



Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs

**Evaluation of the Life Skills Training Program
Los Angeles County, California:
Final Report**

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Life Skills Training Program Executive Summary

Approximately 510,000 children lived in out-of-home care on September 30, 2006, the most recent date for which national estimates are available. In fiscal year 2006, over 26,000 youths remained in care until they were legally “emancipated” to “independent living,” usually due to reaching the age of majority or upon graduation from high school. On average, these youth have limited education and employment experience, relatively poor mental and physical health, and a relatively high likelihood of experiencing unwanted outcomes such as homelessness, incarceration, and nonmarital pregnancy.

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 amended Title IV-E to create the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), giving states more funding and greater flexibility in providing support to youth making the transition to independent living. It also required evaluation of such services. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children’s Bureau contracted with the Urban Institute and its partners—the Chapin Hall Center for Children and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago—to conduct this evaluation. The goal of this study is to determine the effects of the programs funded under CFCIP in achieving key outcomes for youth. Four programs are being evaluated under this contract. The subject of this report is the Life Skills Training (LST) program of Los Angeles County.¹

Description of the Life Skills Training Program

The Life Skills Training program is similar in many respects to services provided in numerous locations throughout the United States (i.e., classroom- and practicum-based training), though there are special aspects as well. There is an extensive outreach component, and the community college locale enables youths to be served in their communities and also exposed to community college campuses. The program serves a large number of youth and was oversubscribed for service, having nearly twice as many youths referred as program participants.

The five-week curriculum consists of ten three-hour classes held twice a week in 19 community colleges throughout Los Angeles County. The program is based on seven state-adopted competency skill areas: education, employment, daily living skills, survival skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal/social skills, and computer/Internet skills. Instructors have the flexibility to design their own classes and activities, invite guest speakers, and use experiential methods to impart information. Pre- and post-test assessments are provided to evaluate whether a youth has made progress in skill acquisition. In addition, an outreach component is staffed with 20 full- and part-time workers dedicated to recruiting youths into the classes. Outreach advisors are responsible for recruiting youths, providing short-term case management, and documenting services. Outreach advisors assess the youths with the Ansell-Casey assessment tool as well as other tools at the beginning and end of the class modules.

¹ The Life Skills Training Program offered through the Community College Foundation is not related to or based on the LifeSkills Training substance abuse prevention program.

The Evaluation

The evaluation consists of two components: an impact study involving three in-person interviews over two years and a process study. The sample consists of youths who were in out-of-home care placements and were 17 years old at the time of assignment, eligible for Chafee services, and deemed appropriate for Life Skills Training. A total of 482 youths were deemed eligible for the evaluation and 234 were assigned to the LST (treatment) group, while 248 youths were assigned to the control group. At the baseline, 97 percent of eligible cases were interviewed, and 88 percent of these were interviewed at the second follow-up. Overall, 76.5 percent of the 234 youths in the LST group enrolled in an LST classroom module, 70.1 percent attended a session, and 65 percent graduated from a module.

As in other field experiments involving social services where the control over program receipt is not complete, some members of the control group received services (e.g., attended one or more LST class sessions). Specifically, according to administrative records, 26.6 percent of the 248 youths in the control group enrolled in the program, 25 percent attended at least one class, and 22.6 percent graduated from the program. The levels of reported receipt of most independent living services by the second follow-up did not differ significantly between assignment groups.

Impact Findings

Concrete measures of the transition to adulthood were examined. Education and employment measures include completion of a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma and current employment status. Economic well-being was measured by reported earnings and current net worth, economic hardship, and receipt of formal and informal financial assistance. Youths were also asked how prepared they felt in 18 areas of adult living and in obtaining a job. Finally, the evaluation considered youths' housing, including residential stability and homelessness, as well as delinquency, pregnancy, and receipt of needed documentation (e.g., Social Security card) and accounts (e.g., a bank or savings account).

The impact evaluation found few impacts on any outcome assessed. After adjusting significance levels to account for the possibility of false positive results, no significant impacts remained. While the problems encountered in trying to conduct a random-assignment evaluation of LST require more complex analyses than would be the case if the evaluation had fewer violations of random assignment, the evaluation findings give no reason to believe that LST had a significant positive impact on any of the concrete indicators of successful transition to adulthood (e.g., educational attainment, employment, earnings, and avoidance of economic hardship).

Lessons for Independent Living Programs

The large percentage of foster youths who reported receipt of help in acquiring various kinds of life skills from sources other than LST calls into question whether classroom-based life skills training can add much to what foster youths are already obtaining from other sources. In addition, for most youths, it appears that independent living assistance comes from a variety of sources. Although the most commonly reported sources of independent living assistance included biological parents or other original family members and teachers and schools, sizable proportions of youths reported receiving

assistance from foster parents, caseworkers, and independent living programs. Child welfare authorities would be wise to assess how available these other sources of help are to youth in their jurisdictions when considering investing in classroom-based life skills training.

The evaluation calls into question the notion that classroom-based life skills training, in and of itself, is likely to have much impact on the well-being of foster youth in transition to adulthood. Child welfare authorities should not expect classroom-based life skills training to suffice as a strategy to prepare foster youth for adulthood.

Our evaluation provides strong evidence that foster youth are already getting some of this kind of help from their foster care providers, though there is room for improvement. Further research should be conducted to understand the degree to which foster youth acquire independent living skills from their caregivers and whether knowledge thus gained is more enduring than knowledge gained through classroom-based training. In addition, promising approaches to training foster care providers in teaching independent living skills and supporting them in such efforts should be rigorously evaluated.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction

Approximately 510,000 children lived in out-of-home care as of September 30, 2006, the most recent date for which national estimates are available (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] 2008). This represents about six children and adolescents per thousand. The vast majority of children and youth will exit care to what are considered permanent placements. Of the estimated 289,000 children who left out-of-home care in the United States during fiscal year 2006, 86 percent went to live with family, were adopted, or were placed in the home of a legal guardian (DHHS 2008). A few (2 percent) were transferred to another public agency, such as a probation or mental health department, and a few (2 percent) ran away and were discharged from care. Nine percent, or 26,517, remained in care until they were legally “emancipated” to “independent living,” usually due to reaching the age of majority or upon graduation from high school. In practice, few states allow youth to remain in care much past their 18th birthday (Bussey et al. 2000). About 5 percent (21,834) of all children and youths living in out-of-home care were between 18 and 21 years old.

Research findings suggest that the transition to adulthood for foster youth in the United States is difficult. On average, they have had poor educational experiences, leading them to bring to the transition very limited human capital upon which to build a career or economic assets. They also often suffer from mental health problems that can negatively affect other outcome domains, and these problems are less likely to be treated once youth leave care. In addition, foster youth frequently become involved in crime and with the justice and corrections systems after aging out of foster care. Further, their employment prospects are bleak, and few of them escape poverty during the transition. At the same time, many former foster youth experience homelessness and housing instability after leaving care. Compared with their peers, former foster youth have higher rates of out-of-wedlock parenting. Interestingly, in spite of court-ordered separation from their families, often for many years, most former foster youth rely on their families to some extent during the transition to adulthood, though this is not always without risk (Barth 1990; Bussey et al. 2000; Cook, Fleischman, and Grimes 1991; Courtney et al. 2001; Courtney et al. 2005; Dworsky and Courtney 2000; Fanshel, Finch, and Grundy 1990; Festinger 1983; Frost and Jurich 1983; Goerge et al. 2002; Harari 1980; Jones and Moses 1984; Mangine et al. 1990; Pecora et al. 2005; Pettiford 1981; Sosin, Coulson, and Grossman 1988; Sosin, Piliavin, and Westerfeldt 1990; Susser et al. 1991; Zimmerman 1982).

These poor outcomes suggest the need for services to better prepare foster youth for the transition to adulthood. Two decades ago, there were few such services. Numerous independent living services have been developed since then as federal funding for independent living services has increased. A recent review by Montgomery et al. (2006) found that no rigorous evaluations of such services have been conducted. Rigorous evaluation of various independent living services is needed to inform efforts to improve their effectiveness.

This report presents findings from a rigorous evaluation of the Life Skills Training Program (LST) in Los Angeles County.^{2,3} LST provides 30 hours of life skills training over five weeks to

² The Life Skills Training Program is operated by The Community College Foundation (TCCF). TCCF is a nonprofit organization in California that provides a range of programs to support educational technology, internship, scholarship, and at-risk youth initiatives. TCCF’s Human Development and Youth Services division

foster youths ages 16 and older. The classes are held on community college campuses throughout Los Angeles County. The program is staffed by workers tasked with conducting outreach to youths to engage them in the program and providing some case management. We examine the program's implementation and its impact on the youths served with a rigorous random-assignment method with a two-year follow-up. This is one of the impact reports from a four-site study required by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, funded by the Children's Bureau and directed by the Children's Bureau and the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This work is important for several reasons. First, the work confirms that youth who age out of foster care are not doing well and need further attention from the systems that have served them before they turned 18 years old. Second, child welfare systems can and should rigorously test interventions using the best possible evaluation methods. It is possible to conduct rigorous evaluation in the child welfare system, and it is crucial to do so if the field is to develop services that address the great needs of its children and youth. Finally, it is especially important to do this work now. The field has developed a significant number of new services in the past few decades, but without rigorous evaluation it is impossible to know what is truly helping the children and families in the child welfare system.

In the remainder of this chapter, we provide an overview of the Chafee legislation and the evaluation purpose, as well as site selection for the evaluation and research questions for the study. We also review the research design and methodology for both the impact and process studies. In chapter 2, we describe the LST program using information obtained as part of the process study component of the evaluation. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the evaluation's implementation, including a discussion of service take-up, sample development, and a description of the sample. Results of the evaluation's impact study are discussed in chapter 4. A discussion of process study findings that shed light on the impact findings is also presented in chapter 4. Finally, chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings of the evaluation and how it relates to the broader field of independent living programs.

Overview of Legislation and Evaluation Purpose

The Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999 (Public Law 106-169) amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to create the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), giving states more funding and greater flexibility in providing support for youth making the transition to independent living. The FCIA allocates \$140 million per year in independent living services funding to states, allows states to use up to 30 percent of these funds for room and board, enables states to assist young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 who have left foster care, and permits states to extend Medicaid eligibility to former foster children up to age 21. State performance is a much higher priority under the FCIA than under earlier iterations of federal policy in this area. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is required to

offers programs at 49 community colleges throughout the state, 19 of which are in Los Angeles County, and reaches more than 14,000 youths and adults annually.

³ The Life Skills Training Program offered through The Community College Foundation is not related to or based on the LifeSkills Training substance abuse prevention program.

develop a set of outcome measures to assess state performance in managing independent living programs, and states are required to collect data on these outcomes. In addition, the FCIA requires that funding under the statute be set aside for evaluations of promising independent living programs:

The Secretary shall conduct evaluations of such State programs funded under this section as the Secretary deems to be innovative or of potential national significance. The evaluation of any such program shall include information on the effects of the program on education, employment, and personal development. To the maximum extent practicable, the evaluations shall be based on rigorous scientific standards including random assignment to treatment and control groups. The Secretary is encouraged to work directly with State and local governments to design methods for conducting the evaluations, directly or by grant, contract, or cooperative agreement (Title IV-E, Section 477 [42 U.S.C. 677], g, 1).

The language in the FCIA requiring rigorous evaluation of independent living programs reflects the acknowledgment by lawmakers that little is known about the effectiveness of independent living programs. In response to this language, the Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau has contracted with the Urban Institute and its partners—the Chapin Hall Center for Children and the National Opinion Research Center—to conduct an evaluation of selected programs funded through the CFCIP, the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs. The goal is to determine the effects of independent living programs funded under CFCIP in achieving key outcomes for participating youths, including increased educational attainment, higher employment rates and stability, better interpersonal and relationship skills, fewer nonmarital pregnancies and births, and reduced rates of delinquency and crime.

Program Site Selection

In 2001, the Department of Health and Human Services contracted with the Urban Institute and its partners to conduct an evaluability assessment of independent living programs. The goal of this assessment was to identify programs that could be rigorously evaluated and to develop evaluation designs that would meet the requirements of the authorizing legislation. The evaluation team—in coordination with the Children's Bureau and a federally-appointed technical work group—established criteria for selecting sites for the evaluability assessment. The Children's Bureau selected programs to be evaluated.

To be considered for the evaluation, programs were required to exhibit the following:

- Programs should take in sufficient numbers of youths to allow for the creation of a research sample of adequate size.
- Programs should have excess demand for services so that randomly assigning youths to a control group is possible while serving the same number of youths.
- Programs should be reasonably stable.

- Programs should be relatively intensive.
- Programs should have well-developed theories of intervention (“logic models”), linking intended outcomes with intervention activities.
- Programs should be consistently implemented.
- Sites should have available data with which to understand the flow of clients and to follow clients to assess key outcomes.
- Relevant decisionmakers should be willing to support participation in a rigorous evaluation.
- Program sites should be willing to make minor changes needed to accommodate the research and should be able to maintain them for the full research period.

The evaluation team conducted this assessment to identify programs suitable for evaluation between October 2001 and January 2003 and involved the following:

- identifying independent living programs in the United States;
- developing information on critical aspects of these programs;
- categorizing the programs;
- selecting programs for further study;
- visiting the selected programs;
- applying the criteria for evaluability to selected programs; and
- recommending programs for evaluation.

Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia were contacted and 87 different independent living programs were examined. Site visits were conducted with the 23 programs that seemed most promising. Most of the programs did not meet the basic criteria for evaluability; that is, most did not have sufficient program intake to allow the creation of a research sample of adequate size or the excess demand that makes random assignment possible while serving the same number of youths.

Four independent living programs were selected for inclusion in the evaluation, which used a random-assignment design. The selected programs encompass a set of critical independent living services and represent a range of program types. The programs include an employment services program in Kern County, California, modeled on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families work development assistance; an intensive case management and mentoring program in

Massachusetts; a tutoring and mentoring program; and a classroom-based life skills training program, both serving youths in Los Angeles County. Note that these four programs are not representative of all of the different types of independent living services available to youth in the United States. Rather, they represent a range of different interventions that independent living programs use. As a result, the findings from the Multi-Site Evaluation cannot be generalized to all independent living programs. It is also important to note that the study team attempted to identify a housing program to evaluate and investigated several different housing programs located throughout the country. However, low numbers of participants in these programs made random assignment difficult and would not provide sufficient samples for the analyses.

The LST program provides a service (life skills training classes) commonly provided throughout the United States. Although LST may provide a typical set of services, there are unusual aspects of the program that may provide useful information for other independent living programs. At the time of the evaluation, 19 community colleges throughout Los Angeles County offered the LST program, enabling youth to be served in their communities while being exposed to community college campuses. The outreach component was unusual in that many life skills programs do not have staff dedicated to recruiting and engaging youth. The program had roughly 20 full- and part-time staff members dedicated to recruiting youths into the classes. Aside from programmatic aspects, the program was selected because of the large number of youths that it serves (nearly 600 annually at the time of the assessment). LST is an oversubscribed service, having nearly twice as many referrals as program participants.

Research Questions

In addressing the goals of the Chafee legislation, the Multi-Site Evaluation addressed the following research questions.

- Program impacts: What impact does access to the identified intervention have for youth compared with similar youth who have access to standard services or “services as usual” on key outcomes like self-sufficiency and well-being (e.g., educational skills, interpersonal skills, living skills, employment skills, psychosocial well-being)?
- Program mission: How does the program identify its logic model? Does service implementation follow the logic model and mission?
- Service implementation: How are services implemented? Who performs the service delivery? What is the training and experience of staff delivering services?
- Who is being served: What types of youth are being served? Is there an assessment protocol to determine the types and duration of services needed? Who is excluded? Do the intended populations receive services?
- Program challenges: What are barriers to implementation?

- Policy variables: How might external community or state-level variables contribute to outcomes achieved by program participants?
- Portability of program models: To what extent might these programs be adapted to other locales? How transportable are these services and program models to other programs in other regions?

Research Design and Methods

This evaluation used an experimental design, whereby some youths were randomly referred to the service being evaluated, while others were referred to standard services or “services as usual.” Youths assigned to the group referred to the service, or treatment group, are referred to as “LST group youth.” Youths that were not assigned to receive the service, but rather to receive services as usual, are referred to as “control group youth.” Chapter 3 contains a more detailed description of the random-assignment process and LST and control groups. The evaluation consists of two elements: an impact study and a process study. To determine the effects of independent living programs on the key outcomes required by the Chafee legislation, youths in both the LST and control groups were interviewed in person at three points over the course of the evaluation. For the process study, members of the evaluation team visited the sites to observe the programs and conduct interviews and focus groups with youths, staff, administrators, and service providers. A more in-depth description of the evaluation methodology appears in appendix A.

Impact Study

The main source of data for identifying program impacts comes from interviews with foster youths. For the LST evaluation, we drew samples of eligible youths and randomly assigned each youth to either the LST (treatment) or control groups. Our target was to interview a total of 450 youths across the LST and control groups at the baseline. Each respondent was asked to participate in an initial interview and two follow-up interviews, with expected first and second follow-up retention rates of 85 and 80 percent, respectively. Each follow-up interview was to take place approximately one year after the previous interview with that respondent.

