



RESEARCH REPORT

How Employment Programs Can Support Young People Transitioning Out of Foster Care

Formative Evaluation Findings of Two Employment Programs

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Overview

Introduction

Learning how to succeed in the world of work during the transition to adulthood is a universal need, and young people aging out of foster care are no exception. But research consistently finds that compared with other young people, those aging out of foster care have less stable employment, work fewer hours and earn lower wages as they enter adulthood (Courtney et al. 2001; Hook and Courtney 2011; Dworsky 2005; Goerge et al. 2002), while often having greater demands to support themselves financially (Berzin et. al 2011; Dworsky, Napolitano, and Courtney 2013; Havlicek, Garcia, and Smith 2013; Keller et al. 2010; Pecora et al. 2003; Dworsky and Gitlow 2017). This report examines two employment programs that focus explicitly on young people transitioning to adulthood from foster care and purposefully address this population’s unique experiences and needs.

Do such programs improve employment and financial prospects for young people aging out of foster care? Unfortunately, the evidence is limited, often because programs are small and may not be designed or implemented in a way conducive to rigorous evaluation. Our study examined two such programs through formative evaluation, shedding light on key features of these programs and the young people they serve. Our study highlights the important role of formative evaluation in laying the groundwork for successful future rigorous impact evaluation.

Primary Research Questions

The key research questions for the formative evaluations of iFoster Jobs in Los Angeles County, California, and Mentoring Youth to Inspire Meaningful Employment (MY TIME) in Chicago, Illinois, were the following:

- How do these programs operate, and do they operate with fidelity to their logic models?
- Whom do the programs serve, and do they achieve their program goals? What are some successes and challenges?
- Do these programs have the potential for rigorous evaluation in the future?

Purpose

To date, little is known about how employment programs for young people with histories of foster care operate and whether they are effective in promoting positive employment outcomes. A key finding from the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs is that many programs serving Chafee-eligible young people are not ready for rigorous evaluation because they lack a clearly articulated logic model or are not implemented as intended (Courtney et al. 2014). This study fills a knowledge gap using formative evaluation to illustrate what is needed for programs to be ready for successful rigorous impact evaluation. The purpose of formative evaluation is to examine whether programs are being implemented as intended, expected outputs are being produced, and short-term outcomes are trending in the right direction; and to provide feedback to programs about program functioning and data-collection needs.

This series of formative evaluation activities explores how the employment programs iFoster Jobs and MY TIME are being implemented, who is served by each program, and whether participants seem to be reaching their employment-related goals. We also explore how each program's goals relate to the young people they serve and their programmatic approaches. Comparing the two program's goals, populations served, and programmatic approaches provides additional insights into the variation in employment programs for young people transitioning out of foster care.

Key Findings and Highlights

We found that both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME are generally operating in alignment with the logic models developed through the formative evaluation process, although a few inputs and activities need to be more fully realized in practice. In addition, we found that both programs are preparing their participants for employment and helping them connect to work. Forty percent of iFoster Job participants in our sample got a job, and 58 percent of our MY TIME analytic sample got a job at least once during their participation in the program. However, without a comparison group, these findings don't show to what extent these outcomes differ from what the young people would have achieved without the programs' services. Additional refinement of data-collection activities, including participant characteristics, program participation, and longer-term employment outcomes, are needed before a rigorous impact evaluation could be conducted. In addition, both programs operate in contexts saturated with other employment programs that serve this population, making it difficult to tease out whether the outcomes observed are a result of participation in the program.

Even though both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME serve young people transitioning out of foster care, the programs serve young people in different circumstances. Participants in iFoster Jobs are generally older, can be currently or formerly in foster care, and have higher levels of education than those participating in MY TIME, who must still be in the child welfare system at the time of program participation. In addition, each program uses different implementation approaches despite many training components of these programs being similar—job search, applications, résumé writing, and communication and conflict-resolution skills. iFoster Jobs training focuses on facilitated peer groups to practice work scenarios and uses community partners to provide additional supports. MY TIME training focuses on facilitating individual and group reflections on what it means to become someone who works. MY TIME staff use every interaction with participants to build a trusting relationship and engage with the young person’s social network to facilitate connections to additional supports.

The employment goals for each program are also different. iFoster Jobs serves as a gatekeeper that introduces participants they have assessed as ready for competitive work to interviews for existing open positions with corporate employer partners. Often, these jobs serve as launching pads into industries with the potential for growth. MY TIME develops mentoring relationships with its participants and uses early-employment experiences, even if they are not pathways to long-term careers, to help participants develop the skills and resilience that will serve them well in future employment. Our formative evaluations of iFoster Jobs and MY TIME illustrate not only the key components and successes of employment programs for young people transitioning out of foster care, but they also highlight that different approaches are appropriate for different populations of young people.

Methods

We began our inquiries with initial telephone calls to program leadership and then visited each program where we conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with program staff, participants, and other stakeholders including local child welfare agency leadership and employer partners. We also observed numerous program activities and informal interactions among young people and between program participants and staff.

We also used program data to analyze participant characteristics, program participation, and employment outcomes. In the case of MY TIME, we conducted content analysis of staff notes regarding

interactions with participants to explore the ways in which program staff provided a range of supports to participants. In addition, we also conducted comparative analysis across the programs to explore how and why each program's approach may work well for each program's participants and in the context of each program's goals.

Recommendations

Planning for the alignment between the program model, the population served, and the local context is essential to program success. It is important to clearly articulate how program components are expected to address the developmental needs of the specific population served and to develop a logic model that accurately represents the program's focus population, program components, and approach to employer engagement. Then, it is essential that programs capture the types of data that define their focus population, youth participation in program components, and employer-engagement activities.

Our formative evaluations also highlighted some common barriers to finding and maintaining employment for young people with foster care histories. These challenges can result in young people cycling through components of employment programs without becoming stably employed during program participation. Employment programs need to be aware of these barriers and identify ways of addressing them, including by partnering with local resource providers to serve young people in their program.

Programs, on their own or in partnership with local resource providers, can

- provide access to concrete resources such as transportation and cell phones or laptops;
- provide access to legal resources;
- ensure young people know when and how to communicate their challenges to an employer;
- maintain communications with the child welfare system for young people currently in care and community organizations for those who have left care to support participants in maintaining housing; and
- prepare their participants for how to handle emotionally triggering or unfamiliar situations in the workplace.

How Employment Programs Can Support Young People Transitioning Out of Foster Care

Obtaining and maintaining employment is crucial to a successful transition to adulthood. This can be especially true for young people aging out of foster care. In addition to building skills that support relational capacity and providing an opportunity to engage in activities that promote self-confidence, employment offers an immediate solution to the urgent economic demands that young adults face as they age out of the child welfare system. At the same time, the employment outcomes of young people aging out of foster care are, on average, poorer than those of their peers who have not been in foster care (Courtney et al. 2001, 2011; Stewart et al. 2014; Courtney, Dworsky, et al. 2011; Macomber et al. 2008; Pecora et al. 2006)

Recognizing the need to support young people in foster care transitioning to adulthood, federal child welfare policy has increasingly focused on availability of transition supports (box 1). In 2008, a provision in the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act gave states an option to extend eligibility for Title IV-E foster care for young people ages 18 to 21. In states that chose to extend care to age 21,¹ employment is one of the eligibility criteria for young people to remain in care after age 18:² by working at least 80 hours a month or participating in a program that prepares them for employment. As such, programs for young people in foster care that prepare them for employment, provide employment experiences, or connect young people to employment opportunities can serve an important function by helping them stay in care in participating states. Even for young people who have already left foster care, these programs can provide support and skill-building that enable these young people to work toward self-sufficiency and stability in adulthood.

BOX 1

The Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood

Young people transitioning out of foster care and into adulthood need many supports to navigate the challenges they face. Over the past three decades, federal child welfare policy has significantly increased the availability of those supports. In 1999, the Foster Care Independence Act amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to create the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (the Chafee program), the primary source of federal funding for services to support young people in foster care

during their transition to adulthood. The Family First Prevention Services Act renamed the program in 2018; it is now the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.

The Foster Care Independence Act requires that a small percentage of Chafee program funding be used to rigorously evaluate independent living programs that are “innovative or of potential national significance.” In 2003, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) contracted the Urban Institute and its partners, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the National Opinion Research Center, to conduct the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs.^a Of the four programs evaluated using a randomized controlled design, only one had a statistically significant effect on youth outcomes.

Two decades after the Chafee program was created, we still know little about which programs for young people transitioning out of foster care are effective and which program components are essential to their effectiveness. To continue building an evidence base for programs that serve young people transitioning out of foster care and into adulthood, ACF contracted the Urban Institute and its partner Chapin Hall to carry out formative evaluation activities that could lead to future rigorous evaluations. This report presents findings from our formative evaluation of two employment programs serving young people transitioning out of care.

^a OPRE (Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation), ACF (Administration for Children and Families), HHS (US Department of Health and Human Services), “Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs (Chafee Independent Living Evaluation Project) 2001–2010,” (Washington, DC: HHS, ACF, OPRE, 2010), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/multi-site-evaluation-of-foster-youth-programs-chafee-independent-living>.

Building an Evidence Base on Employment Programs

Although many young people in foster care receive employment supports such as job search information, résumé development, and career counseling through an independent living program, more programs focused on employment that serve young people with histories of child welfare involvement have emerged over the past decade. Young people with histories of child welfare involvement are similar to their noninvolved peers in many ways; however, many often face additional barriers to successful early employment experiences and longer-term positive employment outcomes. These barriers include structural disadvantages characteristic of the historically underresourced neighborhoods many young people in foster care are from; a history of trauma and disrupted relationships; high rates of mental health conditions and substance use (Havlicek, Garcia, and Smith 2013; Keller, Salazar, and Courtney 2010; Pecora et al. 2003); high rates of housing instability and homelessness (Berzin et. al 2011; Dworsky, Napolitano, and Courtney 2013); and high rates of early parenthood (Dworsky and Gitlow 2017), which can be barriers in the absence of affordable and reliable child care.

In addition, young people with histories of foster care may not benefit from the familial and other relationships that provide ongoing access to and guidance about the world of work. This social network is a key source of information about employment pathways and access to employment opportunities. In addition, supportive adult relationships provide support for skill development, especially interpersonal skills that are valued and necessary for success in the labor market. This helps young people learn not only how to succeed at work, but also how to deal with inevitable on-the-job mistakes as learning experiences. Finally, many young people transitioning out of foster care face a different level of urgency to find employment that provides a living wage. Without family to provide a cushion of support and resources during this period, these young people must balance immediate financial needs with longer-term employment goals.

Despite a greater need for stable employment, research has shown that young people aging out of foster care have less stable employment, work fewer hours, and earn lower wages than their peers in the general population (Courtney et al. 2001; Hook and Courtney 2011; Dworsky 2005; Goerge et al. 2002). In fact, these differences continue into early adulthood (Stewart et al. 2014; Courtney et al. 2011; Macomber et al. 2008; Pecora et al. 2006). A longitudinal study (Stewart et al. 2014; Macomber et al. 2008) shows that in California, Minnesota, and North Carolina, young people who aged out of foster care still had worse employment outcomes at age 24 compared with low-income and national samples. For young people aging out of care in North Carolina, the discrepancy continued to age 30. This study also found that employment outcomes at age 24 are better for young people who have had work experience before age 18 and that longer stays in care are associated with better employment outcomes in two of the three states.

Studies have shown that most young people in foster care access employment-related programs and services. Sixty-three percent of 17- and 18-year-olds in care in Illinois reported receiving at least one employment support (Dworsky and Havlicek 2010), 73 percent of 17-year-olds in care in California reported receiving at least some employment services or training (Courtney et al. 2014), and 84 percent of young adults in the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study reported having access to employment training or job location services while in care (Pecora et al. 2006). However, studies also show that access to employment services drop after young people leave care. Forty-three percent of young people in Illinois reported receiving employment supports at age 19, and 30 percent reported receiving employment supports at age 21 (Dworsky and Havlicek 2010). In another study, less than 20 percent of young people formerly in foster care reported receiving employment services through the Workforce Investment Act within three years after they exited care (Singer 2006).

Identifying employment programs that effectively serve this population is imperative if we want to help young people with foster care histories live successful, stable, and satisfying adult lives.

Formative Evaluation of Programs Focused on Employment for Young People Aging Out of Foster Care

Employment programs for young people in foster care generally aim to help them acquire and practice the soft skills needed to succeed in early work experiences, prepare a résumé, practice interviewing for work, and seek employment. This is accomplished largely through short-term training and support during the job search. Some programs continue providing guidance and support, as well as concrete resources such as transportation or cell phones, for a period while young people are employed.

BOX 2

Formative Evaluation

The purpose of formative evaluation is to provide feedback to programs about program functioning. They examine whether programs are being implemented as intended, whether expected outputs are being produced, and whether short-term outcomes are trending in the right direction. Our formative evaluation of employment programs addressed four main questions:

- Does the program have a coherent logic model?
- Is the program being implemented with fidelity to its logic model?
- Does the program have data to measure the services it provides and its intended outcomes?
- Is it likely that an impact evaluation would be able to detect impacts under present conditions?

To date, little is known about how employment programs for young people with histories of foster care operate and whether they are effective in promoting positive employment outcomes for their participants. A key finding from the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs is that many programs that serve Chafee-eligible young people are not ready for rigorous evaluation because they lack a clearly articulated logic model or are not implemented as intended. Formative evaluation is designed to help programs address these challenges (box 2).

The goals of our formative evaluation activities were to learn more about the implementation of two employment programs, examine whether these programs function as intended, and assess whether these programs potentially could be rigorously evaluated in the future.

In this report, we present findings from our formative evaluations, providing descriptions of each program; comparing how each program’s model would be expected to relate to the implementation of program components, participant characteristics, and employment outcomes; and analyzing program data on employment outcomes. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for how to think about the relationships between program goals, participant characteristics, and components of employment programs for this youth population.

Methodology

To identify the programs that would be the focus of our formative evaluation activities, we searched the internet for information about employment programs that serve young people in foster care. This yielded basic information about 68 programs, including some that do not solely focus on young people in foster care and some that do not focus exclusively on employment but have an employment component. We conducted telephone interviews with representatives from 14 programs that seemed to focus on young people in foster care and exclusively on employment. Those interviewed provided additional information about the size, duration, and intensity of each program, the population served, the program’s capacity for data collection, and the employment opportunities young people would have access to. Finally, we conducted information-gathering site visits to four programs to deepen our knowledge about each program from the perspectives of program leadership, staff, employers, and community or child welfare system partners. Based on the information we gathered and the aim of identifying programs that would be potential candidates for future rigorous evaluation, we selected two for formative evaluation: **iFoster Jobs** in Los Angeles and Riverside Counties, California,³ and **Mentoring Youth to Inspire Meaningful Employment (MY TIME)** in Chicago, Illinois.

