster Care to Young Adulthood: The Role of Independent Living Programs in Supporting Successful Transitions,” presents findings from two analyses of Pathways to College data “exploring the potentially beneficial role of independent living programs (ILPs) for foster youth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pecora et al.</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>20–33</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“Educational and Employment Outcomes of Adults Formerly Placed in Foster Care: Results from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study” evaluated “intermediate and long-term effects of family foster care on adult functioning.” High school and postsecondary education (PSE) completion rates are shared. Supports to completion included positive placement history and independent living preparation. The latter supported employment outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute for Educational Leadership</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16–24</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>The Foster Youth Demonstration Project: Final Evaluation Report is a longitudinal evaluation of a five-year demonstration project on education and employment outcomes of 1,058 youth transitioning from foster care in five major cities. Information is provided on program design and staffing, partnerships, services, youth outcomes, and data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Brien et al.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>20–49</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>Interviews “assessing education, employment, and financial outcomes” were conducted with American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) former youth in foster care. “The primary purpose of this article [“Educational and employment achievements of American Indian/Alaska Native alumni of foster care”] is to describe the education, employment, and financial outcomes of AI/AN alumni of care.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk &amp; Day</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>&quot;Increasing College Access for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Evaluation of a Summer Camp Program for Foster Youth Transitioning from High School to College&quot; reports on outcomes from a university “small scale, targeted intervention to help transitioning foster youth achieve” higher education goals. Youth perceived the camp “as enhancing life skills, self-concept, empowerment and sense of purpose.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney at al.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>17–26</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>The longitudinal Midwest study titled Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26 looked at major life outcomes for youth in foster care in early adulthood. The study’s purpose was to provide states with a “comprehensive view of how former foster youth are faring as they transition to adulthood.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 Publication and topical information for quantitative, experimental, and longitudinal studies: transitioning youth in foster care (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnow et al.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>17–23</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>The longitudinal study, titled &quot;Effective Services for Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for Children and Alumni of Foster Care Service: Correlates and Educational and Employment Outcomes,&quot; examined “education and employment outcomes of youth and alumni of foster care” served by transition programs in five U.S. cities. The longer youth were enrolled, “the more education and employment outcomes they achieved.” Also, “job preparation and income support services were associated” with positive outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geenen et al.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>14–17</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>This paper reports on a “longitudinal, randomized clinical trial of the efficacy of TAKE CHARGE, a self-determination enhancement intervention, for promoting the school performance of youth in special education and foster care.” Findings suggest gains “in elements of self-determination, engagement in educational planning, school performance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney et al.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>16–17</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>&quot;Better Futures: A Randomized Field Test of a Model for Supporting Young People in Foster Care with Mental Health Challenges to Participate in Higher Education&quot; presents baseline findings from the longitudinal California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH). “CalYOUTH is an evaluation of the impact of the California Fostering Connections to Success Act on outcomes during the transition to adulthood for foster youth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dworsky, Smithgall, &amp; Courtney</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Up to 18</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>Employing findings from an experimental study, “Supporting Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care, Issue Brief 1: Education Programs,” focuses on the category of programs that aim to improve education outcomes. It explains why these programs are important, suggests a way to think about the types of existing programs, and summarizes’ their effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geenen et al.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>16–18</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>&quot;Better Futures: A Randomized Field Test of a Model for Supporting Young People in Foster Care with Mental Health Challenges to Participate in Higher Education” describes an experimental study whose purpose “was to “conduct a preliminary efficacy evaluation of the Better Futures model, which is focused on improving the PSE preparation and participation of youth in foster care with mental health challenges.” The intervention group participated in a Summer Institute, individual peer coaching, and mentoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, &amp; Eklund</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>13–17</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>This quantitative study, titled &quot;School Climate, Family Structure, and Academic Achievement: A Study of Moderation Effects,&quot; examined “the moderating effects of students’ school climate perceptions on the relationship between family structure” and academic performance. School climate perceptions of youth in foster care had a weaker effect on their grade point average than of students in other family types.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 Publication and topical information for quantitative, experimental, and longitudinal studies: transitioning youth in foster care (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valentine, Skemer, &amp; Courtney</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>18–24</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td><em>Becoming Adults: One-Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation</em> is an experimental evaluation that tested whether a transitional living program made a “difference in the lives of young people with histories of foster care.” Participants received “intensive case management, support, and counseling.” The program “boosted earnings … and economic well-being.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis &amp; Bullock</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5–17</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>In &quot;Youth Residing in Out-of-Home Placements: Examination of Behavior and Academic Achievement,&quot; a survey dataset was analyzed to determine if “relationships existed between participants’ internalizing and externalizing scores on the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)” and scores on assessments of academic achievement and behavior problems. CBCL did not predict achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney &amp; Hook</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>16–18</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>Using data from a longitudinal study of youth in foster care transitioning to adulthood, this study, titled &quot;The Potential Educational Benefits of Extending Foster Care to Young Adults: Findings from A Natural Experiment,&quot; took “advantage of between-state policy variation in the age at which youth are required to leave care to assess the relationship between extended foster care and educational attainment” by age 26.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney &amp; Okpych</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>16, 18 and 19</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“Examining outcomes observed when young people participating in the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH) were nineteen years old, [the authors of &quot;Memo from CalYOUTH: Early Findings on the Relationship Between Extended Foster Care and Youth Outcomes at Age 19&quot;] find evidence that remaining in extended care is associated with a number of benefits for young adults.