

Y.O.U.T.H. (Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help) Training Project

In Iowa, child welfare policy mandates that on the night of a foster youth's 18th birthday, a car arrives to drive the birthday boy/girl to a homeless shelter for adults. Happy birthday.

This same thing happens to some foster youth in California.

In California, there are more than 90,000 youth in foster care, about one fifth of the foster youth in the nation. Each year, between 2,300-4,000 foster youth emancipate from care in California and sadly, research predicts grim outcomes for many of these youth. Studies across the nation are reporting that a large percentage of emancipating foster youth become homeless, incarcerated, impregnate someone or get pregnant, don't finish high school, are unemployed, etc. In short, we know we need to do better to support transition aged foster youth to make successful transitions into adulthood.

In October of 2000, the Bay Area Academy (BAA) received a three-year federal grant to develop a curriculum and deliver training to enable social workers to better serve the needs of transitioning youth. BAA partnered with California Youth Connection (CYC) and empowered six foster youth to develop a curriculum entitled *Youth Development, Empowerment and Super Strategies for Supporting Transition Aged Youth*. In 2002 - 2003, ten current and former foster youth trained more than 445 child welfare workers in this curriculum.

With support from the Stuart Foundation, in 2004 we updated our curriculum and included elements of the California Re-Design and Performance Improvement Plan. The California Permanency for Youth Project provided further assistance and we developed a module on permanency. In late September 2004, we were happy to receive two years of full funding from the Stuart Foundation and Walter S. Johnson Foundation. In October 2005 we were awarded one of six federal grants to develop curriculum for child welfare supervisors in California, Hawaii, Guam and Samoa.

To date we have trained more than 2,000 child welfare workers throughout California, Hawaii and the greater United States. Utilizing our "practice what you teach" philosophy, the project continues to educate and build the capacity of current and former foster youth to join with members of the child welfare system to create a better support system for youth in California.

***If you have any further questions about the project, the work of BAA or CYC,
Please contact Project Director, Jamie Lee Evans at 510/419-3607.***