After telephone interviews with our selected programs’ leadership, we then conducted site visits where we interviewed each employment program’s leadership and frontline staff over the phone; then interviewed program partners and participants.⁴ Based on those interviews, and in consultation with program leadership, we developed logic models for each program. Developing these models helped the programs better represent what leadership and staff considered the key components of each program and would allow us to explore “what” is working “for whom” if we were to conduct a rigorous evaluation. Second, we used data collected by each program to analyze the characteristics of each program’s

participants, participation in program activities, and program and employment outcomes. Additional information about data and methods is provided in the appendix.

Findings

We present our findings in three main sections. First, we describe each program including information about their program history, context, staff, participants, and components. This information was collected through interviews and focus groups with stakeholders of each program. Next, using the program descriptions, we compare how each program’s model would be expected to relate to the implementation of program components, participant characteristics, and employment outcomes. Finally, we analyze program data to explore whether each program appears to be reaching its employment outcomes for their intended participants.

These findings are followed by our assessment of each program’s readiness for rigorous impact evaluation. We conclude this report with broader considerations for the field drawn from our formative evaluations.

Program Descriptions

IFOSTER JOBS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Recognizing the need for young people with histories of foster care to find and succeed in employment, iFoster Jobs is a program within iFoster, a support and advocacy organization for young people with histories of or who are currently in foster care. iFoster Jobs began with a single employer in the grocery industry in Placer County, California, in 2014, an industry they see as providing a particularly good employment pathway because it includes benefits and opportunities for growth. Rather than appealing to the employer’s desire to help young people with foster care histories, the founder made the economic case that these young people, if appropriately trained and screened, could address the employer’s needs to fill open positions and respond to high employee turnover by connecting them to potential employees motivated and prepared to succeed at work. Since its inception, iFoster Jobs has developed relationships with dozens of additional employer partners in the grocery industry and beyond. In addition, iFoster Jobs has developed partnerships with community organizations to provide iFoster Jobs training and provide additional supports to young people in different Los Angeles and other California locations over the years.

iFoster Jobs sees its role as providing important services to both young people with histories of foster care and employers by connecting young people to work opportunities for which they are prepared to succeed. iFoster Jobs staff work with high-level human resources executives at their employer partners to ensure that young people trained by iFoster Jobs are prioritized for an interview if they submit a successful application for an open position. In return, iFoster Jobs trains young people on customer service and communication skills, provides them with interview clothes and haircuts at an event called Boutique Day, and screens young people for basic math skills, language abilities, and customer service skills at an event called Assessment Day. Cohorts—groups of young people going through the program at the same time—are organized based on iFoster Jobs’s and their community partners’ training and Assessment Day schedules and locations. Young people who have already gone through training and Assessment Day and are coming back to iFoster Jobs to look for different employment or who have worked within the past year and can provide a reference are allowed to go straight to Assessment Day without training. Young people assessed as not yet ready for competitive work are referred to supportive internship opportunities provided by community and local government partners. iFoster Jobs staff check in with young people after they are hired to support employment success. Figure 1 illustrates the key components of iFoster Jobs’s program pathway.

FIGURE 1
iFoster Jobs’s Program Pathway

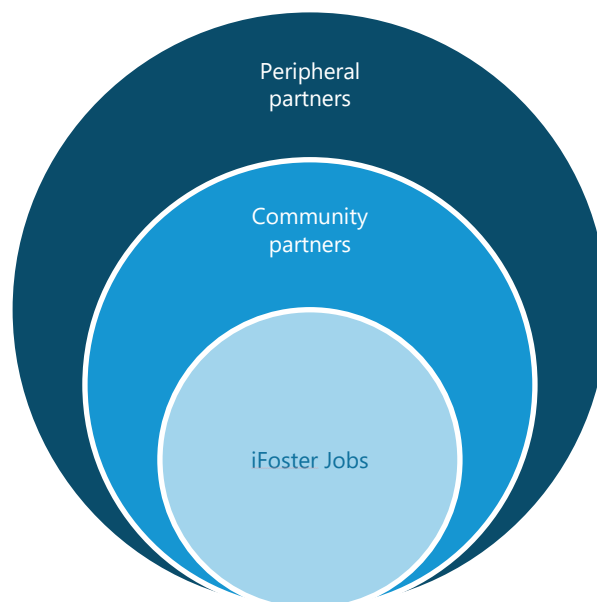


Source: Urban Institute iFoster Jobs site visits.

iFoster Jobs has expanded to Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Sacramento Counties in California and to New York City. In each location, iFoster Jobs partners with local human service organizations and/or the local child welfare agency to provide referrals, implement the iFoster Jobs’s training curriculum, and offer other supports.⁵ These “collaborative partners” also provide information about the local employment landscape and help connect iFoster Jobs to local employers.⁶ “Peripheral partners” are the region’s employers, additional participant referral sources such as independent living programs, and community resources. These community resources include community-based organizations that implement an iFoster Jobs–approved training curriculum or provide services to iFoster Jobs participants, from haircuts to legal services. iFoster Jobs also relies on collaborative and peripheral partners to address participants’ barriers to work, such as support with legal and mental health issues (figure 2). iFoster Jobs participants are required to have identified a “supportive adult”

who agrees to support them in their program and employment efforts. iFoster Jobs continues to focus on establishing and maintaining relationships with the grocery industry and expanding to other industries that provide stable work and career pathways, such as retail pharmacies and department stores.

FIGURE 2
iFoster Jobs’s Implementation Approach



Source: Urban Institute iFoster Jobs site visits.

iFoster Jobs staff manage partnerships, support trainings, and run Boutique Day and Assessment Day. iFoster Jobs staff also conduct informational telephone calls with referred young people, support young people through training (e.g., by providing transportation), assist them with their job searches, prepare them for interviews, and periodically check in with them and their employers once employed. At the time of our site visits, iFoster Jobs staff included the executive director, the program manager, and two program coordinators.

IFOSTER JOBS FOCUS POPULATION

iFoster Jobs serves young people ages 16 to 24 in Los Angeles and Riverside Counties with histories of foster care. Young people are referred to iFoster Jobs through their case managers, independent living placement staff, and county social workers. Young people who have heard about iFoster through marketing or from other young people sometimes self-refer. iFoster Jobs calls each referred young person to explain their program, screen for major barriers to participation, and build buy-in and

commitment to the program. As part of this process, iFoster Jobs also reaches out to the young person's referral source to ensure they can serve as a supportive adult—someone who is aware of the young person's participation in the program and can help the youth prioritize program participation and address barriers that may come up in the program and future employment. iFoster Jobs can then contact this person if a participant is not showing up for trainings or meetings. iFoster Jobs leadership and staff note that it is uncommon for the young people referred to iFoster Jobs to not be accepted into the program. However, iFoster Jobs staff encourage those with significant housing, health, or parenting barriers to participation to first address those issues and return to the program when they can fully participate. Because iFoster Jobs creates strong relationships with its referral partners, these partners are likely aware of what young people need to succeed in the program and do not refer those who are not ready to participate. iFoster Jobs does not track how many young people do not participate because of these and other barriers.

IFOSTER JOBS TRAINING

Four full days of training are provided to cohorts of iFoster Jobs participants (either by an iFoster Jobs trainer or a community partner organization), and these cohorts go to the same Boutique Day and Assessment Day. The timing of trainings can vary from a series of four daylong sessions held once a week to a “boot-camp” model where daylong trainings are held four days in a row to an evening model where shorter trainings take place over numerous evenings. iFoster Jobs has two full-time facilitators who provide trainings to some cohorts. In addition, iFoster Jobs partners with community organizations to provide iFoster-approved trainings. Trainings focus on customer service and communication skills with ample time for young people to engage in various scenarios, including mock interviews, and give each other feedback. Time is also allocated to résumé writing, job search strategies, and workers' rights. Boutique Day involves finding interview clothes and getting haircuts, all provided by iFoster Jobs peripheral partners. To remain active in the iFoster Jobs program, young people must not miss more than one day of training; the absence must be preapproved by iFoster Jobs, and the absence must not be on the résumé writing training day. Training facilitators provide iFoster Jobs staff with copies of each participant's résumé, which is included in a packet of information provided to each participant at Assessment Day.

IFOSTER JOBS JOB READINESS ASSESSMENT

Assessment Day is a daylong event hosted by iFoster Jobs to formally assess youth readiness for competitive work, provide young people with information about employer partners and the matching process, learn more about youth interests, and celebrate their training completion. Young people

complete basic math and language skills assessments and an assessment interview. Assessment interviews are conducted by professionals in the community who volunteer their time to conduct a predetermined interview scenario with a young person and use iFoster Jobs’s rubric to score the youth’s responses and interaction style.⁷ iFoster Jobs staff also meet with each participant to collaboratively develop an employment plan that includes discussing potential positions available with employer partners, the process and timing for completing applications, and other actions such as attending job fairs or open interviews identified by iFoster Jobs or the young person. The employment plan is anchored on the young person taking ownership for the direction and pace of their employment plan. Assessment Day is coordinated and run by iFoster Jobs staff.

iFoster Jobs also requires their participants to be drug free for 30 days before they are matched with their employer partners for interviews. Although iFoster Jobs does not directly test participants for drug use, if a participant is refused employment by an employer partner because of drug use, they can be dismissed from the program. iFoster Jobs will wait until a participant has been drug free for 30 days before matching them with employer partners. This policy is stated upfront during screening calls and at every interaction between a participant and iFoster Jobs staff (if a young person has indicated on their referral form that they use drugs), and a frank discussion about this occurs at Assessment Day. iFoster Jobs sets an “unbaking” clock timer for every youth who needs to stop using marijuana. When a young person reports that they do not make 30 days drug free, iFoster Jobs resets the “unbake timer.” For many young people, this happens multiple times before they make it to 30 days drug free.⁸

IFOSTER JOBS EMPLOYMENT MATCHING

Young people who are assessed as “ready for competitive work” work with iFoster Jobs staff to identify potential employers and positions, fill out applications, and prepare for interviews. iFoster Jobs staff use their knowledge of the young people and their employer partners, as well as young people’s input, to identify potential matches based on skills and interests while maintaining the standards required by employer partners for potential employees. iFoster Jobs staff try to locate employment opportunities within five miles of a participant’s residence to accommodate transportation. They do this through a process of “heat mapping” using their data on participants’ residential addresses and employer addresses.

Young people who are assessed as “not yet ready for competitive work” are placed in paid internships with supportive work environments through iFoster Jobs’s partners. They are encouraged to return after their internship, complete Assessment Day again, and work with iFoster Jobs to connect them to long-term competitive employment.

IFOSTER JOBS ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

iFoster Jobs helps provide young people with transportation to and from trainings, Boutique Day, and Assessment Day as needed. In addition, iFoster Jobs staff attempt to work with supportive adults and sometimes social workers, case managers, and community partners to refer young people to appropriate supports for other needs (e.g., health, housing, legal). iFoster Jobs also refers young people to other iFoster programs that provide cell phones and laptops, as well as the iFoster “virtual locker” where they can digitally store their résumé and other documents.

iFoster Jobs staff check in with young people and their employers after employment to assess and address any youth needs and track employment outcomes. According to iFoster Jobs’s model, iFoster Jobs staff do work check-ins after the first 10 days of employment and then at 30, 60, and 90 days of employment.

MY TIME PROGRAM OVERVIEW

MY TIME stands for Mentoring Youth to Inspire Meaningful Employment. The employment program was started in 2012 by the vice president of youth and community development at Lawrence Hall, a community-based service agency in Chicago “embracing at-risk youth and their families by instilling resilience, healing and changing lives for good.”⁹ As part of its mission, Lawrence Hall provides housing and various services for young people in foster care. MY TIME also can refer participants to other Lawrence Hall workforce development programs, including those that support young people with justice-system involvement to support criminal record relief and progress toward various industry-recognized credentials including certification for food service and security positions.

MY TIME is based on a mentoring model that uses employment preparation training and employment experiences to promote important developmental experiences for young people aging out of care. Although the program sees employment as a normative developmental experience, it also recognizes that young people transitioning out of foster care face additional challenges related to employment that their peers without foster care histories are less likely to face. These include concrete challenges like lack of transportation and work clothes as well as developmental challenges like not knowing how to read contextual cues and difficulty building trusting relationships, having limited communication and self-presentation skills, and having family and peer support networks with limited connections to employment. Through training, employment searches, and early employment experiences, MY TIME employment mentors aim to build not only each young person’s skills, but also a relationship with the youth that allows the mentor to, over time, identify and address employment and other needs. Figure 3 illustrates the pathway through MY TIME’s program components.

FIGURE 3

MY TIME's Program Pathway



Source: Urban Institute MY TIME site visits.

MY TIME staff manage youth recruitment and intake, trainings, and employer engagement. MY TIME has some partnerships with local employers, but building relationships with employers has not been a central focus of their model. MY TIME also ran a café in the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration, which provided jobs to MY TIME participants.¹⁰ At the time of our site visits, MY TIME had an executive director, program manager, program coordinator, three employment mentors, and one employment specialist.¹¹

MY TIME FOCUS POPULATION

MY TIME is contracted by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to provide services to a specific number of young people in foster care annually. In 2018, they were contracted to serve 120 young people, double the number of young people in recent prior years. MY TIME aims to serve young people ages 17.5 to 21 who currently have an open child welfare case in Cook County, which includes Chicago and its surrounding suburbs. Although MY TIME can serve young people starting at age 16 with a special exception from DCFS, they prefer to serve young people ages 18 to 21 because of challenges with school and work permits.

Young people are referred to the program by DCFS as well as nonprofits that DCFS contracts with to operate foster homes, group homes, residential treatment homes, and transitional and independent living programs. Additionally, referrals come from local schools that serve young people in DCFS care. All young people referred, who meet the qualification criteria, are accepted once MY TIME staff speak with them to confirm their interest in the program. MY TIME's contract with DCFS prohibits screening out young people based on potential barriers to program participation or employment.¹² Although information about potential obstacles to employment such as pregnancy or parenting, justice-system involvement, educational gaps, and drug use are sometimes included on a referral, these are not consistently entered into the MY TIME database. Rather, this information can be found in employment mentors' notes about their interactions with specific young people and used by mentors in their efforts to support each youth. Employment mentors describe child care, drug use, justice-system involvement, effects of trauma, and unstable housing or homelessness as the most common barriers to employment.

