

# Foster Youth Strategic Initiative: 2019 Snapshot

## Cross-system coordination: Accomplishments and next steps

Foster youth interact with multiple public agencies along their path to self-sufficiency. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Foster Youth Strategic Initiative funds efforts to strengthen cross-system coordination, data collection and integration, and the use of data and research to drive decision-making.

### Coordinated service delivery across systems

Grantees play a central role in building relationships across public agencies in LA and NYC. Key areas of development in 2019 include:

- **Expanding services with new public funding.** The successful **Fair Futures** advocacy campaign leverages public funds to expand foster youth access to innovative programs supported by the Initiative in **NYC**. Several additional grantees leveraged new public funding, including **Friends of the Children**, **Children's Law Center**, **iFoster**, and **First Star**.
- **Formalizing new interagency agreements.** **LA** education and child welfare stakeholders concluded their 3-year pilot school stability transportation program, culminating in a long-term transportation plan and cost-sharing agreement between the child welfare agency and individual school districts. The **NYC** Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's **Adolescent Health Unit** continues to establish agreements with provider agencies to identify and connect foster youth with school-based reproductive health services.
- **Convening cross-agency partners.** Cross-agency working groups, such as the education and postsecondary workgroups co-facilitated by the **Juvenile Law Center** and the child welfare agency in **NYC**, and convenings such as those co-sponsored by the **OYC** and public and private partners in **LA**, provide important opportunities for public agency staff to build and strengthen relationships.

#### Spotlight: Grantees broker public partnerships to connect foster youth with workforce services

The **Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC)** facilitated new agreements between **LA's** child welfare, workforce, education, and probation agencies to standardize a job readiness curriculum and establish on-the-job work experience goals for foster youth and a more coordinated service delivery system.

New findings from the **University of Chicago's** CaYOUTH study underscore the importance of strong relationships and coordinated service delivery: the researchers found that when caseworkers were more satisfied with their level of collaboration with the K-12 education system, foster youth were more likely to complete high school or equivalency by age 19.<sup>1</sup>

In 2020, the Initiative and grantees will be engaged in the **LA** child welfare agency's "Invest LA" collaborative strategic planning initiative. **LA** stakeholders will continue to build a coordinated TAY hub that will centralize the multitude of countywide resources and supports available to foster youth. **NYC's** Interagency Foster Care Task Force will continue to monitor implementation of its recommendations, including several related directly to older foster youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Courtney, M. E., Park, S., Harty, J., & Huiling, F. (2019). *Relationships between youth and caseworker perceptions of the service context and foster youth outcomes*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

## Data collection and integration

**New publicly available data** were produced in California and LA this year, including the college enrollment rates within 12 months of high school graduation; foster youth participation in workforce services; and number of parenting foster youth.

Expanded data are expected in 2020 through a new web-based data platform being developed for **Fair Futures** coaches to track service receipt and outcome data on foster youth in **NYC** and forthcoming analyses from the **Children's Data Network** and Cal State LA on crossover youth. Grantees in LA and NYC are also paving the way for ongoing **data integration**. In **California**, the **Children's Data Network** is expanding data linkages across departments in the California Health and Human Services Agency, including child welfare and now birth record data, which will allow for analysis of birth record data for parenting foster youth.

Grantees and stakeholders identified opportunities to strengthen several **data sharing agreements and platforms** that facilitate information-sharing between public agencies in LA and NYC. In **LA**, the Education Passport System facilitates data sharing between the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and workforce agencies; however, while school districts are actively sharing information, child welfare is not fully utilizing the system as intended. Stakeholders are working to increase the uptake and use of this tool through caseworker trainings. In another example, the Cal-PASS Plus data system in **California** integrates education and postsecondary data for participating schools; however, it relies on youth's self-reported foster care status and would provide more comprehensive information if it also incorporated child welfare data. In **NYC**, privacy protections embedded in laws and regulations continue to restrict some service providers from obtaining information on foster youth who are eligible for their services, inhibiting recruitment efforts. Additionally, stakeholders expressed the need for more frequent data sharing between education and child welfare to address youths' more immediate educational needs (e.g., attendance and grades). **Advocates for Children** is working closely with education stakeholders to address this issue, by exploring opportunities for provider agencies to gain access to real-time student data.

### Spotlight: Data integration in NYC will answer key questions on foster youth outcomes

In **NYC**, the **Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI)**, part of the NYC Mayor's Office, is linking data across child welfare, education, and employment systems to answer key questions about the experiences and outcomes of foster youth on their path to self-sufficiency. For example, **CIDI** will generate high school graduation rates using a methodology similar to that used in California to report the on-time graduation rate for students who spent time in foster care between grades 9 and 12. **CIDI** will explore other aspects of education and employment, including attendance and grade promotion, and the relationship between youth outcomes and foster care experiences such as length of stay and placement stability.

## Research and data-informed decision-making

The Initiative's grantees are **generating new knowledge**. In addition to ongoing work by the **Children's Data Network**, **California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)**, and **University of Chicago's** CalYOUTH team, the Initiative invested in a new research project at **Cornell University** that will assess the well-being of foster youth in New York on a weekly basis and deliver technology-based interventions. This first of its kind longitudinal well-being data will shed light on foster youth experiences and needs leading up to and immediately after their exit from care.

Grantees **serve as trusted partners** to stakeholders and service providers to strengthen their data-driven decision-making. For example, the **CCWIP** and **Children's Data Network** have both participated in workgroups led by the child welfare agency and the Office of Child Protection focused on permanency for foster youth and provided data that informed these efforts. Service providers in **California**, including **First Place for Youth**, are partnering with researchers from the **University of Chicago's** CalYOUTH study to explore opportunities to receive aggregate data on youth education and employment outcomes to strengthen service delivery and inform advocacy efforts.