

September 2008

SERVICES FOR YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE: PRELIMINARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Fiscal Year 2009 supplemental budget included a proviso for the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to:

- conduct a national review of state programs for youth transitioning out of foster care; and
- survey foster youth and foster parents about how well current services are meeting the needs of youth aging out of foster care.

The full proviso language is provided in the sidebar.

In this preliminary report, we describe the activities the Institute is undertaking to meet this request. We will present results in the final report to be completed by December 31, 2008.

NATIONAL REVIEW OF STATE PROGRAMS

The national survey of state programs will be conducted in September and October. A draft survey has been piloted with seven states; a copy is available upon request from the Institute. The Institute is contracting with the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago to conduct this survey.

SURVEYS OF THE SERVICES AND NEEDS OF YOUTH TRANSITIONING FROM FOSTER CARE

Foster Parent Survey

In May and June of 2008 the second annual foster parent survey was conducted for the Braam Oversight Panel. The Panel agreed to include additional questions in the survey to meet this legislative request. Foster parents who had cared for a foster youth 17 years old or older in 2007 were asked the following questions:

- ***How prepared is this youth to live on his or her own?***
- ***Is there any particular challenge that you think this youth will face living on his or her own?***
- ***Is there any specific service that you feel would really help foster care youth live on their own after they turn 18?***

Almost 200 foster parents indicated that they had cared for at least one youth 17 years old or older in 2007. Their responses are being analyzed and will be presented in the December report.

Study Direction

\$19,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2009 is provided solely for the Washington state institute for public policy (WSIPP) to (a) conduct a national review of state programs for youth transitioning out of foster care and analyze state policies on eligibility requirements for continued foster care, age thresholds for transition services, types of services provided, and use of state funds to supplement federal moneys; and (b) survey foster youth and foster parents in Washington regarding how well current services are meeting the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care to independence.

The institute shall issue a preliminary report by September 1, 2008, with a final report by December 31, 2008.

HB 2687, Sec. 610 (12), laws of 2008

Foster Youth Survey

The Institute is collecting information from foster youth using two different surveys. The results from these surveys will be included in the December report:

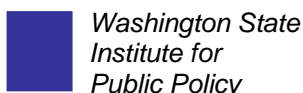
- At the request of the legislature, the Institute is evaluating the Foster Care to 21 program, which allows up to 50 youth per year to remain in foster care while they are pursuing postsecondary education or training. As part of the evaluation, the Institute is surveying youth who aged out of foster care in the year prior to June 1, 2007, or who were 18 years old or older and in care on June 1, 2007. The survey began in spring 2008 and efforts to contact youth are ongoing. The survey asks questions similar to those in the foster parent survey:
 - ***How prepared do you feel to live on your own?***
 - ***Is there any particular challenge that you have faced in living on your own?***
 - ***Is there any specific service that you feel would really help foster care youth live on their own after they turn 18?***
- This fall, the Institute will conduct a survey of foster youth served by Independent Living or Transitional Living programs in the past year. The Independent Living program provides services to foster youth ages 15 to 17 years old to help them prepare for independent living; the Transitional Living program serves foster youth who are 18 to 20. The survey will provide information on the types of services that foster youth receive from the Independent Living and Transitional Living programs and other sources to help them prepare for independent living.

CURRENT SERVICES PROVIDED BY INDEPENDENT LIVING PROVIDERS

To obtain information on services provided by the Independent Living and Transitional Living programs, the Institute is reviewing the quarterly and annual reports filed by the programs on the numbers of youth referred and enrolled, the characteristics of enrolled youth, and the types of services provided. The Institute is also conducting a survey with Independent Living and Transitional Living providers to supplement the data available in the annual and quarterly reports. The December 2008 report will include results from this review of Independent Living and Transitional Living services by location across the state.

For further information, please contact Laura Schrager at (360) 586-2792 or schragerl@wsipp.wa.gov.

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The Washington State Legislature created the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in 1983. A Board of Directors—representing the legislature, the governor, and public universities—governs the Institute and guides the development of all activities. The Institute's mission is to carry out practical research, at legislative direction, on issues of importance to Washington State.