MY TIME MENTORING AND TRAINING

MY TIME provides a five-day training, usually at its offices but sometimes at a youth group living site.¹³ These small-group, interactive trainings engage young people in scenarios that relate to experiences they may encounter at work and outside of work that might influence work (e.g., drug use or peer pressure). Trainings also include some career interest exploration activities and assessments that help participants think about how their emotional and personality traits would fit in different employment situations. Trainings also include résumé writing support, information about payroll taxes and budgeting, workers' rights, and mock interviews.

At program entry, participants are each assigned to a MY TIME employment mentor who shepherds them through the program and early employment experiences by

- calling the young person to remind them of trainings and meetings;
- helping them seek employment and fill out job applications;
- preparing them for interviews;
- traveling with them to interviews and the first day of work (often providing transportation by car); and
- working with them on other aspects of their lives that may influence how well they succeed in the program and at work.

Sometimes employment mentors identify potential employers who might be a good fit for the young person's interests and skills, while other times they go out with the young person to identify potential employers in the area—an activity called “job developing.” Employment mentors also attempt to get to know significant people in the youth's life, including family members (foster parents, biological parents, siblings), friends, case workers, members of a young person's treatment or staffing team, and probation officers so they can engage these other people in supporting the youth in the program and at work.

All the employment-seeking interactions and work check-ins are designed to build a relationship with the young person so the mentor can build trust, help the young person address barriers, and support them in obtaining and succeeding in employment. MY TIME employment mentors have caseloads of about 20 active participants.

A participant is eligible to move to “aftercare” after they have been employed more than 90 days, or they may be placed in aftercare if they quit their job without apparent reason or have not made

reasonable progress on their job search as assessed by their employment mentor. Before one is moved to aftercare, the employment mentor presents the situation at a staff meeting and staff determine if the participant should be placed in aftercare. Although MY TIME staff do not actively work with young people in aftercare, they do send them information about job fairs and hiring events. They also continue to invite young people in aftercare to MY TIME events such as holiday parties. Because the onus is on the young people in aftercare to remain connected to the program, some young people in aftercare remain very involved, checking in with their employment mentor and attending events, while others tend to become less involved.

MY TIME ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

Creating a safe space for participants is important to helping build connections between the program and participants. MY TIME has a physical space that not only provides private meeting space for young people and their mentors, but also a kitchen that participants can use to prepare food and computers they can use to search for jobs, submit applications, and check email. Young people also have an open and comfortably furnished space where they can just hang out, building connections with other participants and MY TIME staff. MY TIME also maintains a collection of donated professional and business casual clothing (the “closet”) it uses to provide young people with clothing for interviews and work. If young people need a size or type of clothing not available in MY TIME’s closet, the employment mentor may take the young person to a thrift store to purchase clothes.

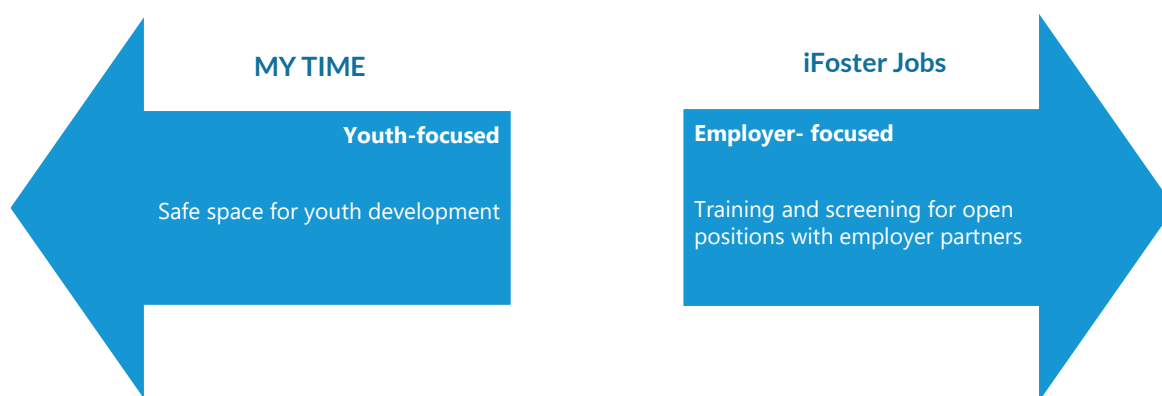
The program can also provide young people with transit passes for the first month of work if needed and has funds that can be used to address other emergency needs such as payment for a certification exam or state ID.

Program Comparisons

Although both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME are employment programs for young people with histories of child welfare involvement, our formative evaluations highlight fundamental differences between the two programs. On one hand, MY TIME uses all employment preparation, job seeking, and work support activities to build relationships with participants. They address developmental or other barriers and promote opportunities to learn and grow through program participation and early employment experiences. On the other hand, iFoster Jobs tries to ensure the young people referred to the program do not have barriers that will prevent them from fully participating in training or the job search. As such, they focus on serving young people who are motivated to work and do not face significant barriers to accomplishing that goal. iFoster Jobs focuses on ensuring the young people who apply to their employer

partners have the soft skills they need to succeed in the workplace and that employer partners can provide their young people with a career pathway and benefits. Essentially, MY TIME serves as mentorship-based developmental support for participants while iFoster Jobs acts as a gatekeeper for their employer partners and providing access to potential career pathways for their participants (figure 4).

FIGURE 4
MY TIME and iFoster Jobs Program Purposes

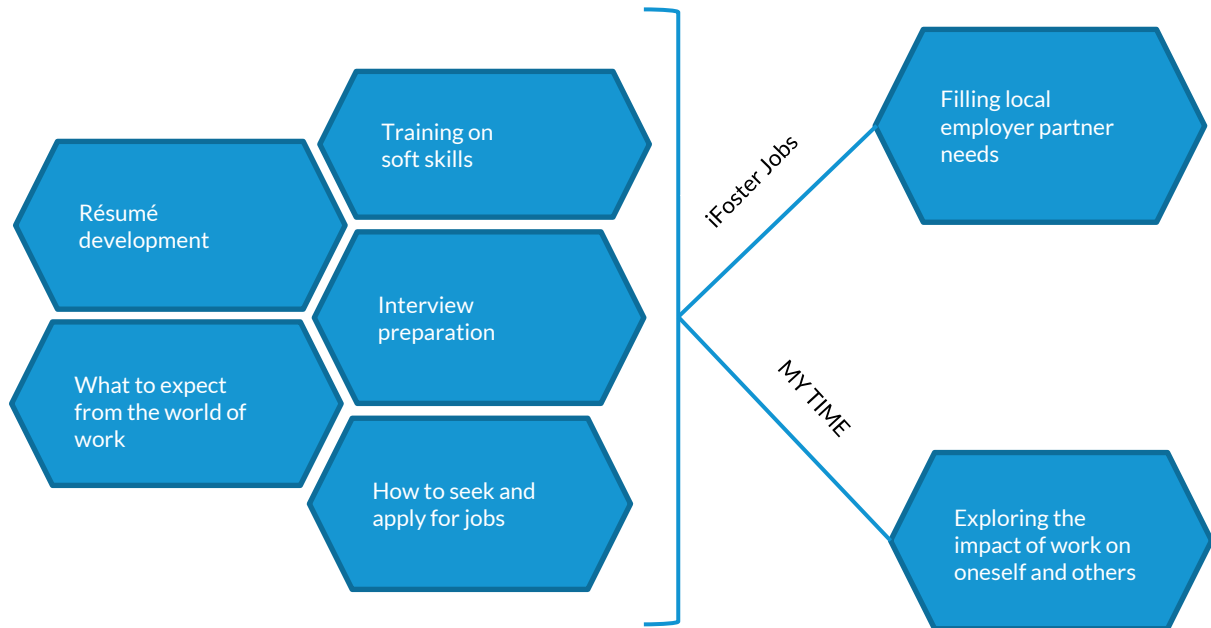


Sources: Urban Institute iFoster Jobs and MY TIME site visits.

The different program purposes suggest that MY TIME and iFoster Jobs aim to serve different populations, highlighted by their respective referral and onboarding processes.

The programs' difference in purpose is also reflected in their respective training components. Much training content is similar (figure 5); however, iFoster Jobs has a stronger focus on developing and maintaining program-level connections to employers and MY TIME has a stronger focus on directly connecting to participants' social networks and exploring how employment will affect young people's lives in concrete social and emotional ways. In this way, MY TIME staff strive to serve as key supportive adults in participants' lives. On the other hand, iFoster Jobs requires that participants already have a supportive adult in their lives and relies on that relationship to support success in program participation and employment.

FIGURE 5
MY TIME and iFoster Jobs Training Components

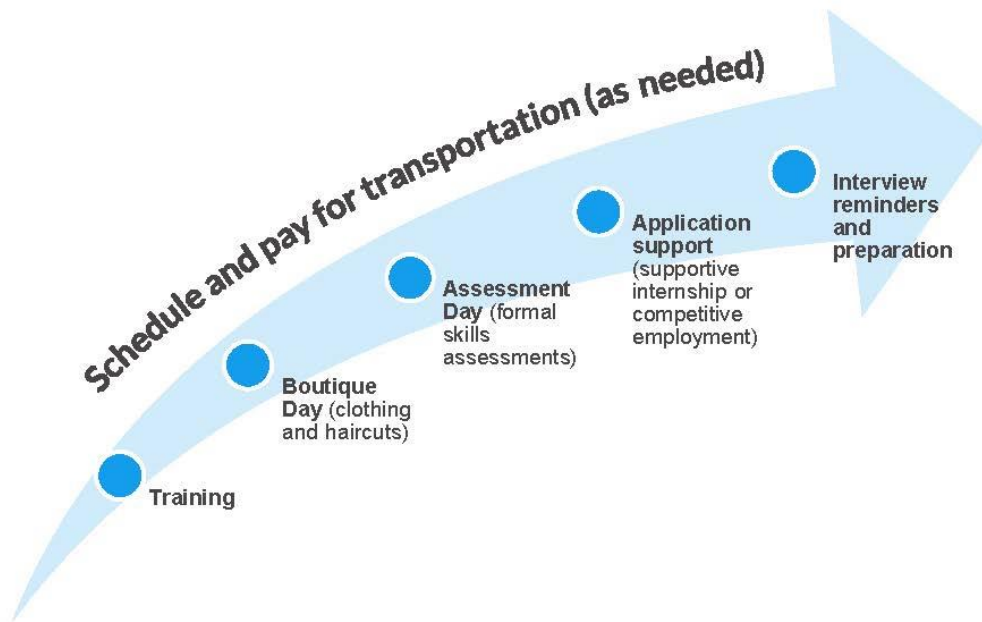


Sources: Urban Institute iFoster Jobs and MY TIME site visits.

Given their different orientations, it is not surprising that differences exist between the programs in their job search processes and the populations they serve.

After completing training, iFoster Jobs staff work with participants assessed as ready for competitive work to identify work opportunities both through iFoster Jobs’s employer and internship partners or through opportunities the young people have identified on their own. iFoster Jobs program staff help participants with the application process, prepare them for interviews, remind them of interview dates, and schedule and pay for transportation if needed (figure 6).

FIGURE 6
iFoster Jobs Participant Interaction Progression

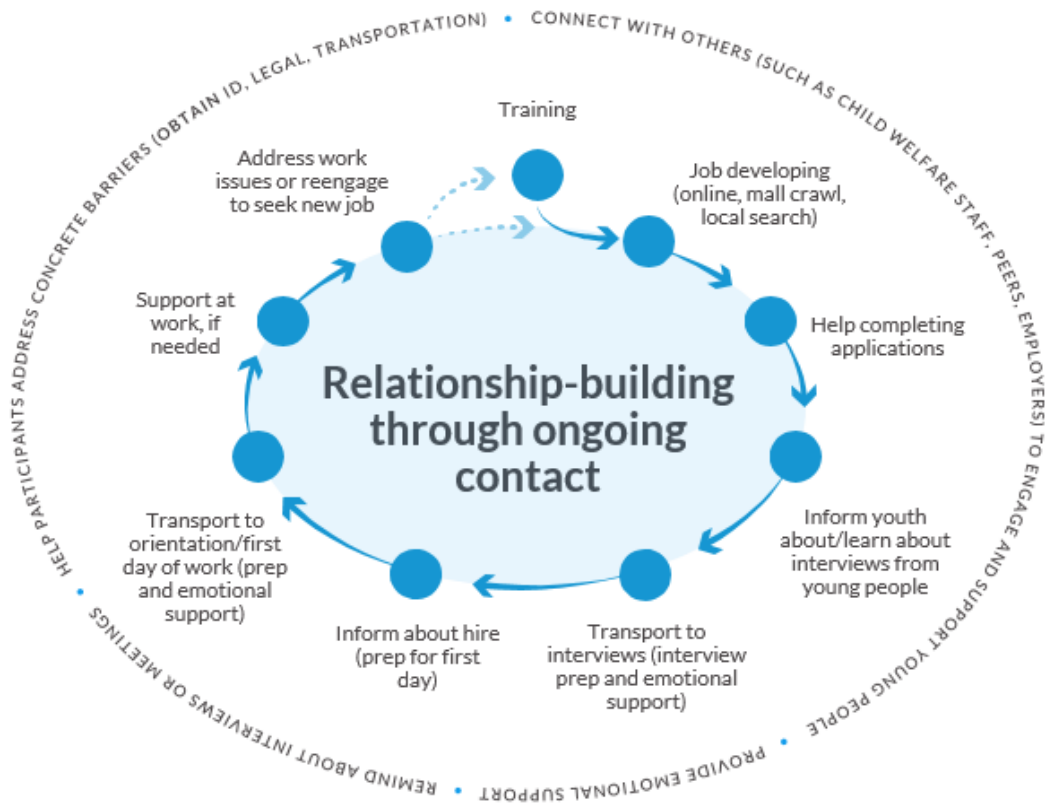


Source: Urban Institute analysis of iFoster Jobs program components.

MY TIME employment mentors work with participants who have completed training to search for employment opportunities. Because MY TIME has very few ongoing employer relationships, employment mentors help young people search for work by locating job openings in the young person’s community or by taking them—either individually or in small groups—to local malls (what the program calls “mall crawls”). While iFoster Jobs arranges transportation to interviews for young people who need it, MY TIME employment mentors travel with young people to interviews and the first day of work to prepare them for the experience, help them deal with any anxiety, and encourage them. Employment mentors’ in-person presence also allows young people the opportunity to process experiences as the MY TIME employment mentors provide insight and guidance (figure 7).

FIGURE 7

MY TIME Participant Interaction Patterns



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program components.