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney et al.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>16–17 and 21</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>This report, titled <em>Findings from CalYOUTH: Conditions of Youth at Age 21</em>, presents findings from the CalYOUTH Wave 3 Survey, when young adults were 21. “CalYOUTH includes collection and analysis of information from three sources: (1) transition-age youth, (2) child welfare workers, and (3) government program data.” This longitudinal study occurred from 2012 to 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fein &amp; Hamadyk</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>18–24</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>This experimental study, titled <em>Bridging the Opportunity Divide for Low-Income Youth: Implementation and Early Impacts of the Year Up Program</em>, documents the implementation and early impacts of Year Up—a national sectoral training program for urban young adults.” Along with training and “internships at major firms”, the program “provides extensive supports.” Young adults in Year Up had “higher average quarterly earnings” after six quarters.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 Publication and topical information for quantitative, experimental, and longitudinal studies: transitioning youth in foster care (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Font, Berger, Cancian, &amp; Noyes</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>In this paper, titled &quot;Permanency and the Educational and Economic Attainment of Former Foster Children in Early Adulthood,&quot; “youth who aged out of [foster] care had significantly higher odds of graduating high school and enrolling in college than did reunified youth ..., and they had similar odds as adopted youth. Earnings were similar across groups.” Overall, “permanency alone is insufficient to promote foster youth’s educational and economic attainment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovett &amp; Xue</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>17–21</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“Family First or the Kindness of Strangers? Foster Care Placements and Adult Outcomes” is a paper that evaluates &quot;the effects of placing foster children with extended family, rather than unrelated caregivers, using individual-level panel data.” At age 21 “former foster youth that were placed with kin are more likely to be employed or enrolled in formal education, and less likely to participate in public assistance programs, suffer from homelessness, or be incarcerated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year published</td>
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<td>Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palladino</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>This qualitative paper, titled “Don’t Sell Them Dreams Without the Foundations: Collaboration for Transitional Needs of Foster Care Adolescents with Disabilities,” reports on a “multiple case study of seven secondary special education teachers and their attitudes, experiences, and recommendations for collaboration with foster parents of adolescent youth.” Participants reported lacking “full awareness of foster care” and focusing collaboration efforts on youth’s “behavioral and vocational needs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, &amp; McClanahan</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>The authors of “Disconnected Young People in New York City” review “what is known about disconnected young people and youth who are at risk of becoming disconnected” in New York City. They summarize strategies “to reconnect disconnected young people with solid employment and career prospects”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochrane &amp; Szabo-Kubitz</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>16–24</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td><em>Hopes &amp; Hurdles: California Foster Youth and College Financial Aid</em> examines &quot;why former foster youth in California are not receiving the aid they are likely eligible for.&quot; The authors analyzed financial aid and college access and affordability data for foster youth. Findings come from &quot;discussions with experts in the foster care field&quot; and interviews with former foster youth about their higher education experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, &amp; Fogarty</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>15–23</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>“This study [&quot;Maximizing Educational Opportunities for Youth Aging out of Foster Care by Engaging Youth Voices in a Partnership for Social Change&quot;] examines the challenges faced by youth in foster care who are making the transition from high school to college.” Youth in foster care spoke at two panels of policymakers and identified 8 main barriers to high school completion and college access. Findings demonstrate “how the voice of youth in foster care can have an impact” on policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomez, Ryan, Norton, Jones, &amp; Galán-Cisneros</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>18–25</td>
<td>mix</td>
<td>“Using content analytic procedures, this study [&quot;Perceptions of Learned Helplessness Among Emerging Adults Aging Out of Foster Care&quot;] analyzed semi-structured interviews [and] four focus groups” with youth that aged out of foster care. They “reported a perception of learned helplessness”. The study “explores participants’ perceptions of possible contributors” to learned helplessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, &amp; Haggerty</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>18–21</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>As part of development of “postsecondary [(PSE)] access and retention intervention for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood, focus groups were conducted with community stakeholders” to collect recommendations on how to structure the intervention. Focus group themes offered insights into developing feasible interventions for youth and communities. This resource is titled “Professional and Youth Perspectives on Higher Education-Focused Interventions for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.4 Publication and topical information for qualitative and mixed design studies: transitioning youth in foster care (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salazar, Haggerty, &amp; Roe</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>18–21</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>“This paper [“Fostering Higher Education: A Postsecondary Access and Retention Intervention for Youth with Foster Care Experience”] describes the development and youth usability and practitioner feasibility testing of the [Fostering Higher Education (FHE)] intervention approach.” Youth and practitioner feedback were generally positive, with “almost unanimous ratings of the FHE intervention components as very important to provide to youth” and feasible to implement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clemens, Helm, Myers, Thomas, &amp; Tis</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>18–26</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>This qualitative study of 16 young adults considered the “perspective of former foster youth on the graduation gap and their experience in school. Analysis of focus group data revealed one overarching domain, emotional consequences, as well as seven additional domains that related to youth's experiences surrounding their educational attainment.” The study is titled &quot;The Voices of Youth Formerly in Foster Care: Perspectives on Educational Attainment Gaps.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome &amp; Raskin</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>18–21</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>This qualitative, “phenomenological study—conducted in partnership with four public child welfare agencies—examined the lived experience of 19 youth during their first year after exiting foster care. The authors of “Transitioning Out of Foster Care: The First 12 Months” used monthly, contemporaneous interviews to explore domains including housing, employment, education, and relationships with trusted adults.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Baker, &amp; Williams - Devane</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>15–17</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>In the case design study titled &quot;Effects of Customized Counseling Interventions on Career and College Readiness Self-Efficacy of Three Female Foster Care Youth,&quot; a counselor “collaborated with the participants in customizing interventions, delivering the intervention, and collecting the outcome data, with the three participants engaging in self-monitoring” to provide data. “Positive trends occurred” for participants, “although different factor-specific outcome data patterns” occurred.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 4: Methods