Sample Overview. The LST analysis sample consists of 467 youths born March 1986 to February 1987. The youths were in foster care placements under the guardianship of the Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services. To be in scope for the study, the youths had to be 17 years old, in out-of-home care, eligible for Chafee services, and deemed able to benefit from life skills training.⁴ We chose to include 17-year-olds based on conversations with program staff. They felt that those younger than age 17 are difficult to engage in thinking about independent living. Also, with more youths referred than can be served, they prioritize those youths who are closest to emancipation age.

⁴ The determination that a youth would not benefit from services is made by the Department of Child and Family Services and according to its policy means that the youth is physically or mentally unable to benefit from independent living services.

Data collection far exceeded our expected response rates. We completed baseline interviews with nearly 97 percent of the in-scope sample. Youths were very cooperative and interested in participating as evidenced by the very small number of refusals. Gatekeepers, or those individuals who provided access to the youth like caregivers, were more reluctant and account for the majority of non-interviews (see the discussion of challenges of the evaluation).⁵ Response rates do not differ greatly between LST and control, with rates slightly higher for controls. Cases determined to be out of scope after sampling constitute more than 19 percent of the total sample. The largest category involves youths who were found to have been reunited with a parent or living with a legal guardian during the field period.

More-detailed information on response and retention rates and out-of-scope conditions for the LST sample population is provided in appendix A.

Youth Questionnaire. The youth questionnaire is the primary data collection tool used in the study. It provides the foundation for the impact study, but also offers critical information about youths' backgrounds and experiences. The evaluation team designed the youth questionnaire primarily by using questions from existing surveys. The sources were selected to provide questions that had been used frequently and would provide good possibilities to compare with other samples. Four surveys provided the bulk of the questions. The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (the "Midwest study") and the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Wellbeing (NSCAW) provided questions about child welfare and provided comparison samples of foster youths. In particular, the Midwest Study provided a good comparison sample of foster youths aging out of care. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997 cohort (NLSY97), and the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (AddHealth) provided many of the other questions and allowed comparisons with nationally representative samples of adolescents aging into their twenties. Special attention to the questionnaire design and selection of items was made so that the core questionnaire could be used with youths referred to independent living services at each selected site and so that the same questionnaire could be used in each round, with minor variations across rounds. LST and control youths were interviewed shortly after referral and random assignment, and follow-up interviews occurred one year and two years later.

The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 90 minutes; actual average times were closer to 100 minutes. Most of the interview was conducted with the interviewer asking the questions and recording the youths' responses on a laptop computer. Some sections of the questionnaire were administered with audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) whereby the youths can either read the questions on the computer screen or listen to a recorded voice asking the questions. The computer faces the respondent and the interviewer does not see the youth's responses. Sensitive sections of the interview were conducted with ACASI.⁶ Where required, the questionnaire was adapted to specific program sites. For example, in Los Angeles

⁵ The distinction between youth refusals and caregiver refusals is murky. When caregivers told interviewers that the youth refused to do the interview, the interviewer tried to get the youth to indicate this to him or her directly, because caregivers frequently did not speak accurately for the youths. In cases where the caregiver would not allow us to speak with the youths, we coded the case as a gatekeeper refusal.

⁶ The sections administered through ACASI were Substance Abuse, Sexual Behavior, Victimization, and Delinquency and Externalizing Behaviors.

County’s Life Skills Training program, staff administer a pre- and post-training life skills assessment to youths who participated in the courses. During the baseline interviews, the interviewer administered the paper self-completed pre-training questionnaire to youths assigned to the control group.

Outcome Measures. Sections of the questionnaire served to identify the services received, short- and long-term outcomes, and moderating factors that influence the efficacy of the services received. Table 1.1 displays categories of data collection topics (sections of the questionnaire) by their purpose for analysis. These topics were primarily addressed in the surveys, though qualitative data collected during the process study (described below) also sheds light on some of these areas of interest.

- *Population Characteristics.* The framework begins with the characteristics of the population of interest in each evaluation site, their demographics, and fixed factors, such as prior experiences in care and prior victimization.
- *Intervention and Services.* The evaluation tests whether an intervention in the site alters outcomes of the treatment youths compared with youths receiving the usual services. We gathered information on both the focal independent living services (offered only to the treatment group) and the other services received by treatment and control group youths.
- *Moderating Factors.* A set of factors was expected to moderate the effects of the interventions. These factors operate at many levels (the youths themselves, the family constellation, and the community). These are separated from the characteristics of the youths because they may change over time.
- *Short-Term (Intermediate) Outcomes.* Early data collection after the intervention will establish the short-term outcomes of the treatment and control group youths. These outcomes may pick up progress on pathways to the final outcomes of interest (for example, education that will ultimately increase success in the labor market) or behaviors that affect ultimate outcomes (for example, sexual behaviors that affect fertility and health risks).
- *Longer-Term Outcomes.* The ultimate goals of the interventions are related to successful functioning in adulthood. Key areas mentioned for the evaluation in the Foster Care Independence Act include educational attainment, employment, and “personal development.” The latter includes physical health, fertility, economic hardship, mental health, incarceration, and victimization.

TABLE 1.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYTIC PURPOSES OF QUESTIONNAIRE SECTIONS

Population Characteristics	Intervention and Services	Moderating Factors	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Demographics	Independent living services of interest	Relationships	Employment and income	Employment and Income
Prior experiences in care	Other services	Social support	Education	Education

TABLE 1.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYTIC PURPOSES OF QUESTIONNAIRE SECTIONS

Population Characteristics	Intervention and Services	Moderating Factors	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Prior victimization		Reading ability	Health behaviors	Physical health
		Living arrangements	Substance abuse	Fertility and family formation
		Substance abuse	Sexual behavior	Economic hardship or homelessness
		Pro-social and other activities	Delinquency	Mental health
		Mental health	Mental health	Victimization
		Attitudes and expectations		
		Sense of preparedness		

Process Study

A key component of the evaluation was examining how the programs under evaluation were implemented, commonly referred to as a *process or implementation analysis*. The process study played a key role in documenting the nature of the programs, interpreting the findings of the impact analysis, and suggesting directions for refining the impact study’s design. Specifically, the process analysis describes and analyzes the programs under evaluation by addressing two broad areas: the current and changing context and the implementation of the services. Each part of the process analysis from the site visits to observational analysis addressed one of these two areas.

Program data have been collected to document the recruitment for and the receipt of services under the evaluation. The extent of the program data collected varies by program. However, it generally includes data on recruitment (e.g., successful and unsuccessful attempts), service participation (e.g., how much of the service the youth received, such as number of classes attended), and crossovers (i.e., control group youths who received the service under evaluation).

To obtain an in-depth understanding of the programs under evaluation and the broader independent living services available to youths in both the control and the LST groups, site visits were conducted for each program under evaluation. During the visits, a number of semistructured interviews were conducted with administrators from the public child welfare agency, private agencies or organizations providing services to youths in the control and LST groups, and other key stakeholders. To gain a full understanding of services and operations from all relevant perspectives, semistructured interviews and focus groups were also conducted with caseworkers, supervisors, and independent living workers in the public child welfare agency and

with staff and administrators of the programs under evaluation. Focus groups were conducted with youths who had and had not received the services. In each site, members of the process study team also observed staff working with the programs under evaluation.

Site visits were conducted in Los Angeles in October 2003 and August 2005. Table 1.2 lays out the types and numbers of respondents by qualitative method. Interviews and focus group protocols focused on the following areas (although not all topics were appropriate for all respondents): program planning, operational aspects, service delivery, and program assessment.

During the first site visit in October 2003, six members of the evaluation team spent two weeks in Los Angeles. During this visit, the team met with administrators, supervisors, caseworkers, and independent living coordinators within the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services to understand the broader independent living context in the county. The team conducted semistructured interviews and focus groups with staff from the LST program, operated under contract with Los Angeles County by The Community College Foundation (TCCF) to understand the programs under evaluation. Focus groups were conducted with youths who received LST services and with LST workshop instructors. Team members were also able to interview five community college program directors, several stakeholders involved with emancipation in Los Angeles County, and several service providers. Finally, the evaluation team conducted five observations of LST classes at three community colleges.

For the second site visit, four members of the evaluation team spent a week in Los Angeles. The purpose of the first visit was to understand the broad context of independent living services and the programs under evaluation, and the aim of the second visit was to understand more fully how the programs operate. For this reason, the second visit contained more in-depth interviews with and observations of key program staff for each program. In addition, the team conducted interviews with key Department of Child and Family Services emancipation services staff, transition coordinators, and members of the Emancipation Program Partnership. Focus groups with foster youths were planned; however, these groups were poorly attended. After the visit, during September and October 2005, team members conducted hour-long individual phone interviews with those program staff who conducted outreach for the LST program.

In preparation for the site visits, TCCF program documents and Department of Child and Family Services policies relevant to independent living were collected and reviewed. This document review has continued throughout the duration of the study in Los Angeles.

TABLE 1.2. LST PROCESS STUDY RESPONDENTS IN LOS ANGELES BY QUALITATIVE METHOD

	Type of Respondent	First Site Visit (October 2003)	Second Site Visit (August 2005)	Respondents by Type (n)
<i>Individual interviews</i>	DCFS administrators/managers	5	6	11
	TCCF program administrators/managers	3	3	6
	TCCF program staff	0	11	11
	Other stakeholders	14	4	18
<i>Focus groups</i>	DCFS supervisors	55	0	55
	DCFS workers	54	8	62
	TCCF program staff	21	0	21

TABLE 1.2. LST PROCESS STUDY RESPONDENTS IN LOS ANGELES BY QUALITATIVE METHOD

Type of Respondent	First Site Visit (October 2003)	Second Site Visit (August 2005)	Respondents by Type (<i>n</i>)
Youths	8	8	16
<i>Observations</i> TCCF program staff	3	6	9
Respondents by site visit (<i>n</i>)	163	46	209

Note: Los Angeles County; DCFS = Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services; TCCF = The

As discussed earlier, program data were collected to document the recruitment for and receipt of services under the evaluation. For LST, data were collected on recruitment into workshops (noting the reasons a youth did not accept the service) and service participation (including attendance and graduation). These data were collected for youths assigned to the LST and control groups. Examining program data on control group members has allowed the evaluation team to identify violations of control group status. These data are presented in chapter 3.

Evaluation Challenges

To better understand the remainder of this report, it is important to briefly discuss some of the major challenges experienced throughout the evaluation. These challenges will be discussed in greater detail in appendix A, but it is necessary to outline some of them here. First, in any evaluation with an experimental design, there are inherent challenges in using administrative data to randomly assign participants, as well as in maintaining the random assignment (i.e., ensuring that participants in the control group do not receive the service or intervention and that participants in the LST group do). In addition, imposing upon established procedures in a given program is difficult. As will be discussed at length in chapter 2 and appendix A, the evaluation changed some of TCCF's procedures, which proved challenging to maintain. Finally, the evaluation faced significant challenges due to inherent characteristics of the foster care population. Similar in some respects to other disadvantaged populations, youths in the foster care system are highly mobile both when they are in care and once they have been emancipated. These youths also have higher rates of mental health issues and behavioral issues. These difficulties are just a few of the many that make working with the foster care population challenging.

Report Organization

This chapter introduced the purpose and intent of the Multi-Site Evaluation, as well as an overview of the research design of the evaluation, including outcome measures. While the impact study is a critical part of the evaluation, it is important to first provide a better understanding of the design, context, and structure of the Life Skills Training Program, presented in chapter 2.

Chapter 2. Life Skills Training Program: Context, Description, and Operations

Introduction

The information provided in this chapter plays an important role in the Multi-Site Evaluation. Describing the Life Skills Training (LST) program in detail, including program implementation, staffing, referral, recruitment, and services provided, offers an understanding of how the program operates. This information provides background needed to understand the results of the impact study. This chapter begins with an overview of the context within which the LST program operates, including state and local demographics, and local policies and practices for youth aging out of foster care. The discussion then presents logic models for the LST program and the context within which it operates. The chapter also includes a detailed description of the LST program, including staffing, referral, recruitment, and services provided. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of some challenges to service provision.

In examining the program's implementation, it is important to keep in mind that social service programs often change and adapt to changing contexts as necessary. As a result, some descriptions may no longer reflect current operations. The programs may have changed operations, reporting structures, or forms used since the research team collected data. However, although this report points out some recent changes to the programs' operations and structures, the focus is on the implementation and operation of the programs during the evaluation period. In other words, the process study captures the operation of the programs while the youths in the study were involved with them. It is important to understand how the programs were being implemented for the youths in the evaluation. The research team acknowledges that programs adapt and grow and has noted these developments whenever possible.

Context for Evaluated Program

To understand the LST program and the extent to which it has the intended impact for foster youth, it is critical to understand the context within which the program operates. The LST program operates within the larger context of Los Angeles County, posing a number of challenges that might affect outcomes for youths in the study, as well as program operations and implementation. The county's size (both geographically and in population) and its diverse population are only two of many such factors. In particular, it is important to understand the demographics and nature of Los Angeles County, as well as any emancipation services in the county. The following section describes demographic characteristics of California and Los Angeles County, as well as the foster youth population in Los Angeles County. It also discusses other contextual factors that may affect the outcomes of youths in this study. A more in-depth description of the state and local context is provided in appendix B.

State and Local Demographics

California is the most populous state in the nation, with more than 35 million residents in 2004 (table B.2). Slightly more than a quarter (27 percent) of the population is under the age of 18, and 35 percent of the total population is Latino. Just over 80 percent of the population age 25 and older are high school graduates, and 10 percent have less than a ninth-grade education. Nineteen percent of children under age 18 and 11 percent of families were living below the federal poverty

level in 2004, when per capita income was a little more than \$25,000. In June 2006, the unemployment rate was 4.7 percent, and in 2004, 3.5 percent of households were receiving public assistance (i.e., Cal-Works).⁷

Los Angeles County makes up almost one third of the entire state's population. Similar to the state average, 28 percent of the county's population is under age 18, and 47 percent of the population is Latino. Just over 73 percent of the population age 25 and older are high school graduates, and 14 percent have less than a ninth-grade education. Twenty-four percent of children under age 18 and 14 percent of families were living below the federal poverty level in 2004, when the per capita income was approximately \$23,000. In June 2006, the unemployment rate was 4.9 percent, and in 2004, 4.3 percent of households were receiving public assistance. More specific data on Los Angeles County demographics are contained in table B.2.

Foster Youths in Los Angeles County

The LST program serves youths age 16 and older. Administrative data from 2005 show that 5,180 youths age 16 and older were in supervised foster care placements in Los Angeles County (Needell et al. 2006). During the other evaluation years, 2003 and 2004, 5,292 and 5,133 youths age 16 and older, respectively, were in supervised foster care placements. The number of older youths in foster care placements was highest during the first year of the evaluation (April 2003) but remained fairly constant between April 2004 and April 2005. In terms of the target population for the Chafee program (youths age 14 to 21), a total of 11,757 youths were offered Independent Living Program services in 2003–2004, including employment, housing, independent living skills, and educational goals, along with many other services.⁸ Of the youths offered services, just over 7,400 youths received any.

Department of Children and Family Services

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is the child protection agency in Los Angeles County. DCFS, along with its community partners, provides a number of services to children and families in Los Angeles County, including child care, child abuse prevention and treatment, family preservation, substance abuse assistance, and services for young parents. DCFS currently has offices located throughout the county in each of the eight service planning areas. DCFS had a \$1.49 billion budget in fiscal year 2006, an increase of \$100 million over the fiscal year 2004 budget (County of Los Angeles Strategic Plan Coordinator 2004, 2006).

Emancipation Preparation and Independent Living Services

The LST program does not operate in a vacuum. There are a number of services available and programs in place that assist youth as they age out of foster care in Los Angeles County. As such, it is important to understand these different services and programs to provide context for

⁷ All demographic data in this section are from U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2004 Summary Tables, generated by Erica H. Zielewski using American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). All unemployment rate data in this section come from California Employment Development Department; Labor Force and Unemployment Data, 2006. Obtained from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/databrowsing>.

⁸ More information on the Independent Living Program's services to youth is listed in detail in appendix B.

the impact study findings, particularly since these services make up “services as usual” for youths in the control group. In Los Angeles County, emancipation preparation begins when a youth in foster care turns 14 years old or when a youth comes into foster care at the age of 14 or older. At that time, the county uses an internal assessment and referral form to identify and assess each youth’s needs and develop a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP). Both the youth and the caregiver must sign the plan, indicating their commitment to fulfilling it. For those youths on probation, a similar procedure occurs in the Probation Department with the probation officer. The TILP is updated every six months by the case-carrying social worker or to coincide with the status review hearing date and is included in the initial case plan or case plan update. The TILP includes services needed to enable the youth to successfully transition to living independently; needs related to school, training, employment, socialization, health, finances, housing, reading and writing skills, or other independent living skills; goals and future objectives, including the steps necessary to help achieve these goals; and reconciliation of the case plan with any other treatment plans pertaining to the youth.

Independent living services are offered to youths age 14 to 21 in child welfare and probation custody through the Emancipation Services Division, which has an annual budget of roughly \$18 million. It should be noted that Los Angeles County policy differs from that of the state by offering independent living services to youth beginning at age 14 (table B.1 in appendix B); state law only requires that independent living services be available to youth at age 16. As mandated by the state, the county has provisions to accommodate youths who have spent time in detention centers and physically or mentally disabled youths who are not currently eligible for the program but may receive a referral for the program. Youths who reside outside of the county can receive independent living services as a courtesy from the host county or as arranged by a Los Angeles social worker.

