

Foster Youth Strategic Initiative: 2019 Snapshot

Employment: Accomplishments and next steps

Having stable employment that supports a healthy standard of living is critically important for all youth transitioning to adulthood. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Foster Youth Strategic Initiative supports workforce preparation for and employer engagement with foster youth.

Stakeholders in LA are reporting new data on the number of foster youth served with public workforce services.

Of the over 1,000 current and former foster youth enrolled in public workforce services:¹



65 percent completed 20 hours of training.



26 percent completed 100 or more hours of services.

NYC continues to share employment data from its Youth Experience Survey.

Foster youth report that they are not employed at the rates they would like to be. Among foster youth who reported they were employed or would like to be employed in 2019:²



44 percent of 18-to-20-year-old youth had a job or paid internship



23 percent of 16-to-17-year old youth had a job or paid internship

Targeted workforce preparation for foster youth

Historic **system reforms** were achieved in LA this year. The **Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC)** encouraged public agency partners to establish shared workforce readiness goals for all youth with foster care and/or juvenile justice involvement, including:

- 100 hours of work experience by age 16;
- 300 hours of work experience by age 18; and
- Graduation from high school, permanent housing, and connection to postsecondary education and/or unsubsidized employment at a living wage by age 21.

¹ Service hours are recorded when a youth exits services, thus foster youth who are still participating in services are not counted in the total who completed 100+ hours of services. Data are not available on youth served through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Additionally, data are not available on the reason why youth exit services. Source: Los Angeles County Department of Workforce, Development, Aging, and Community Services. (2019). *Data Report*. Opportunity Youth Collaborative, email correspondence (August 31, 2019).

² On the Administration for Children's Services Youth Experience Survey. New York City Administration for Children's Services. (2019). *Youth Experience Survey 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2019/FY19YouthExperienceSurveyFINAL51519BB.pdf>

The **OYC** also supported the implementation of a universal referral form used by child welfare caseworkers to streamline referrals of foster youth to workforce development services. Looking ahead, **LA** grantees will continue to work with public agency leaders as they implement these agreements and report data. There may also be opportunities for cross-jurisdiction learning, as **NYC** grantees point to fragmented workforce development services and the need for greater coordination between the child welfare and workforce agencies.

Grantees continue to provide **programmatic supports** to help youth in foster care. In **NYC**, **The Door** provides a continuum of employment supports including work readiness training and retention support once foster youth are employed. **NYC's** child welfare agency continues to partner with Columbia University to train foster care agencies (including grantees such as **Graham Windham** and **HeartShare St. Vincent's Services**) to implement the Young Adult Work Opportunities for Rewarding Careers curriculum, which provides career readiness training and peer-to-peer learning to over 200 youth in foster care.³ **LA** has also expanded access to skill-development training, with widespread adoption of the TAY Collaborative's trauma-informed TAY World of Work curriculum across public agencies and community-based organizations, under the leadership of **OYC**.

Employer engagement with foster youth

In **LA** and **NYC**, grantees support employer engagement with youth in care through **programmatic supports**. For example, **iFoster's** Jobs Program provides resources and career laddering into private employment opportunities and intensive case management to support foster youth employment.

In **NYC**, **The Door** added a Foster Care Job Specialist to its staff to ensure youth receive individualized support to connect to internship and employment opportunities. Multiple grantees also provide this type of support, and access to employment supports will be expanded through **Fair Futures'** individualized career coaching and connection to resources. Outside of grantee programs, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development revamped its workforce development programming based on an evaluation that showed its foster youth-specific internship program was ineffective long-term. It will be important to monitor foster youth engagement in the new program, which targets a range of populations deemed difficult to serve, as concerns have been raised that foster youth in NYC are not accessing and completing public agency workforce programs.

Spotlight: TAY Americorps program launches in LA

This nationally recognized program, launched by **iFoster** in partnership with the child welfare and workforce development agencies, places current or former foster youth, or "TAY Ambassadors," at workforce agencies, other county agencies, and college support programs to serve as peer navigators.

³ New York City Administration for Children's Services. (2019). *Youth Experience Survey 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2019/FY19YouthExperienceSurveyFINAL51519BB.pdf>.