Review Process and Search Criteria

The process for identifying and selecting resources consisted of four steps: starting the search; expanding the search; narrowing the focus; and collecting and organizing the data. The search started with several recommended reports. It was expanded through the use of three online search engines. To narrow the search, limits were placed on publication date, resource type, student outcomes, and models recommended in the resource. The data from resources were then collected and summarized. An Excel spreadsheet was developed for CTE educator use in searching and filtering studies for later reference.

Step 1: Starting the Search

At the beginning of the literature review, OCTAE staff and a project subject matter expert in youth in foster care recommended multiple resources to include in the literature review. These experts recommended both classic and current studies that would be informative and useful to CTE educators and transitioning youth in foster care. In addition to recommended studies, eight resources published in 2018 were also recommended. Bibliographies of the eight resources were reviewed for additional relevant citations and available reports were added to the initial list.

Step 2: Expanding the Search

The next step in the literature review was to expand the search for resources through search engines. The first author queried three search engines for book chapters, reports, or articles: Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Sage Publishing website. A member of the Google suite of search engines, Google Scholar accesses scholarly work across many disciplines and sources: articles, books, abstracts, and resources from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities, and other web sites. ERIC is an online library of education research and information, sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. Publishing more than 1,000 journals, from a wide range of disciplines, Sage Publishing provides a source of education journal articles from authors, editors, and societies. During the period of expanding the search, the first author had temporary complimentary access to Sage Publishing journals.

In querying search engines, the following keywords were employed to search for resources:

- youth in foster care
- age out
- vocational education
- career technical education
- employment
Even though “career technical education” was the preferred current phrase, many older resources, particularly before 2010, used the classic “vocational education” phrasing. Therefore, to maximize the number of possible studies, both phrases were used in searching.

**Step 3: Narrowing the Focus**

While hundreds of potential studies were available via search engines, the search was further narrowed. In addition to several classic studies as recommended above, the search was limited between the years of 2008 and 2018 so that resources would be as current as possible. In addition to education resources, studies from related disciplines were included, such as social work, sociology, mental health, disabilities, and law. Except for federal or state agency and nonprofit organization reports, all resources came from peer-reviewed U.S. studies, articles, or books. Because of wide variations in quality, dissertations and theses were excluded unless they were published later in a peer-reviewed journal or article.

Once a resource was identified, two further limits were applied based on a brief review of resource title, abstract, and content. First, student outcomes to be considered, if discussed in the resource, were limited to education and employment outcomes of transitioning youth in foster care. A second focus was on resources that described effective secondary school-to-college or -career models. As of this third step in the review process, 70 studies remained. Once remaining resources were read closely, 14 studies were judged to be off topic, or to not address education or employment outcomes and not offer effective models or useful supports for CTE educators to consider. The final resource count was 56 (see Section 3: Bibliography Section).