Some of the functions of the Emancipation Services Division include referrals to life skills programs, assistance with college entrance, vocational training opportunities, provision of aftercare services, housing services, drop-in service centers or transition resource centers (TRCs), and a number of events and activities for youth (LA County, Chief Administrative Office 2003). Other important programs are the Early Start to Emancipation Planning (ESTEP) and ESTEP-Tutoring programs. The ESTEP program was developed in 1996 in response to an LA County Superior Court Committee recommendation that emancipation planning should start at an earlier age. The program is designed to teach foster and probation youth age 14 and 15 the skills necessary for emancipation. Youths served by the ESTEP program are referred to ESTEP-Tutoring where appropriate. The ESTEP program consists of a series of workshops that provide an introduction to the emancipation process; information about what is needed in high school; professional and personal relationships; and health, coping skills, and lifestyle choices.⁹

In addition to the ESTEP, ESTEP-Tutoring, and LST programs, DCFS contracts with several community-based agencies to provide vocational skills training and job preparation to eligible youths. This training is offered throughout the county and teaches skills such as job searching,

⁹ In contract years 2003–2004 and 2004–2005, the ESTEP program was expected to assess 1,650 youths and provide 144 workshops and 72 practicums to 792 foster and probation youths each year. Youths who complete the ESTEP program (by attending four of the six sessions in a module) receive \$50. Many tutors from the ESTEP-Tutoring program transport youth to and from workshops.

interviewing techniques, and resume writing. These skill centers also provide job placement and 120-day follow-up services. Appendix B contains a full listing of independent living services available to foster youth at the time of the study.

DCFS provides aftercare services to youth emancipated from foster care through its transition resource centers (TRCs). TRCs are a major part of improving service delivery and outreach to youths and are designed to provide independent living services to eligible former foster youth or youth preparing to emancipate. As of July 2005, there were nine TRCs. Hours and days of operation vary, but generally the centers are open during regular business hours on weekdays. The centers provide college and vocational tuition assistance; clothing stipends; transportation assistance; employment counseling, preparation and referral; and information and referral services (housing, health services, legal issues, etc.) (DCFS 2005). A full listing of aftercare services is located in appendix B.

The Community College Foundation

The LST program is administered by The Community College Foundation (TCCF) through a contract with DCFS. TCCF, established in 1983, is a nonprofit organization committed to excellence in education and the enhancement of communities. With over 800 employees throughout the state of California, TCCF's programs support educational technology, internship, scholarship, and at-risk youth initiatives. The annual portfolio of youth programs supports and trains 5,000 student interns and more than 40,000 foster youths. TCCF has a Human Development and Youth Services (HDYS) division that provides education and training to at-risk youth, foster and relative care providers, and health and human agency workers. The Human Development and Youth Services division of TCCF offers programs at 49 community colleges throughout the state, 19 of which are in Los Angeles County, and reaches more than 14,000 youths and adults annually. HDYS is California's largest provider of independent living programs for foster youth age 14 to 21. HDYS provides direct program services including ESTEP, the Independent Living Program, the Campus Peer Mentoring Program, and a Workforce Investment Act Out-of-School Youth Program. The organization also offers training and educational opportunities to adults, including the Fostering Education Program, foster parent training, and a preparation and support program for kinship caregivers.

Program Description

While the impact study provides evidence as to whether the intervention, the LST program, had the intended impact on youth, the process study and, specifically, the program description, provide important information about the nature of the program, including implementation, staffing, services provided, and the referral processes. It is not enough to know whether the program had the intended impact. Rather, it is also important to understand how the program operates. The following description aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how the LST program operates to provide valuable context for the impact findings.

LST began in 1987. The impetus for the program came from an activist foster parent who, upon learning about the available federal money for independent living services, questioned DCFS

about the lack of independent living services. In response, DCFS contracted with TCCF to provide LST. For contract years 2000 to 2005, TCCF received \$2,150,161 per year to fund the LST program. Each contract year, TCCF was expected to serve 1,400 youths in LST.

The primary goal of the LST program is to prepare eligible foster and probation youths age 16 to 21 to live independently and acquire the skills and resources necessary for emancipation. Another program goal is to encourage as many youth as possible to complete high school and go on to postsecondary education and training. Holding the series of classes at community colleges is a tool to expose youth to these settings and further the goal of going on to postsecondary education and training.

Contextual Logic Model

The context of Los Angeles County poses a number of unique challenges that might impact the ability of the LST program to operate effectively. The county's size and its diverse population are only two of many factors. To fully understand the contextual factors that affect LST, the evaluation team developed a contextual logic model (figure 2.1). The model contains three distinct pieces: factors, inputs, and outcomes, all of which impact LST. This model was created to describe the context in which LST operates. The factors shown in the model would affect any life skills program, yet they are specific and varied for any location. The inputs in the model are those resources that any independent living program has available to direct toward doing its work, including human, financial, organizational, and community resources. Finally, the outcomes for the contextual logic model reflect the intended outcomes of the independent living programs or the specific changes in participants' behavior, knowledge, skills, and level of functioning.

- Factors. Many contextual factors in Los Angeles affect the Life Skills Training program. Some of these factors relate directly to the child welfare system, and others relate to the county more generally. Factors include the employment market for workers with limited skills, the housing market (including the rental market), demographics, budgetary conditions, and federal and state child welfare laws and initiatives.
- Inputs. The factors described above all link to the inputs in the contextual model. The first input is the youths' participation in the service and characteristics including age, race, ethnicity, poverty level, placement setting, mental or emotional health, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, motivation level, and language issues. All of these characteristics could affect youths' outcomes. In addition, DCFS provides some inputs for the program, including independent living/emancipation services, emancipation planning (i.e., transitional independent living plan), contracts with the skills centers, TRCs, financial and educational support for youth, and housing assistance/programs. DCFS and the services that it offers are clearly linked to outcomes for youth. In addition, the Los Angeles County community colleges also provide inputs for the program. The community colleges are subcontractors of TCCF and hire instructors for the workshops, offer space and campus resources, have programs for foster youth and former foster youth enrolled in the college, and provide an on-campus connection for youth. Finally, other independent living service providers in Los Angeles County offer services to

emancipating foster youth or youth leaving foster care . These other service providers are not funded by DCFS and offer such services as housing assistance, mentoring, and the like. These inputs are all specific and unique to Los Angeles County. Another independent living services program in a different location would not have the same set of inputs, although there would probably be many similarities.

- Outcomes. Each of the inputs is directly linked to the outcomes portrayed in the context model. These outcomes come from Public Law No. 106-169, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. The federal legislation listed these eight outcomes as goals for the funds appropriated under the legislation. These outcomes include the youth receiving a high school diploma, continuing educational attainment, avoiding nonmarital childbirth, avoiding high-risk behaviors, avoiding incarceration, gaining employment, attaining self-sufficiency, and avoiding homelessness. LST uses these outcomes as targets for its program.

Program Operations Logic Model

Before discussing LST’s logic model, it is important to consider the program’s goals. While there are formal program goals, data from the process study suggest that TCCF also has other goals for the program. For example, the outreach advisors (OAs), who provide outreach for the program, discussed the contact that they have with youth after a module is completed. In this capacity, they serve as a connection to services for the youths and possibly as a mentor, although these responsibilities have not been formalized.

The primary objective of the LST program is, by contract with DCFS, to provide “individualized education, training, and emancipation services in a college setting that will facilitate each youth’s transition from foster care to independent living” (County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors 2000). In fact, the program is set up to focus on this goal. The OAs see their role, as well as the skills provided through the classes, as important ways that the LST program prepares youths to emancipate. The OAs serve as mentors and role models, help connect youths to the community, and serve as case managers. Having the OAs play an important role in youths’ lives is an informal though notable objective of the program. The OA training manual cites the primary objective of the position is to “advocate for and empower foster and probation youths,” and program administrators reported that the OA position was created by pulling members of the community into the program to serve as resource links for the youths after the module. The OA’s role as a resource link for youths likely grew into a potential lasting connection for the youths without explicitly becoming a stated goal of the LST program.

Figure 2.2 presents the logic model for the LST program created by the evaluation team in collaboration with TCCF. The logic model is composed of four different categories: resources (inputs), activities, outputs, and targeted outcomes. In the logic model, direct links between items are denoted with a bold line, and gray lines denote possible links.

- Resources. There are six key resources or inputs that are supports for LST program operations. The first resource is the TCCF contractual obligation to provide 30 hours of classroom and field practicum training to 15 to 25 eligible youths per module (each 30-

hour session) across 19 community colleges. In addition, TCCF hires college graduates with youth development experience as OAs and provides them with initial and ongoing training. The program's curriculum is another resource (see page 27 for more information). Finally, the community colleges hire workshop instructors to implement the curriculum, and TCCF provides quarterly training to these instructors.

- Activities. The first three resources in the model (contractual obligation to provide 30 hours of training, hiring OAs, and training OAs) all link directly to OAs receiving referrals from the transition coordinators at DCFS and the probation department as well as from some group homes and foster parents. After receiving the referral, the OA calls the youth and engages him or her in a discussion of the program and possibly of emancipation services available to youths. During this call, the OA invites the youth to the LST module and makes an appointment to meet the youth and his or her caregiver. Through the home visit with the youth and possibly the caregiver, the OA explains the LST program and emancipation services in greater depth. After the home visit, the OA enrolls the youth in the workshop. The workshops offer transportation, food, and money to youths as incentives and ways to overcome barriers to enrollment.

The youth then participates in a workshop module with a curriculum covering education, employment, daily living skills, interpersonal skills, choices and consequences, survival skills, and social skills. Following workshop participation are activities not as clearly linked to participation. These activities include the OAs or workshop instructors introducing the youths to college and community resources/services during the workshop and youths participating in a youth advisory group. These advisory group meetings, held quarterly for youths attending LST modules, are intended to provide TCCF with honest feedback about the youth's LST experiences.

- Outputs. All of the outputs in the model stem from three activities—the OA's conversation with the youth about the program, the youth's participation in the workshops, and exposure to community college resources during the workshops. The outputs include concrete skills learned, the growth of the youth's relationships, and other personal results. These outputs are all things that TCCF would like to result from a youth participating in the workshops. Furthermore, these outputs, in theory, are directly linked to the outcomes that the Chafee legislation aims to effect.
- Outcomes. LST outcomes are all linked to the outputs and are outcomes of interest cited in the Foster Care Independence Act. The outcomes encompass areas from education to self-sufficiency, including receiving a high school diploma; continuing education, avoiding nonmarital childbirth, avoiding high-risk behaviors, avoiding incarceration, gaining employment, attaining self-sufficiency, and avoiding homelessness. Some of these outcomes are clearly short-term goals (e.g., receiving a high school diploma), and others are long-term (e.g., attaining self-sufficiency). The majority of the outcomes, however, are both long- and short-term in that they are important in the years immediately following emancipation as well as later in life.

FIGURE 2.1. LST CONTEXT LOGIC MODEL

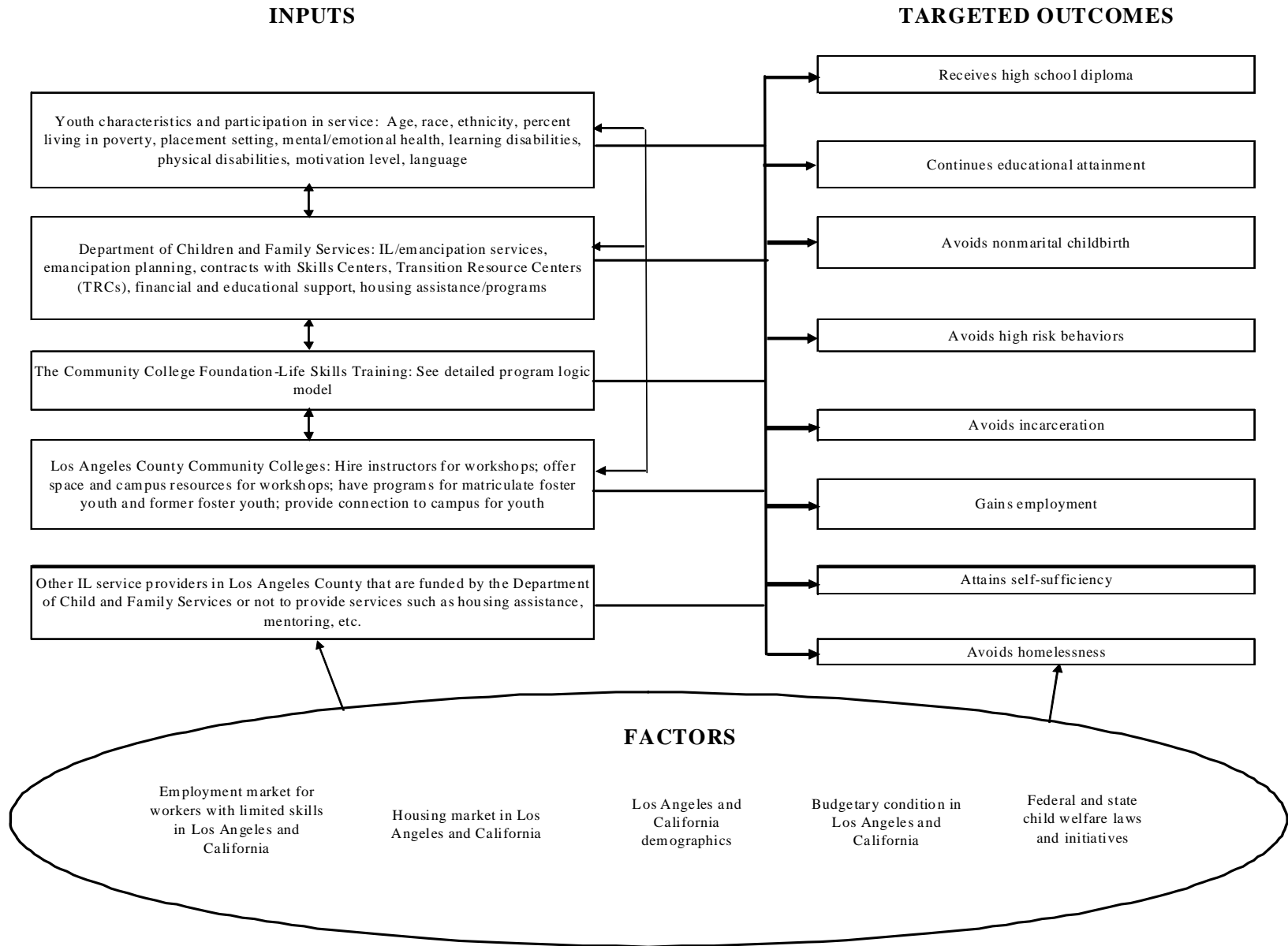
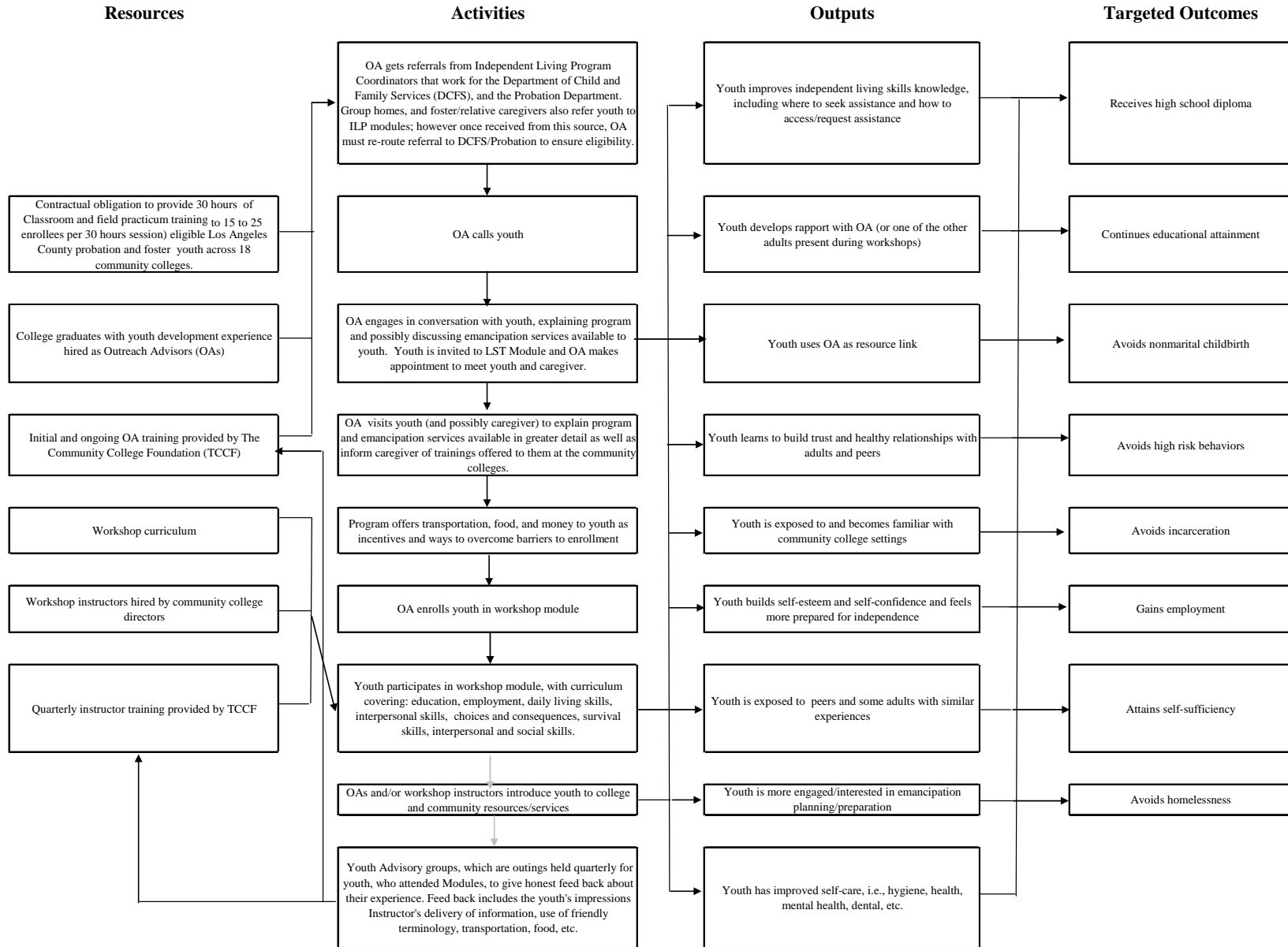


FIGURE 2.2. LST PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL



Program Staffing

Four different types of staff members participate in the LST program. On the community college side, each of the community colleges that offers LST has a program director and workshop instructors. TCCF provides each community college with an OA and a peer counselor. Each of these positions has a unique role within LST. The responsibilities of each type of LST staff member, qualifications for the position, hiring processes, and training for the position are described below. Appendix C includes a table outlining the roles and responsibilities of these different staff members (TCCF 1999).