Although iFoster Jobs and MY TIME both use check-ins after employment to identify and ameliorate any challenges at work and encourage participants, the programs differ in their postemployment support. In part, this is because the programs differ in their approach to connecting program participants to employers. In the case of iFoster Jobs, the human resources departments of employer partners know that the young people referred by iFoster Jobs are participating in a program for young people transitioning out of foster care, but the local managers who do the interviewing, hiring, and supervising do not. iFoster Jobs leaves it up to the young person to disclose their foster care status if they choose to. On the other hand, MY TIME participants know that program staff tell employers they are transitioning out of foster care, so the young people are aware that by participating in the program potential employers will know that they have histories of foster care. iFoster Jobs staff check-in with young people after their first day of employment, 10 days after initial employment, and monthly thereafter. However, because iFoster Jobs works with human resources executives to give their young people first priority for interviews, the local managers who actually interview and hire the young people

are less inclined to provide feedback to the program because they generally do not know that the young person was referred for an interview through a program. On the other hand, MY TIME employment mentors check in with employed young people regularly, sometimes weekly or more often, if they feel the young person needs the support. They also check in with employers, most of whom they have met during the job development process or while transporting the young people to the interview or first day of work. In these interactions with potential employers, MY TIME employment mentors often describe the program so employers know they are hiring a young person with a history of foster care and understand their common barriers to success at work. These employers are generally inclined to provide feedback or proactively reach out to MY TIME when there is an issue at work.

These different approaches to engaging employers with the program both have benefits and challenges. For iFoster Jobs, making the case to potential employers at the corporate level that their participants have been trained and assessed as ready for work can be an appealing draw, especially in industries with high turnover or a consistent need for entry-level workers. As a result, iFoster Jobs participants have the opportunity for an interview that they may not have had without the intervention of a company's corporate HR involvement. However, this form of program-employer partnership provides no connection between iFoster Jobs and the managers where a young person will be working. On the other hand, MY TIME puts less focus on building employer relationships and, as a result, employment mentors spend significant time doing job-development activities with participants. Although the job search process may be more intensive for the program and participants, the process allows employment mentors to make direct connections with managers where their participants work. As opposed to iFoster Jobs providing connections to employers for their participants that they may not otherwise have, MY TIME's model is more akin to supporting young people in their own search for local employers. In this way, MY TIME builds connections with employers who may be good future contacts for other participants.

Outcomes

The following sections include our findings on program outcomes. We tailored our analyses to the data provided by each program. It is worth noting that the data collected by each program reflect the program's model and implementation. For example, iFoster Jobs maintains information about whether or not an employer with which a participant found work is a formal iFoster Jobs employer partner. MY TIME maintains extensive data about not only every contact activity between the program and a participant, but also the content of each contact.

Our analyses suggest that each program’s operations are generally aligned with its logic model, although additional data are needed to accurately assess some program components and outcomes.

IFOSTER JOBS

iFoster Jobs’s goal is to help young people who have been in foster care enter the workforce with the skills they need to succeed. They train those who need it, formally assess all participants’ readiness to succeed in work, and provide participants with information about existing employment or internship opportunities with their employer partners or internship providers. Of the 523 participants served from September 2015 through August 2019 who were sent either to training or straight to Assessment Day, we found that 46 percent got a job or internship.¹⁴

IFOSTER JOBS PARTICIPANTS

Because of iFoster Jobs’s parameters for participants required to attend training and those allowed to go straight to Assessment Day, we explored the demographics of both groups. We compared sets of demographic variables available to determine if there were statistically significant differences.¹⁵

Table 1 provides information about the characteristics of iFoster Jobs participants including gender, race, foster care status, parenting status, and justice-system involvement at program entry, including any statistically significant differences in these characteristics between the groups of participants sent to training and those sent straight to Assessment Day.¹⁶

TABLE 1
iFoster Jobs Demographic Comparisons across Participants Sent to Training and Those Sent Straight to Assessment Day

Category	Type	Sent to training first	Sent straight to assessment day	P-value
Gender (n = 501) ^a		n = 409	n = 97	0.046*
	Female	56%	68%	
	Male	43%	32%	
	Transgender	1%	0%	
Parenting/caregiver (n = 411)		n = 333	n = 78	0.03*
	No	85%	74%	
	Yes	15%	26%	
Foster care status (n = 468) ^b		n = 373	n = 95	> 0.00***
	Current	51%	28%	
	Former	49%	72%	
Race/ethnicity (n = 404) ^c		n = 326	n = 78	
	Black or African American	50%	56%	

Category	Type	Sent to training first	Sent straight to assessment day	P-value
	Hispanic or Latino	39%	32%	
	White	9%	10%	
	Asian	2%	0%	
	American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%	0%	
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	1%	
Justice system record (n = 412)		n = 333	n = 79	
	No	86%	85%	
	Yes	14%	15%	

Source: Urban Institute analysis of iFoster Jobs program data.

Notes: ^a The chi-squared calculation was only between males and females. Transgender people were not included in the calculation because of small sample size. ^b In 2010, the passage of A.B. 12 included the Extended Foster Care (AFC) Act, allowing young people to stay in foster care, or return to foster care, until age 21. Because we do not have data on participant age for iFoster Jobs, we assume that young people formerly in foster care here are, on average, older than those currently in care. But young people who formerly were in care may have left before age 21. ^c The chi-squared calculation was between Black/African American, Hispanic or Latino, and other. White, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander made up the “other” category because of small sample sizes.

The group of participants sent straight to Assessment Day has statistically significant higher shares of females, young people who are parenting or caregiving, and young people who were formerly in foster care. Although iFoster Jobs does not collect data on participants’ age, the data on foster care and parenting status suggest that participants sent straight to Assessment Day are older than those who go through training. This aligns with iFoster Jobs’s model of allowing young people to go straight to Assessment Day if they have worked within the past year. In addition, iFoster Jobs allows young people who have been through training but were not assessed as ready for competitive work and who have gone through an internship to go straight to Assessment Day if they return to iFoster Jobs.

IFOSTER JOBS OUTCOMES

We used iFoster Jobs program data from September 2015 through August 2019 to look at program outcomes, including employment for all 12 Los Angeles county cohorts that went through the program during this period.¹⁷ Because iFoster Jobs data indicate changes in participants’ status rather than every interaction with participants, we analyzed the program trajectories of participants through program milestones based on their starting points in that trajectory: those who were assigned to training and those who were sent straight to Assessment Day.¹⁸

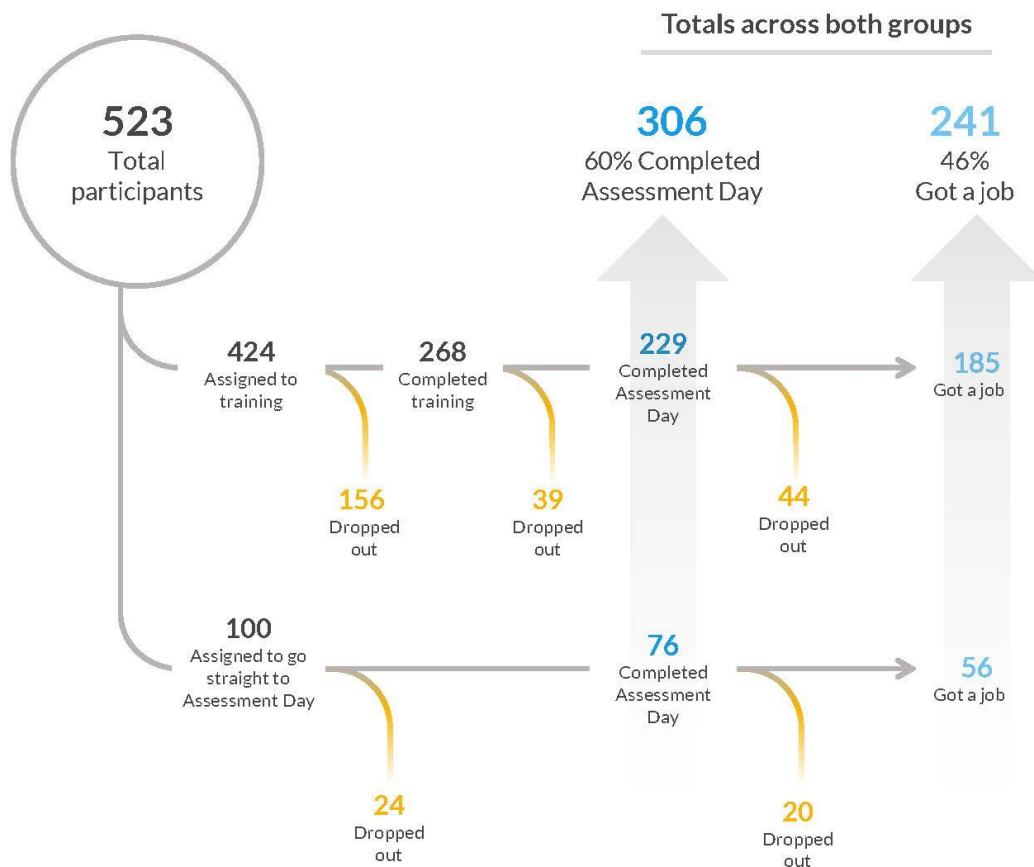
Of 534 young people referred to iFoster Jobs during this period, 10 were listed as “not approved” and one was listed as “on hold.” In general, young people who were not approved for the program had at least one, if not more, life circumstance that iFoster Jobs believes will prevent successful training

completion. Such circumstances include lack of stable housing or late-stage pregnancy, among others. These young people are gently encouraged to reapply when their circumstances change. Of the remaining 523 young people who participated in iFoster Jobs, 424 participants were sent to training and 100 straight to Assessment Day.¹⁹ Of the 523 participating young people, 241 (46 percent) got a job or internship, 185 (77 percent) obtained employment in the labor market, 55 (23 percent) were placed in an internship, and one was placed in a hospitality training program run by iFoster Jobs.

As explained earlier, participants in iFoster Jobs either get sent to training or straight to Assessment Day, and then iFoster works with the young people to identify potential employers and support their application and interview processes or match them with an internship. Figure 8 illustrates the different trajectories through iFoster Jobs milestones for these two groups. Of the 424 young people who were sent to training, 63 percent completed training; 86 percent of those who completed training completed Assessment Day; and 77 percent of those who completed Assessment Day found employment or were placed in an internship. Of the 100 young people sent straight to Assessment Day without first going through training, 76 percent completed Assessment Day; 68 percent of those who completed Assessment Day got a job or were placed in an internship.

As figure 8 shows, the greatest share of participants drop out between training and Assessment Day. iFoster Jobs leadership shared that if participants make it to the second training day, they are more likely to complete the training and, eventually, find work, although we do not have the program data to verify this.

FIGURE 8
iFoster Jobs Outcomes



We found that average time between Assessment Day and internship match was 36 days, and the average time between Assessment Day and getting a job was 56 days.²⁰ According to program leadership, the time to getting a job is based on market factors (what jobs are currently open), the young person’s progress on their employment plans, and iFoster Jobs’s practice of ensuring their participants are drug free for 30 days before they are sent to their employer partners. We also found variation in the time between Assessment Day and getting a job or internship match²¹ across the different youth cohorts (table 2).

TABLE 2

Average Time between Assessment Day and Job Match, by Numbered Cohort

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>n</i>	28	26	9	12	10	8	16	24	15	7	12
Days to job	92	132	56	29	5	16	34	15	14	18	5

Source: Urban Institute analysis of iFoster Jobs program data.

Notes: The total *n* in this analysis is slightly different than the total *n* for our analyses of outcome variables because slightly different data were used in each analysis. See the appendix for a discussion of the data used in each analysis. Also, “Job match” date or “internship match” date is the closest approximation in iFoster Jobs’s data to the date that someone got a job or internship. According to iFoster Jobs, that date sometimes lags behind the actual hire date. Sometimes iFoster Jobs staff find out that participants found jobs on their own, and sometimes a match is entered by iFoster Jobs staff when they learn of employment after the fact from either the employer or participant. However, this is the only program data available that provides a glimpse at length of time to the start of a job or internship.

A dominant theme we heard in participant focus groups was young people’s expectation that they would find a job quickly after completing training and Assessment Day. We also heard from case managers that some young people they referred to iFoster Jobs did not receive any opportunities to apply to an iFoster Jobs employer partner for a “long period of time” after being in the program. One alumnus we interviewed shared that he did not get his job through iFoster because he “couldn’t wait” but that the skills he learned through training helped him get a job on his own.

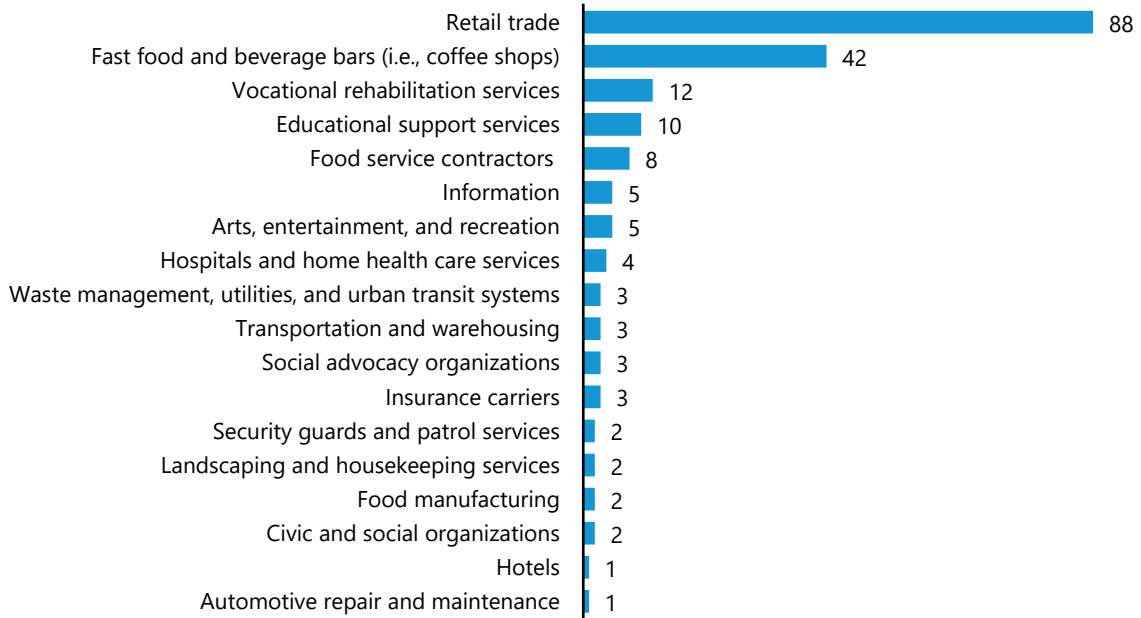
Numerous participants in our iFoster Jobs alumni focus groups shared that they had progressed within an iFoster Jobs employer partner’s organization. They felt that iFoster Jobs’s training prepared them not only to get a job, but also to employ the skills learned through the program that helped them get recognition, promotions, and pay raises at work.