**Step 4: Collecting and Organizing the Data**

The fourth and last step in the review process entailed reviewing each of the 56 resources in detail. A citation was created for each resource (see Section 5). Subtopics were identified for use in developing annotated tables of studies (see Section 3) and were added to the spreadsheet. Demographic data, including youth in foster care age, youth in foster care education attainment, and geography (i.e., urban, rural, or mixed), were gleaned from resources and added to the spreadsheet. Education and employment outcomes were listed, by type and percentage as available, for cross-study comparisons. Potential supports for secondary CTE educators, such as programs, models, and recommendations for improvements, were also added. The study’s research design was also noted for use in tables of annotated studies. Challenges that authors reported, either to transitioning youth in foster care or educators directly or in implementing the study itself, were added to the spreadsheet. Lastly, memorable quotations were collected to enhance the narrative of findings (see Section 2).
Section 5: References


Lovett, Nicholas and Xue, Yuhan, 2018. “Family First or the Kindness of Strangers? Foster Care Placements and Adult Outcomes” (August 9, 2018). https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3116459.


Wieland, Lucy, and Jenny L. Nelson. 2014."Aging out of Foster Care: How Extended Foster


Appendix: Federal Policy on Transitioning Youth in Foster Care

Elementary and Secondary Education

*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*

*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, the bill reauthorizing and amending the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)* became law in 2015. *ESSA* now contains key protections for children in foster care that require state and local educational agencies (SEAs and LEAs) to collaborate with child welfare agencies to ensure the education stability of children in foster care.

The following provisions are designed to support school districts and child welfare agencies in their efforts to serve youth in foster care effectively:

**State Educational Agency (SEA) Responsibilities**
- To ensure the education stability of children in foster care, SEA’s must ensure the following:
  - **School of origin:** A child in foster care will enroll or remain in the child’s school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child’s best interest to attend that school.
  - **Immediate enrollment:** If a determination is made that it is not in the child’s best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child will be immediately enrolled in a new school, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.
  - **Records transfer:** When a foster youth must change schools, the enrolling school must immediately contact the previous school to obtain academic and other records.
  - **State-level point of contact:** State education agencies (SEA’s) are required to designate a point of contact for child welfare agencies.
  - **Data disaggregation:** States must provide disaggregated data on foster youth. Annual state report cards must contain information on student achievement for foster youth. The report cards must also contain information on high school graduation rates for foster youth.

**Local Educational Agency (LEA) Responsibilities**
- To ensure the education stability of children in foster care, LEA’s must ensure the following:
  - **Local-level point of contact:** Designate a point of contact (POC) if the corresponding child welfare agency notifies the LEA in writing that it has designated an employee to serve as a POC for the LEA.
  - **Transportation:** Collaborate with state or local child welfare agencies to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how
    - transportation to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin, when in their best interest, will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the time in foster care.

Educator resources related to the new provisions of *ESSA* and other resources for educators working with foster youth are available from the U.S. Department of Education.46

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46 Educator resources can be found at: [https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/foster-care/index.html](https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/foster-care/index.html)
Career and Technical Education


*Perkins V,* passed in late 2018, updates and expands the definition of special populations to include youth in foster care and who have aged out of the system. *Perkins V* takes effect in July 2019.

The purpose of *Perkins V* is to “develop more fully the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of secondary education students and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs and programs of study,” by “increasing the employment opportunities for populations who are chronically unemployed or underemployed, including ... youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system.”

**Postsecondary**

*John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program Educational and Training Vouchers* The Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program for Youth Aging out of Foster Care was added to the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) in 2002 (see Sec. 477(i) of the Social Security Act). ETV provides resources specifically to meet the education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care. In addition to the existing authorization of $140 million for the CFCIP program, the law authorizes $60 million for payments to states and tribes for postsecondary education and training vouchers for youth likely to experience difficulty as they transition to adulthood after the age of 18. This program makes available vouchers of up to $5,000 per year per transitioning youth for postsecondary education and training for eligible youth. Award amounts are based on the availability of funds and the cost of attendance not covered by other sources of financial aid.

**Federal Student Financial Aid**

Students who were in foster care after the age of 13 are eligible for independent student status for purposes of federal student financial aid. The dependency status designation is helpful in that it does not require the student to include financial information from their parents/guardians. Potentially, students may be eligible for more grant aid and could reduce the reliance on student loans and the burden of financial reporting requirements.

**Housing, Health Care, and Other Transition Supports**

The federal government and many states also offer a variety of additional supports including housing. The CFCIP, in addition to the ETV, provides independent living services to assist youth transitioning out of the foster care system. Each state’s child welfare agency can provide information on what supports are available. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families’ Child Welfare Information Gateway provides a wealth of information.47

47 Child Welfare Information Gateway can be found at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/).
The U.S. Department of Education’s mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.