Outreach Advisers. The primary responsibilities of the OAs are recruitment of youths, short-term case management, and documentation. Some of the other OA responsibilities include attending independent living plan (ILP) events, providing weekly schedules, maintaining contact with the TCCF office, participating in TCCF committees, networking with foster parents and group homes, and having a working knowledge of community resources. Each OA has an annual committee assignment to attend specific meetings for various committees at the Foundation and has a working knowledge of the college system (TCCF n.d.). Finally, before beginning each module, the workshop instructors, community college program director (if available), and OA at each college meet to discuss details about the students enrolled. This is an opportunity for the OA to make suggestions regarding content, guest speakers, class schedules, and any other pertinent information (Hawkins n.d.). A full list of the responsibilities of the OAs is located in appendix C.

For the OA position, TCCF aims to hire individuals with a bachelor's degree, although TCCF waives this requirement if the candidate has adequate experience as a child advocate. Because the job does not follow a typical work schedule, the OAs must have flexibility in scheduling, and it appears as though they all must have a vehicle, although this is not expressly stated. Prior experience working with youth, particularly foster youth, is also important for the OAs. Interviews and focus groups with program staff also reported the following qualities and characteristics as important to being an effective outreach advisor: being energetic, compassionate, a good listener, open to diverse groups of people, passionate about working with youth, supportive, able to multi-task, and disciplined about getting work completed outside the office. TCCF is responsible for hiring the OAs.

The interview process for hiring OAs is unique in that youths have the opportunity to participate. Each interview includes a foster youth so that TCCF can get a youth's perspective on the candidate. Following each interview, the LST program's deputy managers ask the foster youth for his or her feelings on the candidate and whether or not the youth felt that this was someone that he or she could listen to and learn from. TCCF finds that including youths in the interview process is effective, as the program staff's opinion frequently varies from the youths'.

Training for OAs appears to be limited to paperwork and office practices, coupled with unstructured on-the-job training. In interviews with 11 OAs, they stated that there was no formal pre-service training for the OA position. Several respondents noted an orientation on paperwork, recruiting youths, and review of the OA handbook. With regards to the training on how to recruit youths, the 11 OAs interviewed noted that the focus was on logistics—calling the youths,

conducting a home visit, and filling out the paperwork—rather than on engaging resistant youths, prioritizing clients, and other engagement-type aspects of recruitment. Nearly all of the OAs participated in some type of job shadowing, although the length of time varied from a few days to two weeks. The OAs were careful to acknowledge that they were not sure if any training could have prepared them for the position, and that much of the preparation that they needed came from life experience and prior work with youth.

Workshop Trainers. The major responsibility of the trainers is to lead and teach the LST classes. A full listing of the workshop trainers' responsibilities appears in appendix C. The qualifications for trainers are similar to those for OAs, although prior to 2006, TCCF had not given the community colleges charged with hiring the trainers any specific qualifications for the workshop instructor position. Interviews with community college program directors and various LST program staff revealed several qualifications that the community college directors look for in trainers. In general, candidates for the workshop trainer position need a background in foster care, working with youth, or in education. No specific degree is required for the position, and trainers' degrees range from associate's to master's degrees. Several of the trainers are former foster youth, and many are high school counselors or teachers. Finally, trainers must pass all necessary fingerprinting and background checks.

Through interviews and focus groups with trainers, community college staff, and TCCF program staff, the process study gathered opinions about characteristics and qualities that make a trainer effective. As with the OAs, characteristics such as open-mindedness, ability to engage and communicate with youth, and so on are likely important qualities for the trainers who must engage an entire classroom of youths. Several LST staff members expressed some concern about the performance of the workshop trainers, which they believed was linked to poor qualifications, as well as inadequate training for trainers. As a result, TCCF has issued more stringent qualifications for the trainers as part of its latest contract with the community colleges. As part of this change, trainers must have at minimum an associate's degree, prior experience with the target population (foster youth and probation youth), the ability to deliver the curriculum in experiential methods, and the ability to teach youths with various learning levels and styles (TCCF 2005). In addition, the community colleges must submit all candidates' resumes to TCCF. As part of its new contract with the colleges, TCCF must now approve all new trainers. This approval process includes assessing the candidate's ability to learn and implement specific teaching strategies and adhere to the newly developed trainer guidelines. These changes took effect as part of the new contract with community colleges for the 2005–2006 contract year.

The hiring process for the trainers is different from that of OAs because the community college program directors hire the trainers. TCCF contracted this responsibility out to the community colleges because the community college directors are in the community and might know individuals in the community who would be effective trainers. TCCF emphasizes local recruiting. The community college program directors use word-of-mouth recruitment from current trainers, as well as recommendations from foster parents and outreach advisors, other staff at the college, and contacts at DCFS. TCCF staff, however, expressed concern about the recruitment and hiring process. In particular, there is concern that program directors hire individuals that they know, rather than finding the individuals best suited for the position.

TCCF conducts the primary training for LST workshop trainers. Focus groups with several instructors suggested that few have participated in any pre-service training offered by TCCF. Interviews with program staff at TCCF confirmed that while mandatory, many instructors do not attend these quarterly trainings. Most instructors noted that they shadowed other instructors as preparation for leading the workshops and observations of LST classes confirmed this. The instructors confirmed that TCCF offers ongoing quarterly trainings, but suggested that there is often miscommunication about the logistics of these meetings (e.g., when and where) that prevents many of them from attending.

Peer Counselors. The LST program also employs former foster youth as peer counselors to assist in program operations. These youths are often graduates of the LST and ESTEP programs. In focus groups with peer counselors, they expressed that they must be good listeners, reliable, responsible, and respectful of youth. Peer counselors are hired by TCCF and many were encouraged to apply by their OAs or workshop trainers. The main responsibility of a peer counselor is to assist the trainers during the workshops by making copies of handouts, passing out papers, assisting youths, and calling youths. The peer counselors also work in the TCCF office, where they provide administrative support to the OAs. Some of the peer counselors noted that they assist in recruiting youths and provide transportation for youths, although program staff did not report these responsibilities. More generally, the peer counselors serve as a resource and example for youths receiving LST services. They feel that they can be most helpful by sharing their personal experiences. There is no formal training for the peer counselors, other than having taken the LST workshop previously. The peer counselors serve as an important resource for the LST program, as they offer a youth's perspective in areas such as strategic planning and staff hiring and training.

Staff Turnover. Staff turnover has been a problem for TCCF. The reasons OAs leave TCCF vary. Many leave to attend graduate school, to retire, or for higher-paying jobs. TCCF has also had to dismiss OAs as the position has been made more accountable to TCCF through paperwork, office duties, and so on. The program's managers have increased support for the OAs as a way to retain staff. However, many OAs noted that they felt burdened by additional paperwork requirements, particularly since office space and computers are limited. Turnover did not appear to be a problem amongst workshop trainers.

Referral and Recruitment Processes

For TCCF, the referral process for the LST program changed because of the Multi-Site Evaluation, which started in September 2003. Under the changed referral process, once youths reached age 16, caseworkers were required to refer them to the Independent Living Program at DCFS through the transition coordinator. This referral included a completed Transitional Independent Living Plan and could contain a request that the youths be referred to the LST program. The transition coordinators referred the youths to TCCF using a faxed referral form. As part of the evaluation, OAs received lists of youths in the LST (treatment) and control groups. The OAs used these lists as guides in determining which youths to recruit and not recruit for the program. Lists of LST and control youths were provided to TCCF in three waves over the evaluation period.

For some time prior to the evaluation, workers from DCFS and the Probation ILP unit referred youths directly to TCCF. This referral was entered into a TCCF database and given to the OA assigned to the college closest to the youth's residence. The OA could also enroll youth who had not been referred by DCFS, provided that the youth's eligibility could be confirmed. Since intake for the evaluation has ended, it is not clear if the referral process has returned to what was in place before the evaluation.

Once the OA receives a list of youths that have been referred to the LST program, he or she begins recruiting for the next class module, or set of 10 LST classes. According to the program's logic model, as well as the OA handbook, the OAs' initial contact with referred youths is by telephone. During this call, the OA explains the LST program and invites the youth to participate in the program. The OA schedules an appointment to make a home visit to meet the youth and the youth's caregiver. The OA discusses the LST program and emancipation services in detail. This visit also serves as an opportunity for the youth and caregiver to complete any needed paperwork, such as the transportation approval form.

Also important to this discussion is how the OAs engage youth. Each OA was asked about his or her own tools and ideas. In addition, how each OA engages a youth varies by each individual youth and the youth's situation. Different types of tools and methods include the following:

- discussing the benefits of the class, including the opportunity to meet other foster youth, the opportunity to learn about resources, the financial incentive, free meals, and transportation;
- trying to relate to the youths by showing recognition and understanding of their emotions and needs, which often includes diverging from discussion of the LST program to issues the youths are facing;
- getting the buy-in of the caregiver first and using the caregiver to find a way to engage the youth (e.g., asking the caregiver what the youth's interests are);
- using the OA's perspective form to encourage the youths to open up about their goals, interests, likes, dislikes, and so on;
- taking a tougher approach (e.g., letting youths know that when they turn 18, there won't be any classes to help them and that these classes are a limited opportunity to get assistance before emancipation);
- dressing casually and speaking with a relaxed tone when interacting with youths; and
- treating youths with respect, which includes returning phone calls promptly and listening actively.

Among these different techniques were a few specific tools that almost all of the OAs used in convincing the youths to attend the LST program. First, the OAs always mentioned the \$100 incentive payment that youths receive when they complete the classes. They noted that this was probably the most effective tool in getting youths to consider participating. Some OAs mentioned the incentive payments after they had explained the rest of the program, and others discussed the payment at the beginning of the conversation. The OAs also stressed the opportunity to meet other foster youth as a selling point for the program; the opportunity to meet other foster youths in a context where they do not feel stigmatized for being in foster care is appealing to many of them. Finally, the OAs all emphasize the importance of life skills and how

the class provides youths with an opportunity to learn how to help themselves when they emancipate.

Services Provided

A significant focus of the process study was to understand what services youths received through LST. The process study was able to document the frequency and duration of services through the number of class sessions that a youth attended. The following section of this chapter discusses the LST program curriculum, how it is implemented in the community colleges, and how differential implementation might impact youth outcomes.

The OAs assess the youths using the Ansell-Casey assessment tool at the beginning and end of the class modules. This tool helps evaluate a youth's independent living skills and consists of statements about life skills in six areas: daily living tasks, housing and community resources, money management, self-care, social development, and work and study habits. The OAs use other tools for determining a youth's needs, including the 10 Tangible Outcomes form and the OA perspective form (included in appendix D). The 10 Tangible Outcomes form assesses the youth's knowledge of and ability to perform 10 specific life skills tasks such as completing an ILP housing plan, knowing how to open a bank account and write a check, and knowing how to obtain certain legal documents (included in appendix D). The OA Perspective form is used as a tool to identify the youth's needs and interests and to get to know the youth better.

The program uses the "Thinking It Through" curriculum, developed by TCCF in 2000, which is based on seven state-adopted competency skill areas (in order by priority): education, employment, daily living skills, survival skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal/social skills, and computer/Internet skills. While clear core competencies must be addressed through the curriculum, instructors have the flexibility to design their own classes and activities, invite guest speakers, and use experiential methods to impart information. Pre- and post-assessments are provided to evaluate whether a youth has made progress in skill acquisition. The curriculum is five weeks long and consists of 10 three-hour classes held twice a week. Descriptions of each core competency follow:

- Education. Participants are encouraged to think about the connection between education and long-term life and career goals. Participants are asked to list their goals and then to identify the educational path required to achieve those goals. They also examine different hypothetical situations (e.g., Jake is not sure whether he has enough credits to graduate from high school; what should he do?).
- Employment. This workshop discusses the pros and cons of getting a job while still in placement, realistic versus ideal jobs, and different employment resources. Participants can create a list of employment agencies and services and complete a worksheet listing prospective entry-level jobs. In addition, skills for filling out job applications, creating a resume, and interviewing (including appropriate clothing for a job interview) are discussed. The employment section also provides tips on retaining a job, including worksheets about behaving professionally.

- Daily Living Skills. Household management skills such as banking, rental/leasing agreements, meal planning, and dealing with emergencies are addressed. As with the previous sections, participants begin by compiling lists of different resources to assist with this skill. Worksheets deal with public transportation (e.g., pick two locations that you are likely to travel to—how will you get there?) and banking. Photocopies of key documents such as driver’s licenses and Social Security cards are also distributed. In the section on meal planning, worksheets discuss balanced diets and tips for losing weight.
- Choices and Consequences/Survival Skills. Primarily focused on substance abuse and sexual risk behaviors, this section’s organizing concept is personal morality and values. Participants are asked to identify their personal values and then to rate their importance. Students are given a questionnaire about drug abuse and fact sheets about drug classifications, tobacco, birth control, eating disorders, and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Interpersonal Social Skills. Designed to teach participants how to effectively communicate their needs, thoughts, and feelings to others, this workshop deals with peer pressure, boyfriends/girlfriends, and adults. Special subject areas include abusive relationships, anger management, and appropriate behavior in public places. The emancipation planning section encourages the participants to reflect on their relationships with social workers, biological parents, foster parents, and relatives. The curriculum closes with some activities on problem solving (Cain and Hess 2000).

The curriculum was designed to be classroom-based but encourages trainers to engage in out-of-classroom activities. Included in the workshops are practicums at predetermined off-site locations. These offer youths hands-on experience participating in life skills–related activities, such as grocery shopping, doing laundry, opening bank accounts, obtaining a California identification card, taking public transportation, and applying for a job (DCFS 2000). The majority of time during the LST module is spent in the classroom. The authors aimed to create examples and activities that would lead to an achieved outcome. The goal was to put enough examples and ideas into the curriculum so that less creative trainers could be effective, while giving trainers flexibility in implementation. This flexibility causes differential implementation in each community college.

As noted above, the curriculum provides workshop trainers with some flexibility in helping youths achieve desired outcomes and enables them to use community resources in the classroom. For example, a trainer could use a nearby health clinic as an opportunity to invite a nurse to the class to discuss health-related issues. LST trainers and community college program directors echoed the flexibility in the curriculum. They indicated that trainers are allowed to be as creative as they would like in how they choose to teach the module, but that they must adhere to the topic areas that the curriculum covers. The flexibility in teaching style enables the trainers to adapt lessons to meet the educational and behavioral needs of the youths in each module. It also enables them to deviate from the curriculum when an issue discussed in the classes causes an emotional response. The OAs meet with the workshop trainers before each module to discuss class dynamics. Decisions on exactly what and how to teach, however, are left up to the trainers. Due to this flexibility, curriculum implementation varies considerably among colleges and modules.

Understanding differential implementation is an important piece of the process study, yet detailed information about how each trainer implements the curriculum for each module is limited. It is important to note that the process study did not evaluate these techniques. Rather, this discussion is intended to provide a more rich understanding of what happens during an LST class. The study provides examples of the curriculum's adaptation. For example, colleges can invite different guest speakers for the classes, such as representatives from college financial aid offices, former foster youths who have participated in programs like Job Corps, health care providers, and potential employers. The colleges can also select different hands-on activities. During one observation of an LST workshop, the youths were instructed to cut a "help wanted" ad from a newspaper to bring to the next workshop. Though limited by transportation challenges, some modules include out-of-class activities such as visiting a computer classroom at the community college or gaining work experience at a clothing store for a few hours.

Another area in which modules differ is how the instructors manage the classroom. This also includes the trainers' attitudes toward youth and how they allow youths to interact in the classroom. For example, one observed LST trainer starts each workshop with a "thought of the day" that comes from the youths. Other trainers allow youths to participate in designing the workshop, by asking questions such as "what would you like to learn from these classes?" In one observed module, this participation garnered a positive response from the youths who felt empowered by the trainer.