IFOSTER JOBS EMPLOYERS

iFoster Jobs participants found employment with 72 different employers, 67 percent of whom were iFoster Jobs employer partners. As figure 9 shows, the largest share of young people found work in retail followed closely by fast food establishments and coffee shops.²²

FIGURE 9

Number of Young People Employed, by Industry (n = 196)

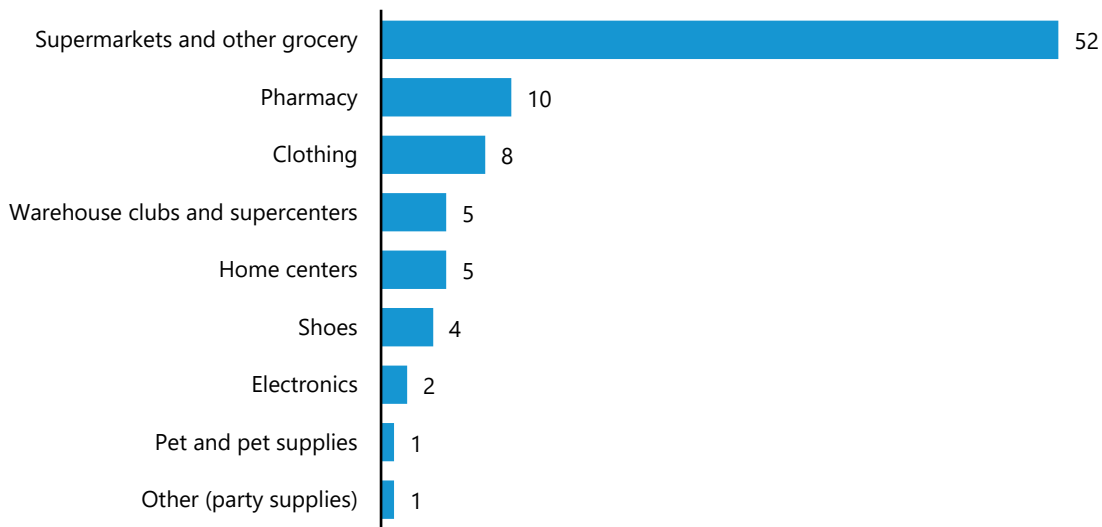


Source: Urban Institute analysis of iFoster Jobs program data.

Within the retail category, most participants (59 percent) found work in the grocery industry (figure 10). This aligns with iFoster Jobs’s origins and ongoing focus on establishing and maintaining relationships with the grocery industry.

FIGURE 10

Number of Young People Employed with Retail Employers (n = 88)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of iFoster Jobs program data.

iFoster Jobs found internships for young people with 15 different internship providers. These internships largely involved clerical positions in county and city departments run through county-level Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and the county child welfare agency, organizations that prioritize young people in foster care for their internships and with whom iFoster Jobs has close relationships (table 3). iFoster Jobs also placed young people in trade apprenticeships required for entry into fields like fiber optic cable installation and high-end culinary work. These apprenticeships are often very competitive but were classified as internships in iFoster Jobs data. Finally, iFoster Jobs provides hospitality industry internships, leading to an industry certificate, as well as some highly competitive internships that can lead to jobs in the technology and movie production industries. However, these internships do not have the expectation of permanency that competitive work has, and the participants have a supervisor supporting them in building skills on the job. As such, not all data classified as “internship” by iFoster Jobs are for those assessed as not yet ready for competitive work. This data classification is a departure from the program’s logic model and creates challenges in assessing which participants entered supportive internship experiences versus career pathway and competitive internships.

TABLE 3
Number of Young People in Each Internship Type

Internship type	Number of young people served
120-hour internship (WIBs)	14
320-hour internship (county)	25
Apprenticeship—culinary	1
Apprenticeship—fiber optic cable	2
Competitive internship—career development internship at DCFS	1
Competitive internship—tech	8
Competitive internship—TV production	1
Hospitality training and certificate	1

Source: Urban Institute analysis of iFoster Jobs program data.

iFoster Jobs employer partners reported feeling positive about the matching process. One employer partner highlighted iFoster Jobs’s thoughtful approach to matching, something they did not experience with other organizations that passed along candidates who were obviously not suited for the position. This sense that iFoster Jobs knew what would be best for the employer and employee was also valued by participants. iFoster Jobs staff cited their knowledge of their employer partners’ cultures, and the knowledge about their participants gleaned through Assessment Day, as helping them make mutually beneficial matches.

MY TIME

MY TIME’s goal is to provide young people currently in foster care with employment skills and job-seeking training as a mechanism for supporting positive development as they approach aging out of care and the need for financial stability. Of the 424 young people referred to MY TIME from July 2013 through July 2018, program service data show a total of 9,561 contact activity records between MY TIME staff and participating young people, including 924 training days attended, 1,217 applications submitted, and 469 interviews completed.²³

MY TIME PARTICIPANTS

Because MY TIME does not screen potential participants based on demographic or life circumstances (e.g., justice-system involvement, parenting), it does not require this information upfront. Some of this information is captured over time as young people disclose these circumstances to employment mentors. Sometimes employment mentors will update the referral data system with information as it is disclosed, but historically this practice has been inconsistent.

Based on available demographic data in the referral data only, MY TIME largely serves a predominantly black (86 percent) and male (57 percent) population. The average age of MY TIME participants at program entry is 19 years. Demographic data are presented in table 4.

TABLE 4
MY TIME Participant Demographics (n = 412)

Race/ethnicity	N	Gender	n	Age	Years
Black/African American	253	Female	153	Range of ages	16–21
Hispanic/Mexican	8	Male	206	Average age	19
Hispanic/Puerto Rican	3	Transgender	4		
Hispanic/other	12	Missing	49		
Other race	3				
Two or more races	2				
White	13				
Missing	118				

Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Notes: ^a We use the same categories as are in the MY TIME program data. ^b “Nonbinary” was not a category in the data.

MY TIME OUTCOMES

To analyze the program and employment outcomes, we used MY TIME’s contact data files. These data files included some drop-down categories, such as date, contact type (i.e., in-person, phone, email), and activity (i.e., training, contact, application submitted, interview). In addition, these data files contained significant amounts of rich information about the substance of each contact in open text format. It is in these text fields that we found the most accurate information about program and employment outcomes, as well as important information about the content of interactions that provides insights about the mentoring relationships. Given the large number of contact activities recorded (9,651), it would be beyond our resources to analyze the full sample. In addition, because those participants who had little contact with the program would likely have different program and employment outcomes than those who had significant contact with the program, we divided the participants into four groups based on the number of contact activities recorded by their employment mentors to generate a stratified random sample for analysis (table 5).

We selected a random sample of 10 participants from each quartile of contact activities, giving us a stratified random sample of 40 participants across the spectrum of program contact.²⁴ We analyzed the employment outcomes and content of contact activities to find any differences across the groups based on the level of contact they had with the program. For our analyses, we used the information noted in the text fields.

TABLE 5

Number of Contact Activities Range

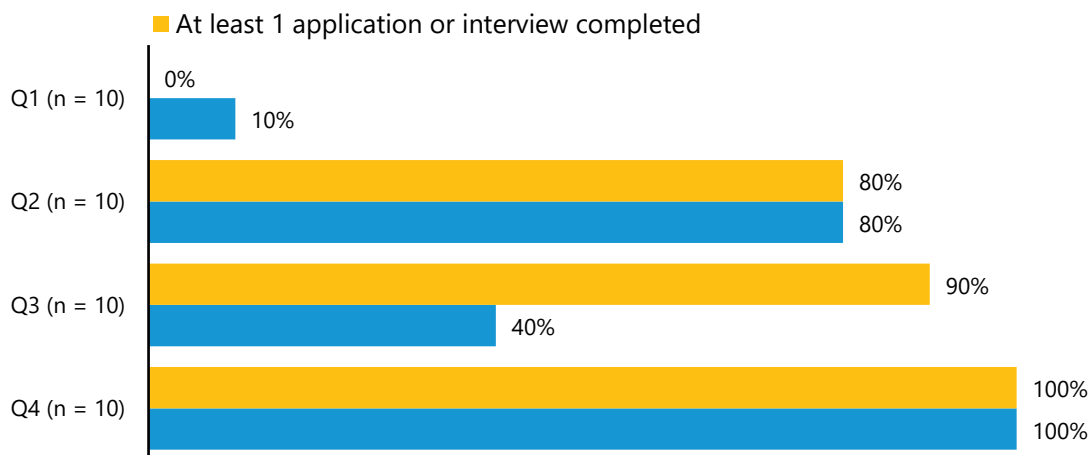
	Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4
Number of contact activities range	1-8	9-21	22-39	40-110

Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Overall, in our random sample of 40 participants, 130 applications were submitted, 55 interviews completed, and 39 hired as new employees. Twenty-seven participants (68 percent) had at least one application submitted or one interview completed. Twenty-three participants (58 percent) were employed at least once while active with MY TIME, either through an internship or competitive employer, and ten of those young people were employed more than once. Figure 11 shows differences in these activities across the four quartiles of contact activity.

FIGURE 11

Share of Participants' Employment Activities, by Quartile—Jobs and Internships



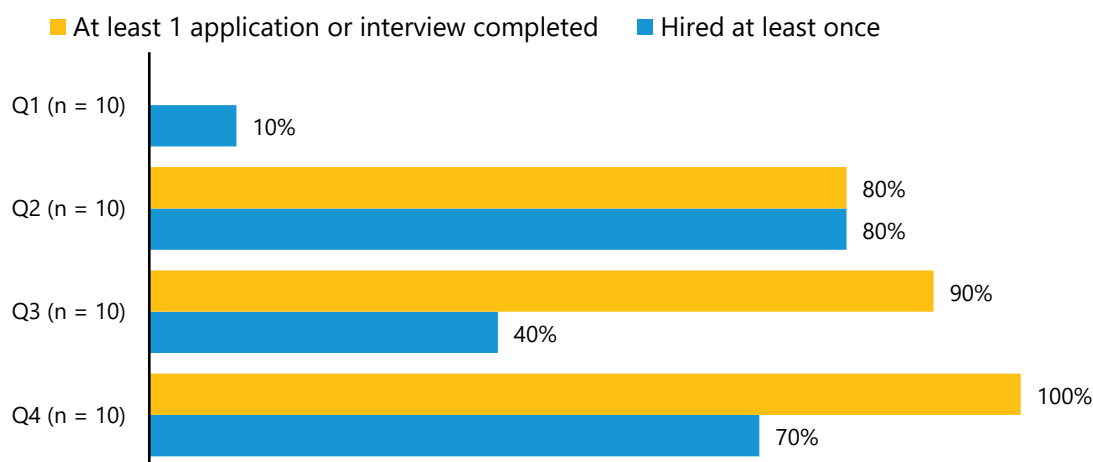
Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Those with the least number of activities recorded had the lowest level of employment-related activities. In fact, most contact activities for young people in that quartile were related to MY TIME staff trying to engage or reengage them in the program and get them through training. Those in the quartile with the greatest number of activities recorded all completed both applications and interviews. However, those in the third quartile of activity contacts had high levels of application and interview activity but relatively low levels of employment. When we look at competitive work only (not including internships), employment drops to 70 percent for those in the quartile with the greatest number of contacts (figure 12). This suggests that those in the quartile with the least contact activity are those

who never really engage with the program, and those with the highest levels of contact activity may include young people who are engaged and motivated to seek employment but face significant barriers to securing and maintaining work.

FIGURE 12

Share of Participants’ Employment Activities, by Quartile—Jobs Only



MY TIME staff discussed how some young people move out of and back into the program as their life circumstances change (i.e., they engage with the program in spells). Table 6 shows the lengths of time in program and number of spells for each quartile of contact activity.

TABLE 6

Length of Time in Program (n = 40)

	Number of young people with one spell	Number of young people with two spells	Number of young people with three spells	Average number of days (total of all spells)	Least number of days (of any spell)	Greatest number of days (total of all spells)
Q1	8	2	0	39	1	187
Q2	10	0	0	122	32	323
Q3	9	1	0	223	36	420
Q4	8	1	1	343	136	666

Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Note: Q = quartile.

MY TIME CONTACT ACTIVITIES

The following section illustrates the different types of content for contact activities between MY TIME staff and participants. We show, by quartile, the number of contact activities for job-seeking and work

supports, program participation supports, concrete supports, and relationship-building and emotional supports. Because MY TIME's model involves directly engaging others in the participant's support network, we also present findings about the different types of people with whom MY TIME staff had contact and the content of those contact activities.