According to the logic model, the OA or workshop trainer introduces youths to college and community resources or services. Referring youths to other services is clearly a part of the LST program. When asked specifically about other services, OAs reported referring youths to vocational skills centers; homeless shelters; food pantries or other resources; domestic violence shelters; the Women, Infants, and Children program; DCFS's transitional resource centers; places to obtain documentation (e.g., the Department of Motor Vehicles, Social Security office); and United Friends of the Children's transitional housing program. The OAs also refer youths to a number of services available on the college campus, including career centers, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, and child care. The process study is unable to document the specific services that youths in the evaluation were referred to and to which different agencies or community-based organizations they are referred. In addition, the process study does not have any information, anecdotal or otherwise, to document the frequency with which the OAs refer youths to these services. Finally, the time at which the OAs refer youths to other services—whether it is before, during, or after the LST module—is not known.

Programmatic Challenges and Discussion

The process study developed a fairly detailed understanding of how the LST program operates. The study has identified places where practice may deviate from policy, as well as challenges the LST program faces in serving this population of older foster youth. Understanding how well the LST program adheres to its logic model, as well as some of the challenges faced in service provision, provides critical context for the impact study findings are discussed in chapter 4. The following discussion examines some places where policy and practice within the LST program

may diverge and highlights some of the challenges that LST faces and implications for other life skills programs.

Adherence to the Logic Model

The process study identified areas where the LST program may veer from its logic model, the most important of which was recruitment. Recruitment includes several different components, including how youths are contacted, prioritizing youths to recruit, giving information to youths throughout the process, working with resistant youths, and handling inaccurate referrals. As noted earlier, the Multi-Site Evaluation changed the recruitment processes for LST. However, inconsistencies in recruitment likely existed independent of the evaluation. According to the program's logic model, as well as the OA handbook, the OAs' initial contact with referred youth is by telephone. During this call, the OA explains the LST program and invites the youth to participate in the program. The OA schedules an appointment to make a home visit to meet the youth and the youth's caregiver. The OA discusses the LST program and emancipation services in detail. This visit also serves as an opportunity for the youth and caregiver to complete any needed paperwork, such as the transportation approval form.

Findings from the process study, including specific questions to the OAs about how they contact youth, suggest that OAs do not always adhere to this schedule of contact when recruiting youths for the module. In practice, many OAs make initial contact through a letter mailed to each referred youth. Program managers indicated that the letter should be sent before the initial phone call. This letter introduces the youth to the program and lets the youth know that someone will contact them. The letter could include dates, times, and locations of the LST module; contact information for the OA; an explanation of the LST program; and a description of the benefits of participating in the program.

According to TCCF documents, the OA calls the youth following the introductory letter. There is an attempt to make phone contact with every youth referred. The OAs are required to complete an accountability form that documents attempts to contact each referred youth. On the form, the OA documents the date he or she attempted to contact the youth and the result of that contact (i.e., whether the OA was able to enroll the youth in the program). If the OA is unable to enroll the youth, he or she selects the reason from a list of excuse codes. It is unclear how many attempts to contact the youth the OA makes before moving on to the next youth.

Following the phone call, the OAs are required to conduct a home visit with the youth. The OAs, program managers, and program logic model all indicate that the home visit is an integral part of the engagement and recruitment process. OAs indicated that they might conduct a home visit only if the youth seems interested in the program during the initial phone call. For example, when asked specifically about the frequency of home visits, one OA indicated that he or she might only conduct a home visit if the caregiver really wanted to meet the OA or wanted more information. In general, the OAs did not provide much information regarding the frequency of home visits, though there appears to be conflicting information on the frequency, purpose, and requirement of home visits.

Challenges to Service Provision

During focus groups and interviews with program staff, the process study asked respondents specifically about challenges to service provision. In speaking with many stakeholders involved with the LST program, several key challenges emerged. An important issue facing programs that serve foster youth is the fact that foster youth frequently move to placements. For the LST program, changing placements affects the OAs' ability to recruit youths for the program. Moreover, there may be significant lapses between the time when a social worker refers a youth to the transition coordinator at DCFS, when the transition coordinator refers the youth to TCCF for LST, and when the OA actually contacts the youth about the program. During this time, OAs frequently find that youths have moved placements or changed phone numbers, which affects their ability to contact them.

A structural challenge for the program is the time and duration of the classes. Numerous program staff noted that 30 hours of workshop time is not adequate to provide youth with all of the necessary information. Coupled with the limited workshop time are the challenges that often reduce this time, such as late buses, disruptive youths, or other distractions. During one classroom observation, the bus arrived at 7:00 p.m. for a 6:00 p.m. class. By the time the youths were settled and finished with dinner, nearly half of the class time had elapsed. Additionally, some of these 30 hours are spent completing paperwork, conducting assessments, or doing other administrative tasks.

Many respondents listed transportation as a barrier to the LST program. The program provides buses to take youths to and from the workshops, but there are often complications in getting all of the youths on buses. For example, the OAs turn in the bus form, which includes the names and addresses of the youths participating in the module, a few days in advance of the workshop. Many OAs recruit youths until the module starts. If a youth is not recruited in time or moves after the bus list is turned in, he or she might be responsible for finding transportation to the module. The OAs also expressed that sometimes the buses are unreliable and miss stops. In some cases, the OAs transport youths to the workshops, but they are limited in the number of youths that they can transport. If the OA does not transport youth that do not get the bus, the youths will not likely participate in the program. Transportation also limits out-of-classroom activities. Many of the trainers indicated that they would like to do more activities outside of the classroom, such as visiting a Laundromat, but that this is extremely challenging due to a lack of transportation. While there are challenges with transportation, LST is somewhat unique in that it provides transportation. Many programs are unable to provide transportation to their life skills classes, which may serve as a barrier for recruitment and take-up. Providing transportation to the LST classes is a unique benefit of the LST program that likely has a positive impact on program recruitment and retention.

A final challenge to the LST program is each individual youth's abilities or skills. Trying to serve a classroom of youths with different skills and abilities is a challenge. Before each module begins, the OA meets with the trainers to discuss the participants in the class, special needs (if any), and how to address different skill levels. For example, youths' reading skills can vary significantly. The trainers must teach the classes in a way that keeps higher-functioning youths

engaged while not alienating lower-functioning youths. Finding this balance is a challenge for the trainers.

Conclusion

In order to examine a program's impact on a specific population, it is first necessary to gain an in-depth understanding of how the program operates. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth description of the LST program during the time of the evaluation. This description, which included program staffing, the referral and recruitment processes, service provision, programmatic challenges, and adherence to the logic model, served to provide an important background for the impact study (chapter 4). The information provided in this chapter is meant to be primarily descriptive in nature. While there are places where the process study identified key challenges for the LST program, the main purpose of this chapter was to describe the program rather than provide specific recommendations about areas for improvement. The chapters that follow (chapters 3 and 4) provide more specific data about the evaluation, youths' participation in the LST program, and the impact that the LST program had on key outcomes for youth in the evaluation.

Chapter 3. Evaluation Implementation

Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous two chapters by describing how the Multi-Site Evaluation was implemented for the LST program, as well as providing data on the youths in the study. This chapter begins by describing the sample and interview process, including sample development. This discussion is followed by an examination of program participation rates, referred to as service take-up, and a discussion of the factors which may have affected take-up rates among LST and control group youth. Finally, the chapter concludes with a comparison of the characteristics of assignment and take-up groups at baseline, including the baseline values for most evaluated outcomes. An examination of differences between assignment and take-up groups in the level of independent living service receipt (from both LST and other sources) at the year-2 follow-up interview is deferred until the next chapter.

Sample Overview and Interview Process

There were 467 youths born between March 1986 and February 1987 who participated in the study. The youths were in out-of-home care placements under the guardianship of the Los Angeles Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). To be eligible for inclusion in the study, the youths had to be 17 years old, in out-of-home care, eligible for Chafee services, and deemed able to benefit from life skills training.¹⁰ More information about eligibility for the study is included in appendix A. The study team chose to include 17-year-olds on the basis of conversations with staff at The Community College Foundation (TCCF). They felt that youths younger than age 17 are frequently difficult to engage in thinking about independent living. Also, with more youths referred than can be served, they give priority to youths closer to emancipation age.

The study exceeded its target to complete 450 baseline interviews. A total of 482 randomly assigned youths were deemed eligible for the evaluation. Interviewing completion rates were quite high: 97 percent of eligible cases were interviewed at baseline. Of those youths interviewed at baseline, 91 percent were interviewed at the first follow-up and 88 percent were interviewed at the second follow-up. Table 3.1 shows the development of the sample.

Although the intent was to interview youths for the second follow-up two years (730 days) after the baseline interview, the average time between the baseline and second follow-up interviews was somewhat longer, a mean of 822 days, with a minimum of 666 days and a maximum of 1,116 days. There were no significant differences between LST and control group cases in length of time between interviews ($p > .10$).

¹⁰ The determination that a youth would not benefit from services is made by DCFS and according to DCFS policy means that the youth is physically or mentally unable to benefit from independent living services.

TABLE 3.1. LIFE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM SAMPLE

	LST Group	Control Group	Total
Randomly assigned	291	308	599
Percent of total	48.6	51.4	
Out of scope	57	60	117
Percent of randomly assigned	19.6	19.5	19.5
In-scope	234	248	482
Percent of total	48.5	51.5	
Interviewed at baseline	222	245	467
Percent of randomly assigned	76.3	79.6	76.3
Percent of in-scope	94.9	98.8	96.9
Interviewed at first follow-up	203	224	427
Percent of randomly assigned	69.8	72.7	71.3
Percent of in-scope	86.6	90.3	88.6
Percent of interviewed at baseline	91.4	91.4	91.4
Interviewed at second follow-up	196	215	411
Percent of randomly assigned	67.4	69.8	68.6
Percent of in-scope	83.8	86.7	85.1
Percent of interviewed at baseline	88.3	87.8	87.8

Service Take-Up

Before discussing service take-up (youths participation in the service), it is important to clarify some of the terminology. Youths were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, with the expectation that (a) youths assigned to the treatment group, referred to as “LST group,” would receive services consistent with the design of the program and (b) youths in the control group would not receive any services from the program being evaluated, although they might have received similar services from other sources. For the most part, youth followed their assignment, that is, youths in the LST group participated in the service, while youths in the control group did not receive the service. These youths that followed their assignments are referred to as compliers.

However, as in other experimental evaluations of social services, there were some violations of the assignment protocol. That is, some members of the control group received services (e.g., attended one or more LST class sessions) while some members of the LST group did not. The latter group is referred to as no-shows. The members of the control group who received the service are referred to as crossovers.

For the purposes of this discussion, the reference terms in table 3.2 will be used.

TABLE 3.2. GROUP REFERENCE TERMS

Experimental Assignment	Program Take-Up	Reference Terms	
		Violation	Assignment by Violation
Control group	No	Compliers	Control group compliers
LST group	Yes	Compliers	LST group compliers
Control group	Yes	Violators	(Control group) crossovers
LST group	No	Violators	(LST group) no-shows

Table 3.3 shows the service take-up rates for the LST program for youths in the LST group and in the control group. For the LST group, the take-up rate refers to the percentage of youths assigned to the service who actually enrolled, attended, or graduated from the program. The LST program requires a youth to attend seven out of ten classes in order to “graduate” from the program. Overall, 76.5 percent of the 234 youths in the LST group enrolled in a module, 70.1 percent attended at least one session, and 65.0 percent graduated from a module or set of 10 classes that constitutes the LST program. Contrary to the research design, some members of the control group also received LST services (i.e., attended one or more LST class sessions). Specifically, 66 (26.6 percent) of the 248 in-scope youths in the control group enrolled in the program, while 25 percent attended at least one class and 22.6 percent graduated from the program.

TABLE 3.3. EXPERIMENTAL ASSIGNMENT BY LIFE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM TAKE-UP

Assignment Group	Enrolled in LST		Did Not Enroll in LST	
	n	% Take-Up	n	% Take-Up
Control group	66	26.6	182	73.4
LST group	179	76.5	55	23.5

While a significant number of youths in the LST group chose not to participate, it is unclear whether this percentage varies greatly from similar independent living programs around the country. It is likely that take-up for the LST program may be higher than other independent living programs for a few reasons. First, as discussed in chapter 2, the LST program has staff members (outreach advisors, or OAs) whose main responsibility is to conduct outreach and recruit youths to participate in the program. In addition, LST provides transportation for the youths to the classes and provides a meal during the classes. Finally, as will be described below, the implementation of the evaluation, specifically, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) field manager’s responsibilities, is likely to have increased the extent of outreach and, subsequently, participation in the program.

The process study provides information about why youth choose not to participate in the program. According to the OAs, the reasons for youth not participating in the program are both logistical and personal. These reasons include logistical conflicts with after-school activities (e.g., sports teams, jobs) and personal reasons such as a lack of interest or belief that they already know the information. The OAs also noted that youths’ participation is affected by how much they know about the program either through a social worker or transition coordinator. The more youth know about the program, the more willing they may be to participate.

As a form of accountability, OAs complete accountability forms for all youths they attempt to recruit for the LST program.¹¹ This includes youths who were recruited but did not participate in the program. A review of these forms found that the most frequently reported reasons for youths not enrolling was that the youths refused to participate, that the OA’s phone calls were not returned, or that the OA was not able to leave a message.

¹¹ These forms are not consistently completed. Of the 55 youths in the LST group who did not receive the treatment, accountability reports were located for only 15 (27 percent) of these cases.

In addition, the evaluation changed the way youths were referred to the LST program (described in appendix A). Prior to the evaluation, OAs worked off a large list of referrals and contacted youths on that list with the goal of meeting a quota of 15 to 25 youths per module. Typically, OAs focus on the youths they were able to make contact with and who agreed to participate in the program, meaning that they might not recruit all youths on the list. Those youths whom the OAs were not able to contact would be added to the recruitment list for the next module. During the evaluation, OAs were given lists of LST (treatment) and control group youths and were required to recruit only youths on the treatment (LST) list. This process was different for the OAs because the LST group lists were shorter than the larger lists they had previously worked off of, and they were required to try to recruit all of the youths on the list rather than moving on from more difficult cases.

Another possible explanation for the take-up rate for the LST program relates to the timeframe for recruitment. The timeframe for recruitment varies by OA and ranges from two months to two weeks before the module begins. The OAs also reported delays in getting lists of LST and control youths, which prevented them from having an adequate amount of time to recruit youths for the module. There were only three waves of lists of control and LST youths, which may or may not have coincided with the workshop schedules. The OAs did, however, have the names of youths from prior lists. This raises the issue of how much time is needed to recruit youths for a module. A number of issues such as cases with incorrect phone numbers or inability to contact youth could significantly affect an OA's ability to recruit enough youths in a short timeframe. OAs would likely recruit the youths who agreed to participate during the initial phone call and might struggle to enroll more difficult cases. This may explain why many youths in the LST group were not enrolled in the LST program.

Table 3.4 shows the time to service for youths in the LST group. Within 90 days of random assignment for the fall cohort, 20 modules were available for enrollment. Regardless of the college of assignment, the youths could have enrolled in any of these modules. Notably, only 32 percent were enrolled. As discussed earlier, this was a new focus of recruiting for the OAs since they were they were expected to recruit specific youth who were assigned to the LST group, rather than youth who were easiest to recruit. Looking at the spring cohort, nearly six months after the OAs began to use this new recruitment process, youths enrolled within 90 days increased to 49 percent. During the winter cohort, the OAs enrolled 52 percent of the youths within 90 days with only a slightly larger number of modules. In fact, the OAs tended to enroll more youths from the winter cohort than the other two cohorts. It is not clear why the OAs were able to enroll a higher percentage of youths from the winter cohort, particularly since the number of available modules was fairly consistent among the three cohorts.

TABLE 3.4. LIFE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM ENROLLMENT RATES BY TIME TO SERVICE AND COHORT FOR YOUTHS IN LST GROUP THROUGH AUGUST 2006

Time from assignment to class start date	Fall (n=63)			Winter (n=97)			Spring (n=74)			Total (n=234)	
	Modules		Enrolled	Modules		Enrolled	Modules		Enrolled		Enrolled
	n	n	%	n	n	%	n	n	%	n	%
Within 90 days	20	20	32%	23	50	52%	24	37	49%	107	45%

TABLE 3.4. LIFE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM ENROLLMENT RATES BY TIME TO SERVICE AND COHORT FOR YOUTHS IN LST GROUP THROUGH AUGUST 2006

Time from assignment to class start date	Fall (n=63)			Winter (n=97)			Spring (n=74)			Total (n=234)	
	Modules		Enrolled	Modules		Enrolled	Modules		Enrolled	Enrolled	
	n	n	%	n	n	%	n	n	%	n	%
Within 180 days	42	32	51	43	68	70	33	43	57	143	60
Within 270 days	63	37	59	55	70	72	55	49	65	156	66
Within 365 days	75	37	59	73	71	73	70	51	68	159	67
Total	75	43	68	73	80	82	70	56	75	179	76

Note: The fall cohort was released in two transmissions on September 3, 2003, (approximation) and September 16, 2003. The winter cohort was released in two transmissions on December 16, 2003, and December 23, 2003. The spring cohort was released on February 23, 2004. The number of modules is based on the "Final Calendar for Independent Living Program 2003-2004" dated 01/25/05 and the "ILP-LA Calendar 2004-2005" from TCCF. This number represents the number of modules that were occurring during the respective time periods across the colleges. The number is cumulative as the time period increases (i.e., the number of modules within six months from the time of assignment includes the number of modules within three months). Also note that there is variation across the colleges in terms of modules offered; for example, one college might not have offered a module within three months of assignment, but another might have offered two during that same period. For those youths who participated in more than one module, the earliest module in which they enrolled, attended, or graduated was used.

An additional explanation for youth not taking up the service relates to how OAs handle cases in which they are unable to contact youth or have incorrect information for youth. If the information on a referral form is incorrect, the OAs are supposed to contact the youth's transition coordinator or social worker. In some cases, the OA might move onto another youth on the list without getting updated information since there is no policy on the number of times that an OA must attempt to contact a youth. OAs are required to recruit between 15 to 25 youths for each module—a numbers-focused goal. The OAs may not feel that they have time to track down updated information as youth move placements.

One final explanation for the take-up rate is the impact of placement setting. The OAs noted that their recruitment success varies by placement setting. They explained that, from their experiences, kinship caregivers are often more resistant to the classes because they believe they are already providing life skills. However, the process study did not speak directly with caregivers so it is not possible to confirm the OAs' perceptions of this. In addition, some group homes cannot allow a youth to leave the home without a staff person accompanying them, making it more difficult for the youth to attend LST classes. However, OAs noted that enrolling youths from group homes was often easier, since the group home could send multiple youths at one time. Finally, some OAs expressed that foster parents are barriers to enrolling youth by preventing the OA from speaking with the youth or not providing transportation if the youth is not able to use the bus for any reason.

Any discussion of the take-up rate for youths in the LST group must include mention of the role of the NORC field manager whose responsibilities included making sure the evaluation could track the OAs' attempts to enroll youths in the LST group. In monitoring enrollment, the field manager worked closely with the OAs—ensuring that the OAs had updated lists of youths in the

LST and control groups, attending weekly OA meetings to notify OAs of youths who should be recruited, and assisting the OAs by providing corrected contact information for youths (obtained during attempts to locate youths to complete the in-person interview). As part of this process, the field manager interacted with DCFS to get updated information. In a few respondents' views, the NORC field manager was able to find youths that no one else was able to find. As a result, a few OAs relied on her to find youths rather than contacting the social workers or transition coordinators on their own. If OAs were not able to enroll a youth in the LST group, they were supposed to contact the field manager and explain why. The OAs did not consistently relay this information to the field manager, nor did they consistently complete the TCCF accountability form to document why a youth did not enroll.

Important to the issue of take-up rates for the LST program is why some youths in the control group received the intervention. While individual-level information is unavailable, possible causes can be highlighted. In some cases, the OAs' accountability forms indicate that the OAs directly recruited control group youths despite explicit directions to the contrary. Some OAs acknowledged that they did not look at the LST group and control group lists, or they chose not to follow those lists. The OAs also indicated that there was frequent confusion about the status of the lists. It appears that updated lists were frequently circulated to the OAs and they were not always clear which lists were up-to-date. The OAs noted that they felt bad for some youths and let them into the class. For example, if one youth in the home was in the LST group and the other youth was in the control group, the OA might allow the control group youth to take the class. Other reasons youth in the control group received the service included the community college and the social worker enrolling youths. In these cases, it is not clear whether TCCF missed these cases or if the referrals somehow did not go through TCCF. The impact analyses will take these crossover issues into account.

Impact of the Evaluation on the Program

Throughout the evaluation, the study team attempted to have as minimal an impact on program operations as possible. There were, however, several places where the random-assignment research design required changes in practices with regard to the LST program. For instance, the evaluation changed the referral process. The following discussion highlights the ways in which the evaluation affected LST program operations, as well as some of the ways in which program staff perceived the evaluation as having an effect.

The evaluation altered how OAs recruited youth by requiring them to recruit all of the LST group youths. During individual interviews, OAs were asked specifically about the recruitment processes before and during the evaluation. According to these respondents, prior to the evaluation, OAs would contact those youths who were most likely to participate in the program, particularly youths in group homes and foster homes with multiple youths. Once a module reached its maximum capacity (e.g., enough youths agreed to participate), the OAs would wait until the next module before calling additional youths on the list. According to respondents, time often elapsed between when a youth learned about the program through the letter and when they actually received a call from an OA. During the interim, youths may have moved placements, forgotten about the program, or lost interest in participating.

During the evaluation, the OAs were supposed to make all LST group youths a priority for recruitment. In individual interviews, OAs were asked specifically if the evaluation had affected how they recruited youths for the program. Notably, few OAs stated that they changed how they prioritized lists of referrals for recruitment, though they tried to recruit youths on the LST group (treatment) lists. Some OAs, however, acknowledged that they read but did not always adhere to the LST group lists. These comments were supported by the number of control youths that were enrolled in the LST program. In describing the effects of the evaluation on their recruitment, some OAs thought that the evaluation placed an additional burden on them because they had to recruit youths who were on the LST group list.

The process study also examined how the evaluation affected OAs' attempts to engage youth. Many OAs felt that the evaluation did not impact the way that they engaged youths, while others felt that it had inhibited their ability to engage youths. More specifically, some OAs felt that the evaluation prevented them from enrolling interested youths who were part of the control group. They encountered and interacted with control group youths through visits at group homes, in family foster homes, or through their work in the community. The OAs view themselves as youth advocates, and turning away needy and interested youths was difficult for them.

Characteristics of the Evaluation Sample

The evaluation sample included youth age 17 that were in the foster care system and resided in different placement types. Two sources of data, the baseline youth survey and child welfare administrative data, provided information about the characteristics and experiences of youths included in the evaluation, in both the LST and control groups. The baseline survey data were collected in the youth's first interview, while the administrative data were extracted in spring 2006. It is important to note that the tables in this section provide information about two slightly different samples of youths. Specifically, some data are reported for all of the youths who participated in the baseline interview ($N = 467$), and some data are reported for the group of youths who were interviewed at baseline as well as at the second follow-up point ($n = 411$). This latter group represents the analytic sample used to examine outcomes reported in chapter 4. The data presented are not necessarily representative of youths served by the LST program before or after the study period, nor do they necessarily represent all foster youths in Los Angeles County. Rather, they are representative of the youth who participated in the Multi-Site Evaluation's study of the LST program.

Baseline Characteristics by Overall Sample and Assignment Group

Data from the baseline survey indicate that there were no significant differences across experimental assignment groups, that is, LST group versus control group, with respect to most of the characteristics of youths described in these data, including youths' demographics and measures of mental health and behavior (table 3.5). A higher proportion (44.1 percent) of youths assigned to the LST group, however, reported having been placed in a group home or other residential facility prior to the inception of data collection than control group youths (34.7 percent).

Administrative child welfare data accessed through DCFS provided additional information about the child welfare case histories of the youths in the evaluation sample. On average, the youths in the evaluation sample were first removed from their homes at 9.5 years of age, with a median age of first removal of nearly 10 years. During their time in care, the youths had been in an average of 5.7 different out-of-home placements and had been removed from their homes 1.3 times. The evaluation sample youths had spent an average of 8.5 years in out-of-home placements, with a median of roughly 7.8 years spent in care. Two percent of youths in the sample had been adopted at some point.

TABLE 3.5. BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS BY OVERALL SAMPLE AND ASSIGNMENT GROUP

Characteristic	Overall Sample (N=467)		Control Group (N=245)		LST Group (N=222)		Sig.
Male (n/%)	194	41.5	100	40.8	94	42.3	
Age, years^a	17.0	--	17.0	--	17.0	--	
Race^b (n/%)							
Black	233	49.9	120	49.0	113	50.9	
Other	81	17.3	49	20.0	32	14.4	
Unknown	7	1.5	4	1.6	3	1.4	
White	171	36.9	83	33.9	88	39.6	
Hispanic (n/%)	203	43.5	107	43.7	93	41.9	
Mental health/behavior							
Youths self-report (borderline/clinical) (n/%)							
Internalizing	140	30.0	70	28.6	70	31.5	
Externalizing	127	27.2	66	26.9	61	27.5	
Total problem	129	27.6	65	26.5	64	28.8	
Any subscale	219	46.9	116	47.3	103	46.4	
Post-traumatic stress disorder (n/%)	30	6.4	14	5.7	16	7.2	
Delinquency scale (mean/s.d.)	1.32	2.11	1.26	2.06	1.40	2.19	
Has children or is currently pregnant (n/%)	50	10.1	24	9.8	26	11.7	
Social support (mean/s.d.)	6.5	6.1	6.08	5.0	6.97	7.2	
Educational status (n/%)							
Participates in special education program	166	35.6	83	33.9	83	37.4	
Learning disability	115	24.6	49	20.0	66	29.7	*
Substitute care history (n/%)							
Prior group home/residential care	183	39.2	85	34.7	98	44.1	*
Prior runaway	148	31.7	80	32.7	68	30.6	
Re-entered	123	26.3	67	27.3	56	25.2	
Time in care, years (mean/s.d.)	8.42	5.5	8.37	5.4	8.47	5.5	
Current placement type (n/%)							
Non-kin foster home	154	33.0	83	33.9	71	32.0	
Home of kin	198	42.4	106	43.3	92	41.4	
Group home/residential placement	107	22.9	54	22.0	53	23.9	
Other	8	1.7	2	0.8	6	2.7	

Note: statistical significance is measured between LST and control groups

a. All youths were 17 years old at intake for the evaluation.

b. Youths could respond that they were more than one race.

* $p < .05$

Baseline Characteristics by Compliance with Assignment Group

As discussed earlier in this chapter (table 3.2), there were instances in which the youths in the study did or did not follow their assignment group. More specifically, there were both LST group and control group compliers who followed their assignment and either did (LST group) or did not (control group) receive the service. However, there were also no-shows in the LST group who did not participate in the LST program, as well as crossovers from the control group who did participate. While table 3.5 above portrayed the baseline characteristics of the entire LST sample and the LST and control groups, it is also important to examine the characteristics of those youth who did and did not comply with their assignment. This enables the evaluation to identify any significant differences in baseline characteristics of youths between the groups, particularly those that might have an effect on the impact findings.

The following tables (tables 3.6 and 3.7) describe baseline characteristics by compliance with assignment for the control group and LST group. Notably, the tables only contain data for those youths in the study who also received a second follow-up interview ($n = 411$). Differences with respect to youths' racial/ethnic identification, and the level of youths with borderline or clinical levels of some mental health problems, were found across program take-up groups within the control group (table 3.6), but no differences were found within the LST group (table 3.7). A higher proportion of crossovers (63.6 percent) reported being black or African American than control group compliers (42.5 percent) (table 3.5). Conversely, a lower proportion of crossovers reported being white (21.8 percent), or being Hispanic (27.3 percent), than did control group compliers (38.1 percent white; 49.4 percent Hispanic). Also, a higher proportion of crossovers (40.0 percent) scored within the borderline or clinical range on the Child Behavior Checklist internalizing sub-scale than control group compliers (24.4 percent). The fact that some characteristics were associated with the likelihood that control group youths utilized services, in violation of group assignment, may indicate something about the inclination of these subgroups to seek out services, or of caregivers and advocates of these youths to encourage them to access services.

Characteristic	Compliers (N=160)		Crossovers (N=55)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
Male (n/%)	59	36.9	26	47.3	
Race^a (n/%)					
Black	68	42.5	35	63.6	**
Other	35	21.9	10	18.2	
Unknown	2	1.3	1	1.8	
White	61	38.1	12	21.8	*
Hispanic (n/%)	79	49.4	15	27.3	**
Mental health/behavior Youths self-report (borderline/clinical) (n/%)					
Internalizing	39	24.4	22	40.0	*
Externalizing	43	26.9	17	30.9	
Total problem	45	28.1	16	29.1	

TABLE 3.6. BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTROL GROUP YOUTHS BY COMPLIANCE

Characteristic	Compliers		Crossovers		Sig.
	(N=160)		(N=55)		
Any subscale	68	42.5	34	61.8	**
Post-traumatic stress disorder (n/%)	12	7.5	2	3.6	
Delinquency scale (mean/s.d.)	1.32	2.23	1.13	1.55	
Has children or is currently pregnant (n/%)	19	11.9	2	3.6	
Social support (mean/s.d.)	6.22	5.4	5.64	4.1	
Educational status (n/%)					
Participates in special education program	50	31.3	20	36.4	
Learning disability	23	14.4	17	30.9	*
Substitute care history (n/%)					
Prior group home/residential care	48	30.0	24	43.6	
Prior runaway	49	30.6	18	32.7	
Re-entered	48	30.0	11	20.0	
Time in care (in years) (mean/s.d.)	8.03	5.32	9.30	5.60	
Current placement type (n/%)					
Non-kin foster home	49	30.6	20	36.4	
Home of kin	78	48.8	19	34.6	
Group home/residential placement	31	19.4	16	29.1	
Other	2	1.3	0	0.0	

a. Youths could respond that they were more than one race.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 3.7. BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE SKILLS TRAINING GROUP YOUTHS BY

Characteristic	Compliers		No-Shows		Sig.
	(N=144)		(N=52)		
Male (n/%)	58	40.3	19	36.5	
Race ^a (n/%)					
Black	79	54.9	23	44.2	
Other	19	13.2	8	15.4	
Unknown	1	0.7	2	3.8	
White	55	38.2	22	42.3	
Hispanic (n/%)	59	41.0	25	48.1	
Mental health/behavior					
Youths self-report (borderline/clinical) (n/%)					
Internalizing	49	34.0	15	28.8	
Externalizing	37	25.7	17	32.7	
Total problem	43	29.9	15	28.8	
Any subscale	69	47.9	21	40.4	
Post-traumatic stress disorder (n/%)	13	9.0	3	5.8	

TABLE 3.7. BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE SKILLS TRAINING GROUP YOUTHS BY COMPLIANCE

Characteristic	Compliers (N=144)		No-Shows (N=52)		Sig.
Delinquency scale (mean/s.d.)	1.26	2.07	1.30	1.53	
Has children or is currently pregnant (n/%)	18	12.5	6	11.5	
Social support (mean/s.d.)	6.63	6.4	6.77	6.7	
Educational status (n/%)					
Participates in special education program	51	35.4	21	40.4	
Learning disability	46	31.9	13	25.0	
Substitute care history (n/%)					
Prior group home/residential care	59	41.0	25	48.1	
Prior runaway	35	24.3	18	34.6	
Re-entered	37	25.7	8	15.4	
Time in care (in years) (mean/s.d.)	8.72	5.51	8.34	5.86	
Current placement type (n/%)					
Non-kin foster home	50	34.7	15	28.9	
Home of kin	56	38.9	27	51.9	
Group home/residential placement	35	24.3	7	13.5	
Other	3	2.1	3	5.8	

a. Youths could respond that they were more than one race.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

No differences *at baseline* were observed across assignment or take-up groups with respect to most of the outcomes considered here, including employment status, acquisition of financial accounts, and possession of personal documentation (table 3.8).¹² Youths assigned to the control group did, however, report a significantly higher sense of preparedness than LST group youths. These differences were also observed when crossovers and no-shows were, in turn, dropped from the analysis. Finally, no differences were found on baseline outcome measures across take-up groups; that is, the baseline outcomes of control and LST group compliers were not found to differ, respectively, from those of crossovers and no-shows.

The data presented in this chapter provide a foundation for the impact study results, which will be discussed in chapter 4. In particular, chapter 3 described the creation of the evaluation of the sample. It is also provided substantial information about participation in the LST program, including how closely the youths in the LST and control groups followed their assignment and the extent to which crossovers (e.g., youth in the control group who received the service) present a problem for the study. The presence of crossovers was a consideration in our analytic approach, which will be discussed in chapter 4. Information from the process study was utilized to better understand service delivery and take-up in the LST program. Finally, the chapter discussed the baseline characteristics of the youth in the evaluation, including a specific look at

¹² For some outcomes, baseline measures were either not available (e.g., earnings) or provided little information (e.g., high school graduation) given the context under which they were recorded.

the different assignment and compliance groups. This background information provides important context for understanding the impact findings that follow in chapter 4.