Employment-related contact activities

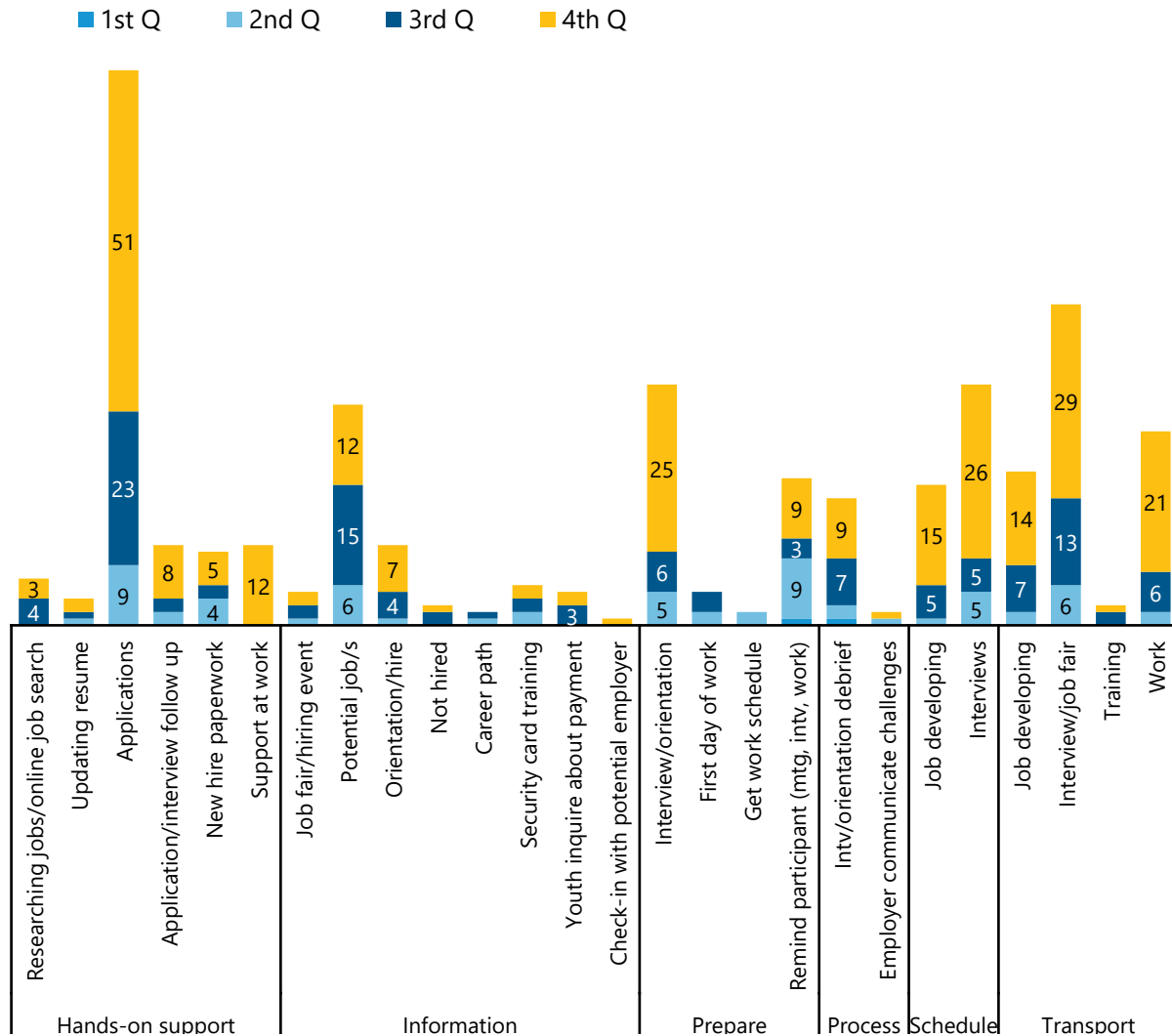
The most common employment-related contact activity is helping complete applications (figure 13). Sometimes this happens at the participant's residence or the MY TIME offices. Employment mentors also take participants out for job developing—looking for employment opportunities near where they live and in areas they can easily access and where they feel safe. Notes for one contact activity highlight this process: "I met [participant] at her apartment. We then transported to North Riverside Mall to complete applications. After strolling through the mall, we were able to complete four applications for open positions. We then transported to Goodwill to shop for interview clothing. She found a few approvable items. We discussed how the pieces will be worn. Also while there we completed another application."

Most transportation interactions for interviewing and work also included prepping the participant and providing emotional support and encouragement. One example from the contact activities reflects this:

Staff picked up [participant]...and transported him to [interview]. Staff prepped [participant] on the way there by going over his résumé with him, asking him several questions and coaching him on his demeanor and approach when interviewing...when staff and [participant] arrived, staff spoke briefly with...the store manager. After the interview, staff again spoke with [store manager], who said he thought [participant] did fine, but that he would like to interview one or two more MY TIME candidates for this position and then evaluate who would be the best fit. Staff then transported [participant] home and praised him for his concerted effort this morning. Staff told [participant] that after speaking next with [store manager], that a [MY TIME] staff member would contact [participant] about next steps.

FIGURE 13

MY TIME Job-Seeking and Employment Support Contact Activities with Young People, by Quartile (n = 40)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Note: Data labels for some contact activities are removed for ease of reading.

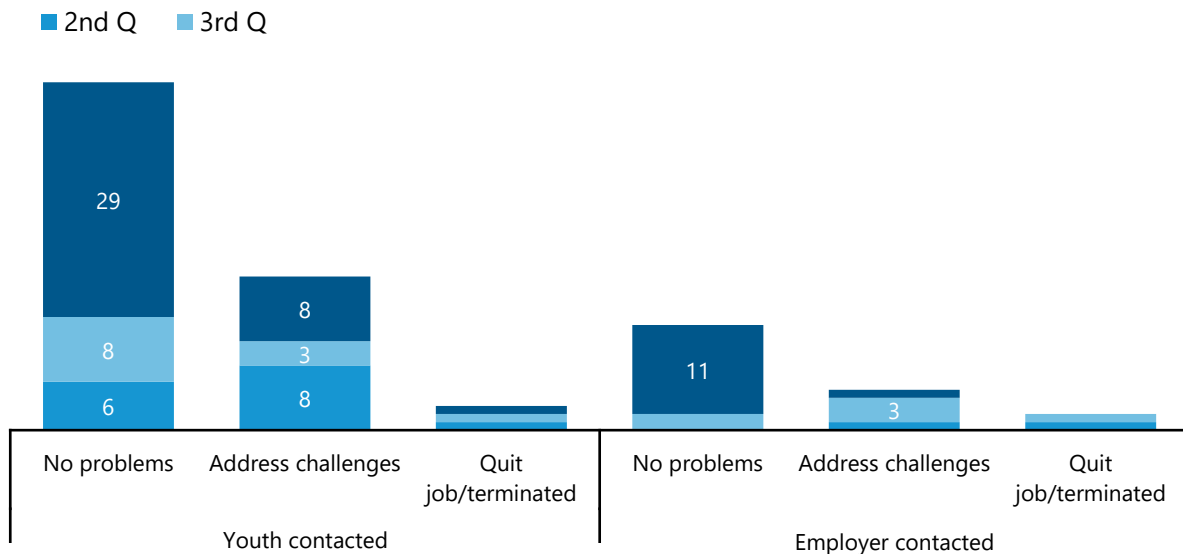
By definition, young people in Q3 and Q4 have more contact activities overall. However, we see a significant amount of contacts for these quartiles in the areas of providing hands-on support completing interviews, preparing young people for interviews, scheduling interviews, and transporting young people to interviews.

Work check-in contact activities

Work check-ins are meant to identify potential issues and address challenges before the situation becomes untenable. Most work check-ins report no problems from both the participant and employer (figure 14). When challenges are identified, MY TIME employment mentors use the opportunity to support the young people in properly addressing the issues. For example, if an employment mentor learns from an employer during a work check-in that the young person has not shown up for work, the employment mentor contacts the youth and explains how to call the employer to tell them why they were absent and explain that in the future they will call in advance. Contact activity notes highlight these conversations. One reports,

This writer asked why he was not at work on November 15 and 18. He stated that his aunt had passed away. This writer offered condolences and reminded him that even during hard times it is his responsibility to communicate with his employer and/or MY TIME. Regardless of what happened to him, this would be considered a "no-call, no-show" and be grounds for termination. He stated that he understood. He also stated he was on his way to work and he would talk with his employer about what took place.

FIGURE 14
Work Check-In Activities (n = 40)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.
Note: Data labels for some contact activities are removed for ease of reading.

There are no work check-in contact activities for participants in the quartile with the fewest number of overall contact activities (Q1). Most work check-in contact activities are between the participant and MY TIME employment mentor, although sometimes an employer will contact MY TIME

about challenges with a participant at work or to let the program know that the participant quit or was terminated.

Program participation support contact activities

Checking in with participants is a key way that MY TIME staff build relationships with participants. As figure 15 shows, most contact activities in the program participation support category are check-ins. Check-ins can be in person or via phone. Most often, check-ins and meetings are initiated by MY TIME staff, although figure 15 shows that numerous participants also reach out to MY TIME to check in. In addition to checking in about employment activities, young people reach out to MY TIME staff when they have problems with their living situation or life circumstances. Here are two examples:

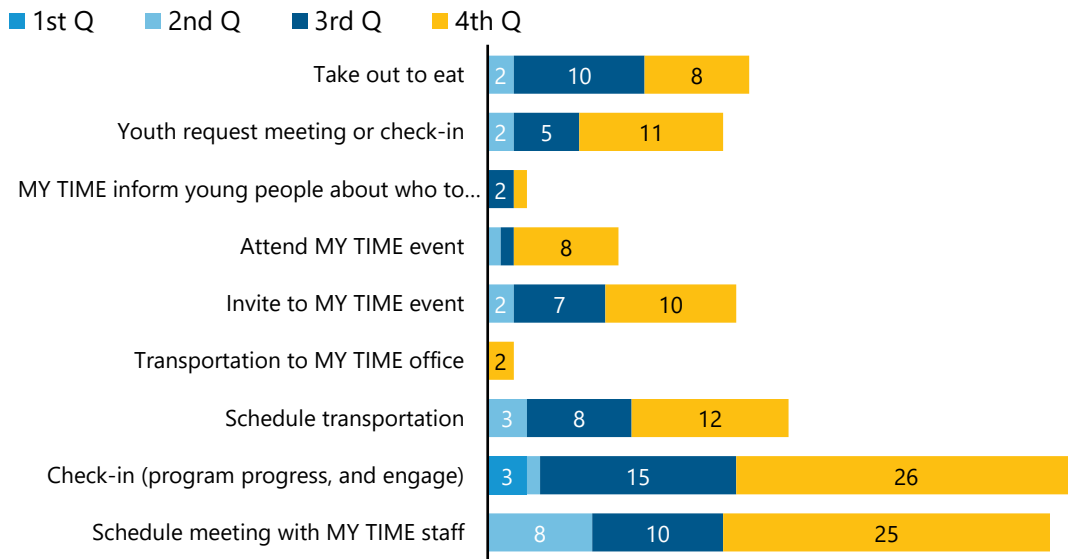
[Participant] wanted to be out [of] the [placement] site and said that he was going through a lot with staff. He informed me that he felt mistreated and needed some time away from the unit. I talked with [participant] about his problems and helped him find better ways to express his frustration.

[Participant] contacted this writer stating that he was on his way back to his placement to be picked up. The client was reportedly arrested the night before but is trying hard to get back on time [for work].

MY TIME staff also record activity contacts intended to promote engagement with the program beyond simple meetings and check-ins. Some efforts include taking young people out to eat, special events such as taking a group of participants to a basketball or baseball game, special trainings about budgeting and money management, a Youth Advisory Council meeting where participants provide feedback to MY TIME staff, or parties for a special event such as Election Day or a holiday. In addition, MY TIME staff note when they contact a participant to tell them who to contact at MY TIME when staff members are taking vacation time. Figure 15 shows that most of these contacts are with young people who have the greatest overall numbers of contact activity with the program (Q3 and Q4).

FIGURE 15

Program Participation Support Contact Activities with Young People, by Quartile (n = 40)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

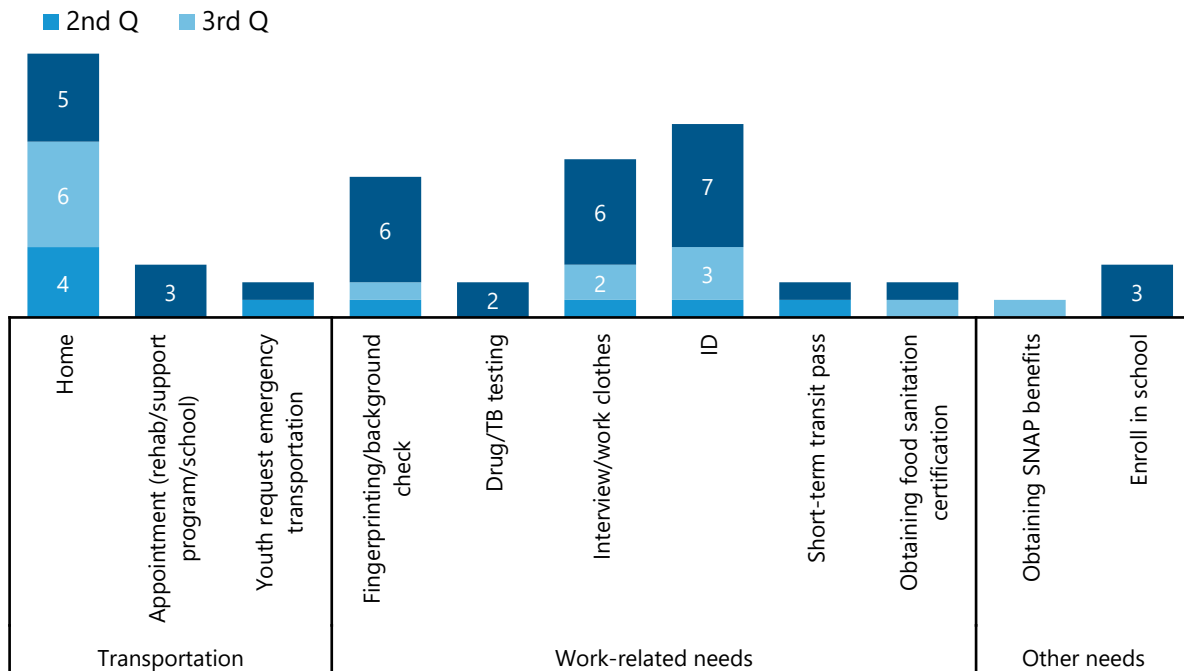
Note: Data labels for some contact activities are removed for ease of reading.

Concrete support contact activities

MY TIME staff also provide concrete supports to young people that directly support engagement in work and also in other areas of their lives (figure 16). The most common are providing young people transportation home and helping young people complete a background check and fingerprinting, get work-appropriate clothes either through MY TIME’s clothes closet or at a thrift shop, and get a state ID so they can work. It is worth noting that in our sample of 40 young people, MY TIME staff had three contact activities related to helping a young person enroll in school and one helping a young person get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) benefits.

FIGURE 16

Concrete Support Contact Activities with Young People, by Quartile (n = 40)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Note: Data labels for some contact activities are removed for ease of reading.

Most contact activities in this category involve work-related needs such as getting documentation or required testing. Figure 16 shows that MY TIME participants face significant transportation challenges outside of work. As one staff noted, “I transported [participant] to his rehab session. Gave him encouraging words before leaving. [Participant] expressed that he is happy to have me as his employment mentor.” Finally, MY TIME staff contact activity notes reveal that staff spend time with young people learning about their histories, interests, and goals (some of which also helps with employment seeking). In three cases, MY TIME staff helped a participant enroll in college.

Relationship-building and emotional support contact activities

Relationship-building is a central tenet of MY TIME’s approach and was echoed by staff and participants alike. Participants reported that the MY TIME office is a safe place and they find the staff authentic and relatable:

- The office is seen as a fun place and as “outside the system.”
- Staff provide advocacy and support outside of specific work-related needs.
- Staff are caring.

- Staff are authentic and legitimate.
- Staff are reliable.
- Staff are relatable and appreciate youth personalities.
- Staff help advocate with employers and negotiate situations at work.