TABLE 3.8. BASELINE OUTCOMES BY ASSIGNMENT, COMPLIANCE, AND SERVICE TAKE-UP

	Control Group		LST Group		Sig. ^a	Control Group				LST Group				Sig. ^e	
	(N=215)	(N=196)	Compliers	Crossovers		Compliers	No-Shows	(N=160)	(N=55)	(N=144)	(N=52)	Sig. ^b	Sig. ^c		Sig. ^d
Preparedness (mean/s.d.)															
Overall	3.39	0.38	3.30	0.42	*	3.41	0.38	*	3.33	0.39	3.29	0.40	3.34	0.47	**
Job	3.62	0.45	3.48	0.58	**	3.65	0.44	***	3.54	0.48	3.46	0.57	3.55	0.63	***
Important documents (mean/s.d.)	2.02	0.87	1.94	0.87		2.03	0.89		2.02	0.81	1.93	0.86	1.98	0.90	
Social Security card (n/%)	180	84.9	164	84.5		134	84.8		46	85.2	120	84.5	44	84.6	
Copy of your birth certificate (n/%)	165	77.8	148	76.3		120	75.9		45	83.3	107	75.4	41	78.8	
Driver's license (n/%)	5	2.4	7	3.6		5	3.2		0	-	5	3.5	2	3.8	
Driver's license or state issued photo ID (n/%)	84	39.6	63	32.5		66	41.8		18	33.3	45	31.7	18	34.6	
Grade completed (mean/s.d.)	10.3	0.8	10.1	1.6	*	10.3	0.9		10.3	0.8	10.0	1.6	10.2	1.6	*
Employed ever (n/%)	78	36.3	74	37.8		57	35.6		21	38.2	54	37.5	20	38.5	
Financial accounts (n/%)															
Checking	17	8.0	14	7.1		13	8.2		4	7.3	10	6.9	4	7.7	
Savings	57	26.8	43	21.9		41	25.9		16	29.1	32	22.2	11	21.2	
Other	17	7.9	12	6.1		11	6.9		6	10.9	9	6.3	3	5.8	
Any	72	34.0	58	29.6		51	32.5		21	38.2	44	30.6	14	26.9	
Delinquency (mean/s.d.)	1.26	2.1	1.4	2.2		1.32	2.23		1.13	1.55	1.26	2.07	1.30	1.53	
Pregnancy (n/%)	21	9.8	24	12.2		19	11.9		2	3.6	18	12.5	6	11.5	

^a – LST Group vs. Control Group

^b – Control Group Compliers vs. LST Group

^c – Control Group Crossovers vs. Control Group Compliers

^d – LST Group No-Shows vs. LST Group Compliers

^e – LST Group Compliers vs. Control Group Compliers

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Chapter 4. Impact Study Findings

Introduction

The impact study was a critical component of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs. Youths in the study were administered a survey three times throughout the evaluation: a baseline interview followed by a first follow-up one year later and a second follow-up two years later. Sections of the questionnaire serve to identify the services the youths report receiving, short- and long-term outcomes, and moderating factors that could influence the efficacy of the services received. A more in-depth description of the youth questionnaire is included in chapter 1.

This chapter presents the results of the impact study for the Life Skills Training program. The first part of the chapter contains an in-depth discussion of our analytic approach, including the specific nature of the analyses conducted and type of outcomes evaluated. Next, we describe our findings concerning differences in the levels of independent living service receipt (from both LST and other sources) across assignment and take-up groups. Finally, we present our findings concerning the impact of LST on a number of different outcomes.

Analytic Strategy

Youths were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, with the expectation that (a) youths assigned to the treatment group, referred to as “LST group,” would receive services consistent with the design of the program and (b) youths in the control group would *not* receive any services from the program being evaluated, although they might have received similar services from other sources.

Consistent with the experimental evaluation design, our primary analytic strategy for assessing the impact of the LST program is an intent-to-treat (ITT) analysis of differences in observed outcomes between the LST and control groups as they were originally assigned. Intent-to-treat analyses assume that the treatment provider (LST program) intends to serve all of the evaluation subjects that are assigned to the LST group. This strategy assumes that the LST and control groups do not differ systematically across any characteristics that might be associated with outcomes of interest since the two groups were selected through a random process. Any outcomes that differ between the two groups in a statistically significant way are assumed to be a result of the intervention being evaluated.

However, as in other experimental evaluations of social services, there were some violations of the assignment protocol. That is, some members of the control group received services (e.g., attended one or more LST class sessions) while some members of the LST group did not. The existence of the latter group, referred to as *no-shows*, was to be expected, considering that, in any large-scale implementation of a social program, some portion of eligible participants will likely not receive the intended service. Indeed, we suspect that the percentage of youths in the LST group who failed to attend at least one class session in Los Angeles (26.5 percent) is not atypical of such programs. Thus, a comparison of the LST and control groups with no-shows included may, in fact, provide an estimate of the *overall* impact of the LST program in a real-world implementation.

The presence of control group youths, who received the services being evaluated, referred to as *crossovers*, is more problematic from the standpoint of the analysis of effects. As with no-shows, the presence of crossovers diminishes the observed effects of the program. Unlike the presence of no-shows, the presence of crossovers does not correspond as readily to a real-world analog. The crux of the problem presented by crossovers and no-shows (collectively referred to here as *violations*) is that both can serve to lessen the observed differences in program effects across the LST groups *as originally assigned*.¹³ To address concerns raised by the presence of no-shows and crossovers, the study employed distinct analytic strategies in addition to our ITT analyses.

Differences in Service Receipt and Youth Characteristics

The first part of the impact analyses entailed an examination of differences in service receipt and youth characteristics, including baseline measurements of outcomes, across assignment and take-up groups. The purpose of these analyses was to (a) ascertain the degree to which service receipt was affected by the presence of violations and (b) attempt to describe the degree of equivalence of the *expectation* of outcomes across groups. For example, if violations of the assignment to the LST and control groups resulted in there being only small differences between the two groups in the likelihood of service receipt, then it would be unrealistic to expect large between-group differences in outcomes.

Extensions to Intent-to-Treat Analyses

Second, in response to findings (described later) that suggest that there was some substantive attenuation or dilution of service receipt as a result of the violations of the experimental assignment condition, two extensions to the ITT analyses were also calculated. In brief, where the ITT analyses reveal statistically significant differences, the ITT results can be rescaled to obtain estimates of the impact of program participation for program participants compared to (a) all members of the control group and (b) control group compliers. Because these estimates represent rescalings of the ITT findings, the statistical significance of each is presumed to be the same as that for the ITT difference (Bloom 1984).

Treatment on the Treated (TOT): For most social service interventions, some portion of those eligible will not participate (be “no-shows”). If it is assumed that there were no program effects for nonparticipants in the LST group or on crossovers, then it is possible to rescale the ITT findings and obtain an estimate of the *impact of program participation for those who participated*.¹⁴ Specifically, using assignment to the LST group as a determinant of eligibility, the TOT effect is calculated by dividing the difference between the average outcomes of the LST and control groups as assigned (i.e., ITT) by the proportion of the LST group who participated in LST. Thus, the TOT estimate represents the average change in an outcome per LST recipient.

¹³ Based on the assumption that program effects are positive for LST group compliers and control group crossovers. The assumption of no program effects on LST group no-shows is relatively weak given that this group of youth did not participate in LST. However, because control group crossovers participated in LST, the assumption of no program effects for this group may not be realistic.

¹⁴ The assumption of no effect on crossovers is less tenable than the assumption of no effect for no-shows, primarily because crossovers have, by definition, received LST services, whereas no-shows have not.

Local Average Treatment Effect: In the presence of crossovers, TOT analyses do not necessarily yield estimates of the impacts of program participation (vs. nonparticipation). A second extension, known as the *local average treatment effect (LATE)*, offers a partial fix by allowing us to rescale the ITT results to represent the effect of participation on a subset of participants, those whose take-up of LST was determined by the experimental assignment.¹⁵ To obtain an estimate of the LATE, the study divided the difference between the average outcomes of the LST and control groups as assigned (i.e., ITT) by the difference in the proportions of the LST and control groups receiving service.

Regression Models

Two sets of regression models were estimated. The first, which parallels the ITT comparisons, included a variable indicating experimental group assignment as well as a number of other covariates (described below). The other, which parallels the LATE comparisons, attempts to minimize the potential bias in treatment effects that might be caused by unmeasured variation between LST participants and LST nonparticipants (Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996).^{16,17} In brief, treatment-effect models were estimated so that experimental group assignment was used to instrument program participation. Parameter estimates associated with program take-up obtained from these models are equivalent to the LATE estimator described above. The covariates included in the regression models are listed in table 4.1. Variable specifications and a more detailed discussion of the covariates are provided in appendix E. Descriptive characteristics from the baseline survey are provided in chapter 3.

TABLE 4.1. COVARIATE (VALUES)

Youth demographics
Gender (female or male)
Age
Race (African American, other, white)
Hispanic/Latino
Mental health/behavior
Achenbach youth self-report
Externalizing t score
Internalizing t score
Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI) short-form diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder
Delinquent/antisocial behavior scale ^a
Social support ^a
Care history
Time since start of current care spell
Care spell (first vs. subsequent)
Currently or previously placed in a group home
Previously ran away from a substitute care placement

¹⁵ Under the additional assumptions that the average effect for compliers is the same as that for youths who (a) would have participated in LST, regardless of assignment, and (b) acted in contradiction to assignment, then the LATE estimate simplifies to become the TOT estimate.

¹⁶ This approach took advantage of the association between random assignment and the likelihood of LST participation estimate instrumental variable models that used assignment condition as the instrument (Angrist et al. 1996).

¹⁷ Our discussion draws upon Howard Bloom, ed., *Learning More from Social Experiments* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005).

TABLE 4.1. COVARIATE (VALUES)

Placement type (home of non-kin, home of kin, group home or residential; placement, other)

a. Standardized.

Significance Levels

The impact analyses described here involved a relatively large number of distinct significance tests. Indeed, considering only those tests in which outcomes were compared by group assignment, over 80 separate tests were estimated. Conducting multiple tests, however, increases the likelihood of a false discovery (i.e., a significant difference that is, in fact, the result of chance alone).

In an attempt to assess the probability that significant findings constituted false discoveries, two well-known adjustment procedures - the Bonferroni and Benjamini-Hochberg adjustments - were applied to the results of the impact analyses. The first adjustment is thought to provide a very conservative threshold, especially where the number of estimates is high. The Benjamini-Hochberg adjustment, on the other hand, while providing more power to detect real differences than the class of procedures to which the Bonferroni adjustment belongs, will typically yield a larger proportion of false discoveries.

If applied simultaneously to all of the outcomes considered here, however, the adjusted significance thresholds calculated under both of these procedures would likely be very conservative. A reasonable alternative is to calculate the adjustments within specific domains or categories of related outcomes (e.g., different types of economic assistance). In the tables containing the results of the impact findings (tables 4.7 and 4.8), only unadjusted significance levels are presented. However, where these findings appear to constitute false discoveries (based on one or both of the procedures just described) qualifications are noted in the text.

Finally, it should be noted that the procedures used to adjust for multiple significance tests were applied only to the analyses of program outcomes. Because the intent of the examination of independent living service receipt across assignment and take-up groups was primarily exploratory, only unadjusted significance tests were conducted.

Evaluated Outcomes

Given the intent of LST to provide youth with a breadth of competencies and resources, we evaluated the impact of LST on a number of different outcomes, including those concerning perceived preparedness for various tasks associated with independent living, education and employment, and economic well-being. Data concerning a number of other domains, including physical and mental health, substance abuse, level of social support, and deviant behavior, were also collected during the course of the evaluation. Although these were included as covariates in our analyses of outcomes, they were seen as being outside the immediate purview of LST—that is, as distal, versus proximate, outcomes.

- Preparedness and job preparedness: Youths were asked how prepared they felt in 18 areas of adult living (see appendix E). The response categories were very prepared (4), somewhat prepared (3), not very well prepared (2), and not at all prepared (1).¹⁸ Efforts to identify underlying dimensions of preparedness based on these items led to the development of two scales, an overall scale of the average of all 18 items and a job preparedness scale, the average of three employment-related items.¹⁹ These scales are not independent since the job preparedness items are included in the overall scale.
- Education and employment: Completion of a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED) and current employment status.
- Economic well-being: Reported earnings and current net worth, economic hardship, and receipt of formal and informal financial assistance.
 - *Reported earnings*: Total of earnings from formal and informal employment. Specifically, youths were asked to list their employers over the past 12 months and then to estimate how much they had earned from each. To this subtotal were added estimates of the total amount earned from all “informal jobs.”
 - *Net worth*: Sum of estimated bank balances²⁰ and selling prices of all vehicles, less outstanding credit card balances.²¹
 - *Economic hardship*: Summative scale comprising the following four questions: In the past 12 months, have you (a) panhandled or begged for money, (b) made money by recycling cans, bottles, or other items, (c) sold your blood or plasma, and (d) sold or pawned any personal possessions?²²
 - *Formal financial assistance*: Youths were asked if, in the past 12 months, they had received any (a) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, commonly known as welfare, (b) Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, (c) Food Stamp benefits, (d) Supplemental Security Income benefits, (e) general relief payments, or (f) other welfare payments.
 - *Informal financial assistance*: Youths were asked if, in the past 12 months, they had received any financial help from (a) Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or your caseworker, mentor, or Independent Living Program, (b) a relative or friend, or (c) a community group, like a church, a community organization, or a family resource center.
- Housing: Residential stability and homelessness.
 - *Residential Stability*: Sum of self-reported number of changes in residence during the two 12-month periods preceding the first and second follow-up interviews.

¹⁸ In the original survey, preparedness items were negatively coded (i.e., lower values corresponded to feelings of greater preparedness). The valence of these items has been reversed for the sake of clarity.

¹⁹ Means of items were used to deal with the small amount of missing data. Cases were dropped if more than 20 percent of the items were missing on any scale. Chronbach’s alpha for overall preparedness was 0.75 at baseline and 0.84 at the first and second follow-ups.

²⁰ Checking, savings, and “other types of accounts where you have money available to you.”

²¹ As of date of survey administration.

²² Chronbach’s alpha for the hardship scale was relatively low (0.33).

- *Homelessness*: Youths reported being homeless or having lived in any of the following during the two 12-month periods preceding the first and second follow-up interviews:
 - (a) Motel, hotel, or SRO (single room occupancy);
 - (b) Car, truck, or some other type of vehicle;
 - (c) Abandoned building, on the street or outside somewhere;
 - (d) Shelter for battered women; or
 - (e) Shelter for the homeless.

- Delinquency: Youths were asked if they had engaged in the following behaviors during the 12 months preceding the second follow-up interview. Comparisons were based on a summated scale.²³
 - (a) Been loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place so that people complained about it or you got in trouble?
 - (b) Been drunk in a public place?
 - (c) Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus or subway rides, food, or clothing?
 - (d) Been involved in a gang fight?
 - (e) Carried a handgun?
 - (f) Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?
 - (g) Purposely set fire to a house, building, car, or other property or tried to do so?
 - (h) Stolen something from a store or something that did not belong to you worth less than \$50?
 - (i) Stolen something from a store, person, or house, or something that did not belong to you worth \$50 or more, including stealing a car?
 - (j) Committed other property crimes such as fencing, receiving, possessing, or selling stolen property, or cheated someone by selling them something that was worthless or worth much less than what you said it was?
 - (k) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them or have a situation end up in a serious fight or assault of some kind?
 - (l) Sold or helped sell marijuana (pot, grass), hashish (hash), or other hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or LSD?
 - (m) Been paid cash for having sexual relations with someone?
 - (n) Did you receive anything in trade for having sexual relations, such as food or drugs?
 - (o) Had or tried to have sexual relations with someone against their will?

- Pregnancy: Female youths were asked at first and second follow-up interviews if they had been pregnant at any point during previous 12 months.

- Documentation and accounts (checking, savings, other): Personal documentation (possession of Social Security card, birth certificate, driver’s license or state ID card); and financial accounts (possession of checking, savings, or other²⁴ account).

²³ Chronbach’s alpha for the delinquency scale was 0.77.

²⁴ “Other types of accounts where you have money available to you.”

Service Receipt among Sample Youths²⁵

Since the Foster Care Independence Act provides funding for independent living services and the LST program is intended to provide help to young people in learning independent living skills, an important outcome of interest in our evaluation is the extent to which LST participation was associated with receipt of independent living services. Strictly speaking, the questions did not ask youth about services per se, but rather asked whether youths had received a variety of specific kinds of help in areas integral to living independently (see table 4.2). In this report we refer to these kinds of help as services because they are the kinds of help typically provided by independent living services providers and are the kinds of services that the Chafee Program is designed to support. Youths could have received the help from an independent living services provider, such as the LST program, but they could also have received it at school, from a foster or group care provider, or from a member of their family of origin.

Many youths reported receiving various forms of help prior to the beginning of the evaluation with the acquisition of independent living skills (table 4.2). In other words, they had received many of the kinds of help that a program like LST is supposed to provide before ever having enrolled in the program. As mentioned in the description of the LST program in chapter 2, the Early Start to Emancipation Preparation (ESTEP) program provides workshops and practicums that address key emancipation preparation areas. Like the LST program, the ESTEP workshops are offered on community college campuses. Youths participating in LST could have attended ESTEP workshops when they were 14 to 15 years old. In addition, some group homes provide life skills classes to the youths they serve. Some foster parents or kin caregivers may proactively work with the youths to prepare them for emancipation. As noted earlier, foster parents and kin caregivers can be barriers to recruitment of youths into the LST program because they believe they are adequately preparing the youth and that he or she does not need LST.

Another potential source of services or help are vocational skills centers (now called independent living skills enhancement programs) that offer services similar to those of the LST program. There are 12 centers throughout Los Angeles County that provide help with job searching, interviewing techniques, resume writing, etc. The Independent Living Program coordinator refers youths to these skill centers.

The Emancipation Services Unit of DCFS offers a range of services, including financial aid workshops; academic mentoring programs; job development programs; scholarships; college tours; financial assistance for special tests needed to gain acceptance into a postsecondary institution (SAT, ACT); and providing financial incentives for youths who graduate from high school. The independent living program also offers employment and job-readiness services through county organizations such as the DCFS Job Development Services Section and the Workforce Investment Act program, which offers career and employment development, on-the-job training, career shadowing, and classes to help guide youths in choosing a career. Other DCFS services include mentoring through partnerships with two community college-based programs, transportation assistance through the Teens on Wheels program, and computer access training programs.

²⁵ Findings regarding differences in the characteristics of assignment and take-up groups are in chapter 3.

Much of the information presented in this report on the availability and description of independent living services was obtained through the review of DCFS program documents. As is often the case with social service programs, implementation often diverges from written documentation and programs are constantly in flux. In addition, it is unclear whether the programs mentioned above serve large numbers of foster youths. A more detailed description of the independent living services available in Los Angeles County is provided in appendix B.