Staff also help young people deal with life challenges, some of which are specific to young people transitioning out of foster care, such as placement changes and planning for aging out of care, and some of which are developmentally normative for emerging adults, such as budgeting, self-care, and longer-term planning. Some examples of longer-term planning include thinking about employment that fits with the young person's interests. The following notes from MY TIME mentors show that they address this with participants both to support immediate job development and help them think beyond current employment needs or circumstances:

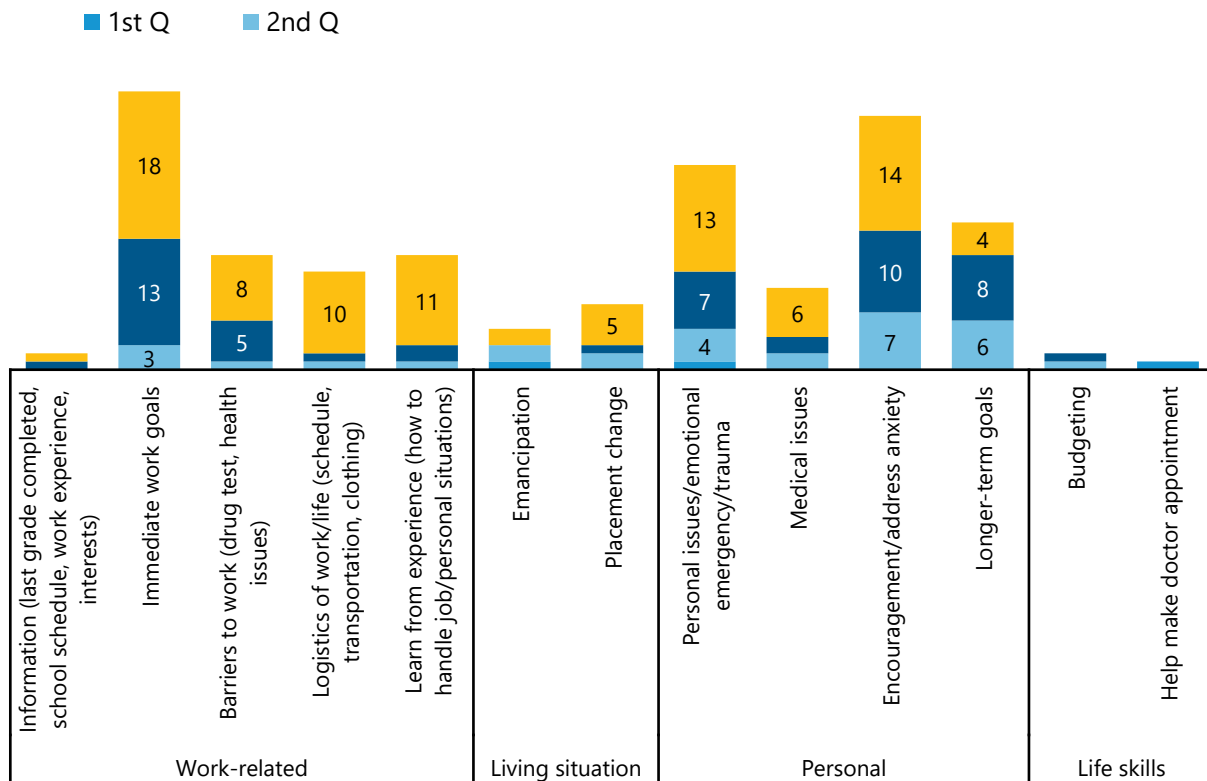
[Participant] and this mentor came up with goals that were attainable. Together [they] also came up with a job list that the client [thought] would be suitable.

This [participant] is really interested in attending school and wants to pursue a career in nursing. This mentor told her about the WIOA program. The program offers courses in CNA, Medical billing, and coding and phlebotomy. She has the opportunity to get certified in the three areas and will be placed in a job. This will give [participant] insight of what the field is like.

Addressing personal issues and encouraging young people when they are apprehensive or anxious are also common supports.

FIGURE 17

Relationship-Building and Emotional Support Contact Activities with Young People, by Quartile (n = 40)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Note: Data labels for some contact activities are removed for ease of reading.

Contact activities with people in participants' support network

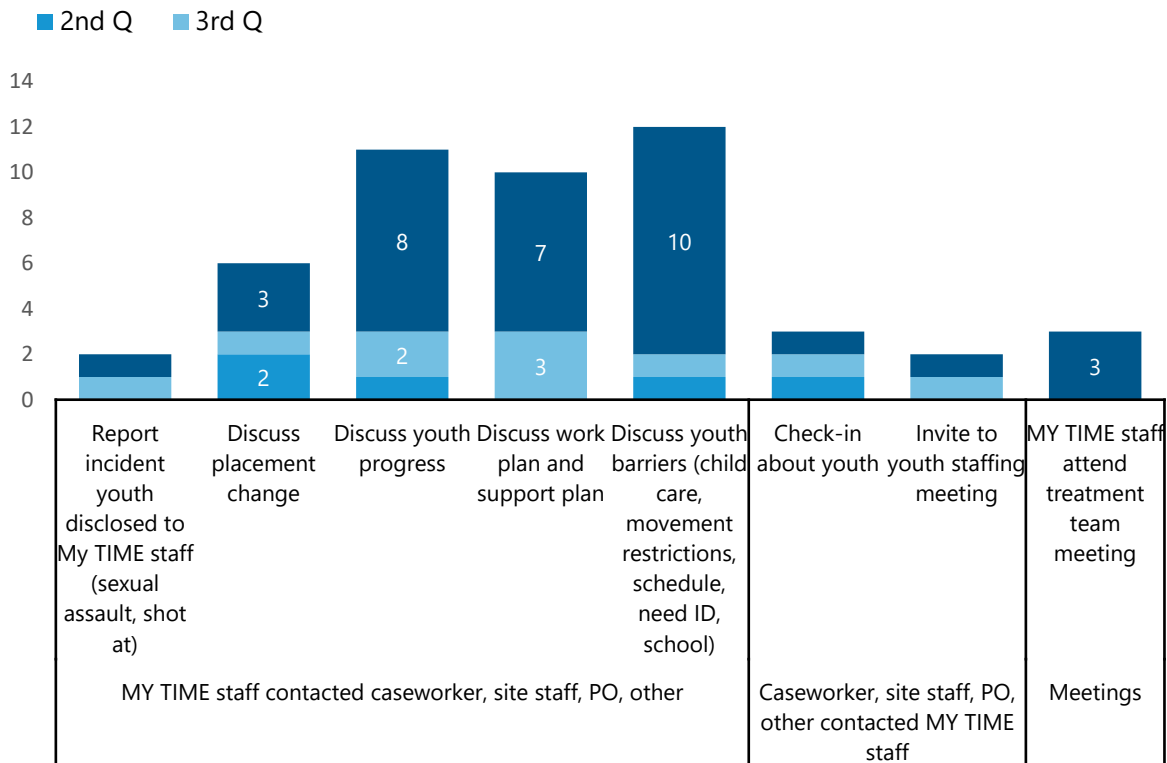
Our analyses show that for young people in all quartiles except the first MY TIME staff have contact activities with people in each young person's support network. These people include caseworkers, placement site staff, siblings, and parole officers. Figure 17 illustrates the content of these contacts.

Much of these contacts involve checking in and providing updates about the participant's progress in MY TIME. Here is one example: "MY TIME mentor called [participant's] [transitional living program (TLP)] and spoke with the staff about [participant's] great progress with MY TIME, and encouraged staff to praise [participant] for his effort this week. TLP staff thanked mentor for the call and made sure to pass along the message to other staff." In other cases, MY TIME staff attend participants' treatment team meetings as indicated in the following contact activity note: "This writer and [another MY TIME staff member] met with the client's treatment team in order to make a plan moving forward on how to work better with the client."

However, in numerous cases, MY TIME staff work with others in the participants' supportive networks to address concrete barriers (figure 18). The notes from one contact activity highlight how these interactions can happen:

[Participant] stated that she was not sure if she would be able to attend [interview]. She didn't have anyone to watch her child. Staff attempted to brainstorm options with her...Staff then reached out to her case worker; however, all the numbers listed were either disconnected or going straight to voicemail...Staff were able to call and get a hold of the case manager. [Case manager] was able to confirm that child care will be at [participant's] residence Thursday at noon so she can leave for her interview. Staff then contacted [participant] and notified her of the child care arrangements and suggested she contact her case worker to reconfirm the details.

FIGURE 18
Contact Activities with People in Participants' Support Network, by Quartile (n = 40)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.
Note: Data labels for some contact activities are removed for ease of reading.

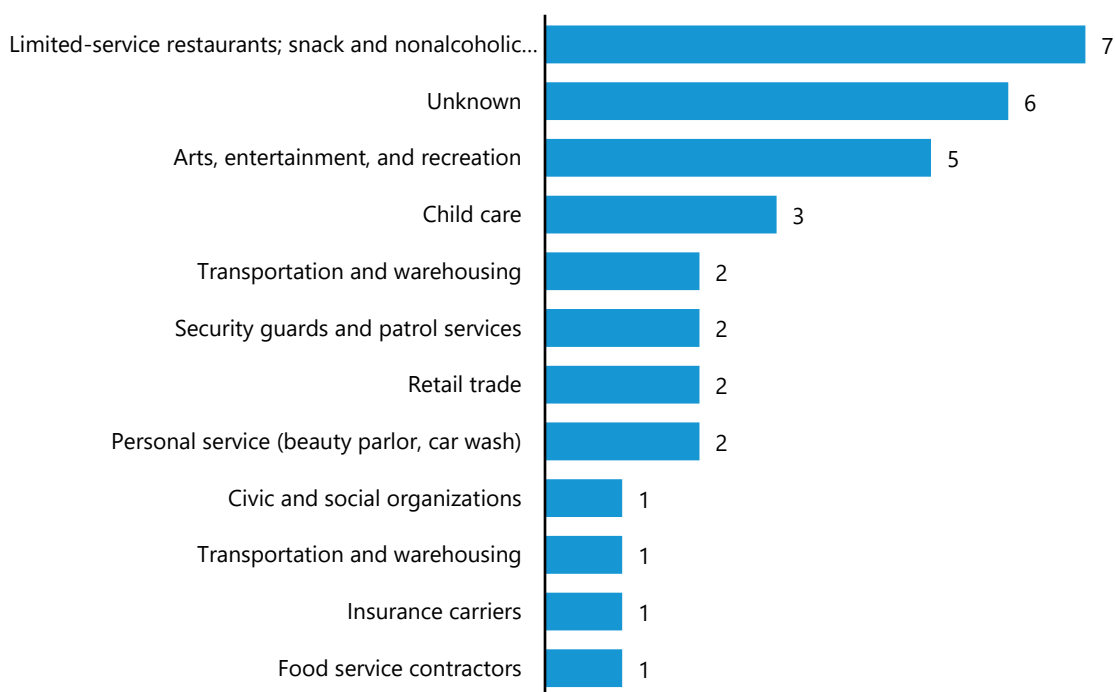
Adults in the young person's support network reach out to MY TIME staff to check in about their participant or invite MY TIME to a youth staffing meeting, but more often MY TIME staff reach out to adults in the young person's support network. Most often, MY TIME staff ask these supportive adults about youth progress in the MY TIME program, work plans, and barriers to work so they can collaborate

in supporting the young people. In two cases, MY TIME staff reported to caseworkers incidents that young people disclosed to them (sexual assault and involvement in a shooting).

MY TIME EMPLOYERS

The employers that hire MY TIME participants are largely fast-food and retail establishments (figure 19). This aligns with MY TIME’s practice of seeking potential employers near a participant’s home or through mall crawls. Two young people found employment in security after getting their certification through a training program at Lawrence Hall.

FIGURE 19
Number of Young People Employed, by Industry (n = 33)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of MY TIME program data.

Note: The “unknown” category represents employer mentor notes that indicate they picked up or dropped off a young person at work without mentioning the employer name or that a young person got a job without any mention of employer name or prior reference to applications in the data.

Of the seven participants employed in limited-service restaurants and snack and nonalcoholic beverage bars, three were employed at Try Me Café, a café run by MY TIME at the University of Chicago campus.

Six young people in the random sample were connected to internships.²⁵ MY TIME worked with the City of Chicago to get summer jobs (paid internships) through the city's One Summer Chicago (OSC) program. Of those who got internships, four were through OSC: three at nonprofit agencies and one at a summer camp. One young person got an internship at an insurance agency and one at the Museum of Science and Industry. Five of the six young people participating in an internship were in Q4 of contact activity, and two of them also had one other job while in MY TIME. The other young people participating in an internship were in Q2 of contact activity and also got another job through MY TIME.

Readiness for Rigorous Impact Evaluation and Program Data Recommendations

We found that both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME are generally operating in alignment with the logic models developed through the formative evaluation process. However, additional refinement of the models, practices, and data-collection activities are needed before a rigorous impact evaluation could be conducted. In addition, although both programs serve a large enough number of young people to find statistically significant differences between their participants and a control group of nonparticipating peers, clearer definitions of the focus populations are needed to appropriately select comparison groups and show which types of young people benefit from the program. For example, iFoster Jobs could consider tracking which young people are steered away from immediate participation, for what reason, and which of those young people choose to participate despite being discouraged. In addition, the roles and functions of supportive adults and community partners (e.g., interactions with participants and iFoster Jobs staff, referrals to youth supports or potential employer partners) could be captured in iFoster Jobs's data to explore these roles' relationship to participant success. The lack of consistent work check-in information in iFoster Jobs's data reflect a challenge with their logic model. The employer engagement model reflects the plan for iFoster Jobs's participants to get the job "on their own": iFoster Jobs helps them put their best foot forward and gets them in line for an interview for an existing job opening. However, this creates challenges around checking in with employers once a participant is employed, because the corporate partners do not know how a young person is performing on the job and the local manager where the young person works does not know the young person was part of an employment program for young people transitioning out of foster care unless the youth self-discloses.

For MY TIME, more information about youth demographics and circumstances in their referral data is needed. MY TIME staff noted that participants reveal more information about their backgrounds and circumstances as their relationships with employment mentors develop. However, when that

information is learned through interactions with young people, tracking those in a consistent way in a database outside of contact activity descriptions would help MY TIME define their focus population and show how the program impacts young people with different challenges. In fact, MY TIME leadership noted that the formative evaluation helped the program enhance data entry training to consistently log data for program management and analysis. It also helped employment mentors track their own notes about contacts to better support the young people they serve.

At this time, measuring short-term, medium-term, and long-term employment outcomes would be a challenge for both programs. Both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME need to improve data-collection efforts through ongoing staff training. Both programs largely rely on reports from participants or employers for information about employment outcomes, and neither program collects wage information. In addition, both programs encourage participants to seek employment opportunities on their own. This complicates efforts to capture employment information from young people in a timely way. An important solution might be for employment programs to develop relationships with their state employment security agencies to get unemployment insurance wage records. Although these records are reported quarterly (therefore hourly wages could not be determined), do not include government or military jobs, and would not capture employment for young people who move out of state, they would be valuable for an impact evaluation and benefit each program. In addition, classifying trade apprenticeships as internships in iFoster Jobs's data system does not accurately represent this career pathway and dilutes the meaning of supportive internships for young people assessed as not yet ready for competitive work. Creating a separate category for this type of employment would help iFoster Jobs better use their data to represent their program's employment outcomes.

In addition, both programs operate in contexts saturated with other employment programs that serve this population. This would make it difficult to tease out whether the outcomes observed are a result of participation in the program. Tightening alignment between program practices and the logic model and refining and codifying data-collection practices could create an implementation roadmap and make a demonstration in another location possible. Implementing the program in a location with enough young people transitioning out of foster care without other significant employment supports and randomly assigning young people who fit the characteristics that would benefit most for each program could be a potential approach to rigorous impact evaluation. Finally, randomizing young people into treatment and control groups would require not only the approval of the employment program but, in the case of MY TIME, also the approval of the state child welfare agency.

Lessons Learned and Considerations for the Field

One key lesson from our formative evaluation is that a one-size-fits-all model is not likely to be effective at improving employment outcomes for all young people transitioning out of foster care, especially in the context of extended foster care. Employment is a developmental experience that can vary for a 16-year-old in their first job as a retail employee, a 19-year-old looking for summer work to support their college education, a 19-year-old looking for steady work that pays enough for them to live on their own, and a 21-year-old looking to move from retail experience to clerical work in office settings. By the same token, the same employer will not be a good fit for young people at every developmental stage and with different life circumstances. It is important, from both programmatic and evaluation perspectives, to clearly articulate how program components are expected to address the developmental needs of the specific population served and develop a logic model that accurately represents the program's focus population, program components, and approach to employer engagement. Once those pieces are articulated, it is essential that programs capture the data that define their focus population, youth participation in program components, and employer engagement activities.

iFoster Jobs's practice of not matching participants with employer partners until they can pass a drug test should be reiterated throughout training so young people can do what they can to stop any drug use earlier—something that is done in trainings led by iFoster Jobs trainers but might not be strictly adhered to when trainings are conducted by community partners. iFoster Jobs should also set realistic expectations about how they learn about opportunities from their employer partners, how they work with young people to match them to potential employers and jobs, and how long the process can take, including how market forces work on employment availability, the role of participant engagement and flexibility in the job search process, or if a participant needs to stop drug use for a time.

Sometimes funding and context will shape the young people a program serves and the employers it works with. For example, we find that a contract with the child welfare system can demand that a program work with hard-to-reach young people who face multiple barriers to employment, which can make engagement more challenging and success look different. But this relationship with the child welfare system also provides the program with insights into the system's workings that they can leverage in their relationships with young people by helping them navigate that system. In fact, we found that both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME had deep knowledge of their local and state child welfare systems.

Identifying potential employers is another essential component for programs that aim to connect their participants to competitive work opportunities. Because WIBs and educational institutions are

most likely to focus on their primary functions and less likely to engage with young people who are not motivated and ready to work or face barriers to success, these institutions provide different opportunities for and constraints on an employment program. At the same time, they can provide young people with access to longer-term employment success through education and career pathways.

Our formative evaluation also highlighted some common barriers to finding and maintaining employment for young people with foster care histories (see list below). Employment programs may not always address these barriers, but they need to be aware of them and should locate and partner with resources in the community to serve young people in their program.

- **Concrete resources.** Resources such as transportation and cell phones or laptops are essential for getting to work regularly and communicating with employers when a young person cannot go to work. If a program does not provide access to transportation or communications technology, providing participants with options for seeking these out could support successful employment-seeking efforts and success in employment.
- **Legal resources.** Justice-system involvement can not only prevent a young person from getting certain types of work, but also create barriers to consistently working if the young person has to schedule work around court dates or has limited movement on home release. Providing access to legal resources and ensuring young people know when and how to communicate these challenges to an employer can help address some of these issues.
- **Housing support.** Housing becomes an increasingly urgent issue as young people transition out of foster care. Maintaining communications with the child welfare system for young people currently in care and community organizations for those who have left care could support participants in maintaining housing through the crucial early employment period until these young people earn enough to seek out housing on their own.
- **Relational support.** Emotional and developmental effects of trauma often display themselves in program participation, employment-seeking, and employment settings. Employment programs may vary in how much in-person relational support they provide to participants, but all should be aware that relational challenges often emerge through early employment experiences and prepare their participants for how to handle emotionally triggering or unfamiliar situations in the workplace.

These challenges can result in young people cycling through components of employment programs without becoming stably employed during program participation. Although both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME staff noted the nonlinear and exploratory aspects of development at this life stage, iFoster Jobs's

model relies on the program providing employer partners for young people who are ready to work and motivated to stay working. On the other hand, MY TIME staff discussed the importance of learning from mistakes at work through consistent engagement with the employment mentor. They expect that young people will fail in some ways and see this as part of building resilience for a hard-to-reach population that has been deeply affected by trauma. iFoster Jobs also recognizes the effects of trauma on this population and considers this during the job-matching process. At the same time, both programs recognized the need for this youth population to secure stable employment as they leave the child welfare system and try to become financially independent. Their models differ because their populations and relationships with employers are different.

It is essential to explore the relationship between program goals and programmatic choices, as that relationship will influence which types of young people will most benefit and how to identify and engage employers. Including evaluators in the design phase can help programs articulate the choices they make about their components, how those components are expected to work together, and how the components match the needs of their focus population. Evaluators can also make recommendations about how to measure program performance and rigorously evaluate program impacts. These issues are often not considered until after programs are implemented, resulting in lost opportunities to collect important data and an inability to identify an appropriate comparison group.

Our formative evaluations of iFoster Jobs and MY TIME illustrate not only the key components and successes of employment programs for young people transitioning out of foster care, but they also highlight that different approaches are appropriate for different youth populations and different employer relationships. Although many employment training components of these programs are similar, how they work and for whom depends on program goals. iFoster Jobs serves as a gatekeeper that introduces participants assessed as ready for competitive work to interviews for existing open positions with corporate partners. Often, these jobs serve as launching pads into an industry with the potential for growth. MY TIME focuses on developing mentoring relationships with its participants, meeting young people where they are, and building on small successes to help participants develop the skills and resilience that will serve them well with future employment. Often, these jobs serve as learning experiences and help build a young person's résumé and skills that are foundational to later success in chosen occupations or career pathways. Planning for alignment between the program model, population served, and local context is essential to program success.

Appendix. Data and Methods

Site visits

For both programs, we began our inquiry with initial telephone calls to program leadership and then scheduled site visits where we conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with program staff, participants, and other stakeholders (table A.1). In addition, we observed numerous iFoster Jobs activities in both LA and Riverside such as trainings, Assessment Days, and Boutique Days. For MY TIME, we observed informal interactions among young people and between them and staff at MY TIME's offices.

TABLE A.1
Site Visit Data Collection

iFoster Jobs		MY TIME	
Respondent type	Number of respondents	Respondent type	Number of respondents
iFoster leadership	2	Lawrence Hall CEO	1
iFoster program coordinators	2	MY TIME leadership	3
iFoster trainers	2	DCFS contract manager	1
Los Angeles (LA) collaborative partners	5	MY TIME employment mentor	1
LA employer partners	3	MY TIME employment specialist	1
LA referral partners (case managers)	10	MY TIME participants and alumni	7
LA program participants	10		
LA program alumni	3		
Riverside collaborative partners	5		
Riverside partner trainers	2		
Riverside community training site partner	1		
Riverside referral partners	2		
Riverside program participants			
Riverside program alum	1		

Sources: Qualitative data collected from iFoster Jobs and MY TIME site visits.

Program Data

Both iFoster Jobs and MY TIME have electronic databases that capture demographic information about their participants, participant referral sources, program participation, and employer names. iFoster Jobs captures demographic information from referral information (often incomplete) and through their screening calls with potential participants. iFoster Jobs provided the research team with a single

dataset that included all information. Except for age, MY TIME captures demographic information largely through participant disclosure over time. MY TIME provided the research team with two datasets, one that included referral and demographic information and one that included contact activities between program staff and participants (table A.2).

TABLE A.2
Program Data

Data category	iFoster jobs	MY TIME
Participant characteristics	Gender Race/ethnicity Juvenile or adult record Parent or caregiver Foster care status	Age at start of program Gender Race/ethnicity Criminal history* Criminal conviction* Substance use* Highest grade completed* Has GED/high school diploma* Pregnant/parenting* Has work experience*
Program participation	Dates for**: attendance at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ trainings ■ Boutique Day ■ Assessment Day ■ completed applications ■ job/internship match 	Dates for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ program start ■ program end ■ contact with staff ■ training ■ help with applications ■ scheduling interviews ■ transportation ■ other support ■ completed applications ■ completed interviews ■ hired
Employer information	Employer name	Employer name

Sources: iFoster Jobs and MY TIME program data.

* Not enough data are recorded in these categories for analysis.

** This does not include all contacts because iFoster Jobs staff members are not expected to record every contact with staff. For our analyses, we only included contacts where the young person reached a “milestone,” transitioning from one component of the program to another.

Analytic Methods

The following notes explain our approach to certain analyses based on each program’s data:

- **iFoster Jobs employment outcomes and milestones analyses.** We defined those who “got a job” as any participant who had an “employer check-in” listed as “completed,” an “employer”

name entered regardless of whether or not they had a “job match” or “internship match” listed, or a “job match” or “internship” match listed as “completed.”²⁶

- **iFoster Jobs time from Assessment Day to employment analysis.** We included only participants who had a “job match” or a “youth-internship match” with a date listed in the data with the activity marked as “complete,” or the activity marked as “scheduled” with an employer listed (not including data on employer check-ins without a job match).
- **MY TIME participants’ time in program analysis.** MY TIME’s data do not allow for analysis of time from end of training to first job. However, to assess length of time in the program, we counted the number of days from the first contact activity to the last. In some cases, participants had significant gaps between recorded contact activity. This may be because they left and then returned to try the program again. For this reason, we considered more than 90 days without contact activity to be a break from the program, indicating a new spell of engagement.
- **MY TIME contact activities analysis.** Comparing the drop-down fields and text fields describing interactions showed discrepancies. For example, a submitted application could be noted in a text field, but “submitted application” is not the type of interaction chosen from the drop-down menu for this field. We also found that numerous different activities were sometimes logged under one type of contact activity from the drop-down menu. For example, transportation for job developing, submitting applications, and completing interviews may be noted as one contact under the drop-down contact type “interview completed.”

Notes

- ¹ As of December 11, 2020, 31 states and the District of Columbia have extended foster care to age 21 or beyond.
- ² Other criteria to remain in care after age 18 include working toward a secondary degree or the equivalent, being enrolled in a postsecondary institution or vocational education program, participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment, or being incapable of fulfilling any of the criteria because of a medical condition.
- ³ Although our site visits included Los Angeles and Riverside Counties, we only received program data for Los Angeles.
- ⁴ The number of site visits and data collected are outlined in the appendix.
- ⁵ In Los Angeles, iFoster Jobs partners with the TAY (Transition Age Youth) Collaborative, a group of organizations including the Alliance for Children’s Rights and Independent Living Programs. In Riverside, iFoster Jobs partners with the county child welfare agency.
- ⁶ Most often, a young person’s “supportive adult” is the referral source to the program—either an independent living coordinator or group home staff. Occasionally young people will self-refer to the program. In these cases, iFoster Jobs staff help them identify an adult who can support them in their program and employment efforts, such as a social worker or foster family member.
- ⁷ These professionals include employer partner staff, case managers, and staff at community partner organizations.
- ⁸ This information is based on discussion with program leadership. iFoster Jobs did not share data about participants’ drug use timing because of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) Act considerations.
- ⁹ Lawrence Hall’s official mission statement, 2021.
- ¹⁰ In 2019, MY TIME stopped running the café because they faced challenges with maintaining café managers.
- ¹¹ The role of the MY TIME employment specialist was eliminated in 2018. Before then, the employment specialist met with young people the Wednesday following training to search online for positions and fill out applications. Employment mentors continue to work with the few employer relationships that MY TIME has built. In 2019 an employment specialist role was created at the agency level (Lawrence Hall) to help successful MY TIME participants transition into other programs that provide entry into career pathways.
- ¹² A few disqualifying criteria are in MY TIME’s contract with DCFS. Young people with histories of sexually offensive behavior, who require a one-on-one staff escort, who have low IQ, or who have some physical disabilities may not be admitted into the program, or depending on the individual circumstances the program may request a program exception for a young person with one of these “disqualifying” circumstances.
- ¹³ In summer 2018, MY TIME changed to a model including a three-day in-office training and a two-day job search training in the field and began providing a \$100 stipend to young people for completing the training.
- ¹⁴ Analysis on average time to a job by cohort is on page 23.
- ¹⁵ We conducted chi-squared tests for these analyses.
- ¹⁶ iFoster Jobs staff verify and fill in missing demographic information on referral forms during their screening calls with potential participants. Despite staff members’ efforts, data are still missing for each characteristic.
- ¹⁷ We were unable to obtain data for Riverside/San Bernadino from iFoster Jobs.

- ¹⁸ Information about how we determined each milestone in iFoster Jobs's data can be found in the appendix.
- ¹⁹ One participant was coded as having been sent to both training and Assessment Day, so they were dropped from our analysis comparing these two groups.
- ²⁰ We dropped cohort 1 ($n = 18$) from this analysis because the time from Assessment Day to Job Match (473 days) seemed to be a data anomaly.
- ²¹ We combined internships and jobs because of the small number of young people in some cohorts.
- ²² Industry categories are based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).
- ²³ We included in our analyses only participants who had at least one year from their MY TIME start date.
- ²⁴ The initial quartile distribution on which the random sample was drawn included 438 participants who had duplicate entries in the dataset. Redistribution changed the number of contacts in the quartiles slightly. Activity counts for one additional participant were added to Q1 because one person originally chosen for Q1 had additional entries under a different ID in Q4. In addition, two young people in Q2 have eight contacts and one person in Q4 has 37 contacts.
- ²⁵ Internships are not counted as job placements in MY TIME reporting data for their DCFS contract; rather these serve as ways for participants to gain skills, exposure to a particular field, or a paycheck while they search for a permanent job.
- ²⁶ This is based on our discussion with iFoster Jobs leadership about how to interpret their data.

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