TABLE 4.2. BASELINE SERVICE RECEIPT BY ASSIGNMENT

Service	Control Group (N=215)		LST Group (N=196)		Sig.
	N	%	n	%	
In the last 12 months have you...					
Attended any classes or group sessions that were intended to help you get ready to for being on your own	85	39.5	67	34.1	
Education (Have you received the following...)					
General Educational Development test preparation	22	10.2	27	13.8	
ACT/SAT preparation	60	27.9	64	33.0	
Assistance with college applications	77	35.8	71	36.4	
Employment (Have ever received the following...)					
Vocational/career counseling	54	25.1	54	27.6	
Help with resume writing	123	57.2	115	58.7	
Assistance with identifying potential employers	72	33.5	73	37.2	
Assistance with completing job applications	143	66.5	136	69.4	
Help with job interviewing skills	128	59.5	123	62.8	
Job referral/placement	71	33.0	60	30.6	
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	116	54.0	105	53.6	
Money management (Have you received the following...)					
Help with money management	97	45.1	101	51.5	
Help on use of a budget	92	42.8	98	50.0	
Help on opening a checking and savings account	119	55.3	88	44.9	*
Help on balancing a checkbook	71	33.0	59	30.1	
Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)					
Training on meal planning and preparation	145	67.4	129	65.8	
Training on personal hygiene	148	68.8	131	66.8	
Training on nutritional needs	154	71.6	141	71.9	
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	115	53.5	93	47.4	
Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?	94	43.7	77	39.3	

Note: There are several categories of service receipt that were not asked at the baseline interview and were not included in table 4.2 or tables E.2 and E.3 in appendix E, including: mentoring, tutoring, summer job, Job Corps, and housing. These data are available in tables 4.3 to 4.6 below.

* $p < .05$.

As expected, given the random assignment of youths to the two groups, there were very few statistically significant differences in the proportions of youths reporting prior receipt of independent living services *at baseline* across assignment groups (table 4.2).²⁶ There were also few differences by compliance group (see tables E.2 and E.3). Surprisingly, the levels of reported receipt of most independent living services *by the second follow-up* also did not differ significantly between assignment groups (table 4.3). Specifically, although higher percentages of youths assigned to the LST group reported having attended independent living classes or group sessions (61.2 percent), or having received help finding an apartment (43.4 percent), than youths assigned to the control group (44.2 percent and 33.5 percent, respectively), no differences by assignment group at the second follow-up were found with respect to the balance of independent living service types considered here, including educational support, services addressing job-seeking proficiencies and tasks, financial management skills, and personal health and hygiene. The difference between the LST and control groups in the likelihood of having reported at the second follow-up that they had attended independent living classes or group sessions is, however, important, because LST provides virtually all of its assistance in the context of such classes.

TABLE 4.3. SECOND FOLLOW-UP SERVICE RECEIPT BY ASSIGNMENT

Service	Control Group (N=215)		LST Group (N=196)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
In the last 12 months have you...					
Attended any classes or group sessions that were intended to help you get ready to for being on your own	95	44.2	120	61.2	***
Have you ever...					
Been involved in mentoring other youth	42	19.5	40	20.4	
Education (Have you received the following...)					
Educational tutoring for help with school	62	28.8	55	28.1	
General Educational Development test preparation	50	23.3	39	19.9	
ACT/SAT preparation	38	17.7	37	18.9	
Assistance with college applications	95	44.2	94	48.0	
Employment (Have ever received the following...)					
Vocational/career counseling	100	46.5	97	49.5	
Help with resume writing	169	78.6	153	78.1	
Assistance with identifying potential employers	129	60.0	121	61.7	
Assistance with completing job applications	174	80.9	163	83.2	
Help with job interviewing skills	179	83.3	161	82.1	
Job referral/placement	124	57.7	120	61.2	
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	148	68.8	137	69.9	
Help finding a summer job	78	36.3	71	36.2	
Help from Job Corps	24	11.2	20	10.2	
Money management (Have you received the					

²⁶ Significance levels are based on *unadjusted* p-values. The procedures used to adjust for multiple significance tests were applied only to the analyses of program outcomes.

TABLE 4.3. SECOND FOLLOW-UP SERVICE RECEIPT BY ASSIGNMENT

Service	Control Group (N=215)		LST Group (N=196)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
following...)					
Help with money management	181	84.2	168	85.7	
Help on use of a budget	170	79.1	158	80.6	
Help on opening a checking and savings account	179	83.3	163	83.2	
Help on balancing a checkbook	155	72.1	136	69.4	
Housing (Have you received the following...)					
Assistance with finding an apartment	72	33.5	85	43.4	*
Help with completing an apartment application	54	25.1	52	26.5	
Help with making a down payment or security deposit on an apartment	43	20.0	34	17.3	
Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)					
Training on meal planning and preparation	177	82.3	161	82.1	
Training on personal hygiene	171	79.5	159	81.1	
Training on nutritional needs	183	85.1	167	85.2	
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	153	71.2	140	71.4	
Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?	176	81.9	150	76.5	

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

A comparison of independent living service receipt by take-up groups revealed a number of significant differences at the second follow-up interview (tables 4.4 and 4.5). That differences in service receipt were apparent based on take-up but not assignment is important because it suggests that, had there been few or no violations of the experiment (i.e., all LST group youths participated in LST and no control group youths had participated in LST), the LST group would have likely reported receiving more services than the control group across several dimensions of independent living services. However, it should also be noted that the levels of reported receipt for most services were relatively comparable across take-up groups (table 4.6). Thus, even under a perfectly executed experiment, while there would likely have been more statistically significant differences in service receipt between the LST and control groups, the magnitude of those differences would have been modest at best.

TABLE 4.4. SECOND FOLLOW-UP SERVICE RECEIPT OF CONTROL

Service	Compliers (N=160)		Crossovers (N=55)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
In the last 12 months have you...					
Attended any classes or group sessions that were intended to help you get ready to for being on your own	54	33.8	41	74.5	***

TABLE 4.4. SECOND FOLLOW-UP SERVICE RECEIPT OF CONTROL

Service	Compliers (N=160)		Crossovers (N=55)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
Have you ever...					
Been involved in mentoring other youths	30	18.8	12	21.8	
Education (Have you received the following...)					
Educational tutoring for help with school	45	28.1	17	30.9	
General Educational Development test preparation	39	24.4	11	20.0	
ACT/SAT preparation	26	16.3	12	21.8	
Assistance with college applications	69	43.1	26	47.3	
Employment (Have ever received the following...)					
Vocational/career counseling	71	44.4	29	52.7	
Help with resume writing	124	77.5	45	81.8	
Assistance with identifying potential employers	95	59.4	34	61.8	
Assistance with completing job applications	131	81.9	43	78.2	
Help with job interviewing skills	128	80.0	51	92.7	*
Job referral/placement	89	55.6	35	63.6	
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	113	70.6	35	63.6	
Help finding a summer job	59	36.9	19	34.5	
Help from Job Corps	16	10.0	8	14.5	
Money management (Have you received the following...)					
Help with money management	138	86.3	43	78.2	
Help on use of a budget	128	80.0	42	76.4	
Help on opening a checking and savings account	133	83.1	46	83.6	
Help on balancing a checkbook	118	73.8	37	67.3	
Housing (Have you received the following...)					
Assistance with finding an apartment	45	28.1	27	49.1	**
Help with completing an apartment application	37	23.1	17	30.9	
Help with making a down payment or security deposit on an apartment	30	18.8	13	23.6	
Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)					
Training on meal planning and preparation	132	82.5	45	81.8	
Training on personal hygiene	125	78.1	46	83.6	
Training on nutritional needs	135	84.4	48	87.3	
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	115	71.9	38	69.1	
Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?	134	83.8	42	76.4	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4.5. SECOND FOLLOW-UP SERVICE RECEIPT OF

Service	Compliers (N=144)		No-Shows (N=52)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
In the last 12 months have you...					
Attended any classes or group sessions that were intended to help you get ready to for being on your own	107	74.3	13	25.0	***
Have you ever...					
Been involved in mentoring other youths					
Education (Have you received the following...)					
Educational tutoring for help with school	43	29.9	12	23.1	
General Educational Development test preparation	30	20.8	9	17.3	
ACT/SAT preparation	27	18.8	10	19.2	
Assistance with college applications	76	52.8	18	34.6	*
Employment (Have ever received the following...)					
Vocational/career counseling	72	50.0	25	48.1	
Help with resume writing	122	84.7	31	59.6	***
Assistance with identifying potential employers	96	66.7	25	48.1	*
Assistance with completing job applications	125	86.8	38	73.1	*
Help with job interviewing skills	122	84.7	39	75.0	
Job referral/placement	95	66.0	25	48.1	*
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	107	74.3	30	57.7	*
Help finding a summer job	59	41.0	12	23.1	*
Help from Job Corps	16	11.1	4	7.7	
Money management (Have you received the following...)					
Help with money management	132	91.7	36	69.2	***
Help on use of a budget	124	86.1	34	65.4	***
Help on opening a checking and savings account	131	91.0	32	61.5	***
Help on balancing a checkbook	111	77.1	25	48.1	***
Housing (Have you received the following...)					
Assistance with finding an apartment	66	45.8	19	36.5	
Help with completing an apartment application	45	31.3	7	13.5	**
Help with making a down payment or security deposit on an apartment	29	20.1	5	9.6	
Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)					
Training on meal planning and preparation	123	85.4	38	73.1	*
Training on personal hygiene	123	85.4	36	69.2	**
Training on nutritional needs	127	88.2	40	76.9	*
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	105	72.9	35	67.3	
Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?	111	77.1	39	75.0	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4.6. SECOND FOLLOW-UP SERVICE RECEIPT BY SERVICE TAKE-UP

Service	No Service Take-Up (N=212)		Service Take-Up (N=199)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
In the last 12 months have you...					
Attended any classes or group sessions that were intended to help you get ready to for being on your own	67	31.6	148	74.4	***
Have you ever...					
Been involved in mentoring other youths					
Education (Have you received the following...)					
Educational tutoring for help with school	57	26.9	60	30.2	
General Educational Development test preparation	48	22.6	41	20.6	
ACT/SAT preparation	36	17.0	39	19.6	
Assistance with college applications	87	41.0	102	51.3	*
Employment (Have ever received the following...)					
Vocational/career counseling	96	45.3	101	50.8	
Help with resume writing	155	73.1	167	83.9	**
Assistance with identifying potential employers	120	56.6	130	65.3	
Assistance with completing job applications	169	79.7	168	84.4	
Help with job interviewing skills	167	78.8	173	86.9	*
Job referral/placement	114	53.8	130	65.3	*
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	143	67.5	142	71.4	
Help finding a summer job	71	33.5	78	39.2	
Help from Job Corps	20	9.4	24	12.1	
Money management (Have you received the following...)					
Help with money management	174	82.1	175	87.9	
Help on use of a budget	162	76.4	166	83.4	
Help on opening a checking and savings account	165	77.8	177	88.9	**
Help on balancing a checkbook	143	67.5	148	74.4	
Housing (Have you received the following...)					
Assistance with finding an apartment	64	30.2	93	46.7	***
Help with completing an apartment application	44	20.8	62	31.2	*
Help with making a down payment or security deposit on an apartment	35	16.5	42	21.1	
Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)					
Training on meal planning and preparation	170	80.2	168	84.4	
Training on personal hygiene	161	75.9	169	84.9	*
Training on nutritional needs	175	82.5	175	87.9	
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	150	70.8	143	71.9	
Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?	173	81.6	153	76.9	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Impact Findings

For each evaluated outcome, estimated bivariate ITT analyses and extensions (i.e., TOT and LATE) are listed in table 4.7. The parameter estimates associated with LST group assignment obtained from the ITT regression models, and those associated with LST participation obtained from the treatment-effect models, are listed in table 4.8. For outcomes in which baseline values were available, an additional model including both covariates and baseline outcome values were estimated.

*Outcomes at Second Follow-Up*²⁷

Very few significant differences in outcomes were found between the LST and control groups. Also, after adjusting significance levels to account for the possibility of false positive results, no significant differences remained.^{28,29} Findings in each of the outcome domains are as follows:

- **Sense of Preparedness.** At the second follow-up interview, the LST and control groups do not differ significantly on either the measures of overall preparedness or job preparedness.³⁰ Although LST participation was found to be significant in the instrumental variable regression that also included covariates and a baseline measure of overall preparedness, the level of significance of this estimate was lower than the adjusted significance levels for multiple significance tests.³¹
- **Education and Employment.** By the second follow-up, approximately 60 percent of the sample had graduated high school or obtained their GED and almost 38 percent reported having attended some college. Almost half were currently employed. Participation in

²⁷ At the first follow-up interview approximately 40 percent of the sample was still in substitute care. Given that many of the outcomes assessed here (e.g., economic hardship, high school graduation) were essentially undefined for these youths, impact analyses were limited to outcomes observed at the second follow-up interview.

²⁸ Adjustments were made using the Bonferroni and Benjamini-Hochberg procedures. See section titled “Significance Levels” in chapter 4.

²⁹ Our ability (i.e., power) to detect differences between LST and control groups in the outcomes of interest is determined by several factors, including the number of subjects in each group and the expected size of the differences in the outcomes of interest. Further, depending on how differences in groups are to be measured (e.g., means, proportions) the general prevalence of an outcome, or its level of variability, can also affect whether or not differences are detected.

With respect to the comparison of the means of outcomes measured as continuous variables (e.g., preparedness), the actual number of subjects interviewed at the year-2 follow-up affords us very high power (i.e., above 0.99) to detect moderate and large effect sizes. Setting statistical power at 0.80, the smallest effect size we could expect to detect is 0.26.

With respect to the comparison of proportions of outcomes (e.g., youths graduating from high school) across groups, our ability to detect differences will depend on the prevalence of the outcome itself. Given statistical power of 0.80, we could expect to detect absolute differences of about 10 percent for outcomes that are either relatively rare (0.10) or very common (0.90). For outcomes experienced by about half of the sample, however, an absolute difference in proportions of about 13 percent would be necessary.

³⁰ Total scale scores were calculated by taking the mean of all included items. Thus, possible values for both the overall and job-related scales range from 1 to 4.

³¹ Adjustments were calculated using the instrumental variable regression results for the effect of LST participation on overall and job-related preparedness (i.e., two parameters).

LST did not, however, appear to increase the likelihood of employment or educational achievement. Indeed, in the instrumental variable regression model, LST youths were found to be significantly *less* likely to have attended college than control group youths (table 4.9). However, this finding was not robust to the adjustments for multiple significance tests.³²

- **Economic Well-Being.** Youths were asked a series of questions about their earnings, net worth, experiences with economic hardship, and receipt of financial assistance. None of these domains showed any significant differences across assignment.
- **Income and Net Worth.** The mean reported income for both the control and LST groups was very low, with the average for each group (control: \$4,410; LST: \$3,810) well below the poverty level for single-person households (\$9,800 in 2006) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). Average net worth, which included the value of any automobiles the youths owned, was also low. No differences based on assignment were found in youths' reported income or net worth, however.
- **Economic Hardship and Financial Assistance.** Approximately half of both the control and LST groups reported having experienced one or more of several classes of hardship. Although the level of reported hardship did not differ by assignment, youths assigned to the LST group did report lower levels of receipt of financial assistance (control: 70.1 percent; LST: 43.9 percent). Further, although there were no significant differences in the level of receipt of specific types (i.e., formal and informal) of assistance, results from the regression model predicting the receipt of formal assistance, suggests that, after controlling for other factors, LST youths are less likely than control youths to receive this type of assistance.³³ However, after accounting for the number of significance tests concerning hardship and financial assistance, none of the regression findings appeared to be significant.³⁴
- **Housing.** Two housing outcomes were evaluated here - residential instability, which was defined as the number of changes in residence, and homelessness, which was defined as having been homeless or having lived on the street, in a vehicle, in a shelter, or some other temporary residence.³⁵ No significant differences were found with respect to either outcome.

³² Adjustments were calculated using the instrumental variable regression results for the effect of LST participation on the two educational outcomes considered here (high school graduation and college attendance).

³³ Formal assistance included receipt of benefits or assistance from TANF, WIC, Food Stamps, general relief, or other welfare payments. Informal assistance included financial help from a youth's (a) caseworker, mentor, or Independent Living Program, (b) relative or friend, or (c) community group, such as a church, a community organization, or a family resource center.

³⁴ Adjustments were calculated using the instrumental variable regression results for the effect of LST participation on the three assistance outcomes included (i.e., formal assistance, informal assistance, and any financial assistance).

³⁵ (a) Motel, hotel, or SRO (Single Room Occupancy), (b) car, truck, or some other type of vehicle, (c) abandoned building, on the street or outside somewhere, (d) shelter for battered women, or (e) shelter for the homeless.

- Delinquency. About a third of youths (30.7 percent of control group youths, 34.7 percent of LST group youths) reported having engaged in one or more delinquent behaviors. The average number of reported behaviors were 0.79 and 0.81, respectively, for control and LST group youths. No significant differences between groups were found, however.
- Pregnancy. About a quarter of female youths (23.1 percent of control group youths, 24.4 percent of LST group youths) reported having become pregnant at some point between the baseline interview and year-2 follow-up. The proportions of youths reporting pregnancies among control and LST group youths were not statistically different.
- Financial Accounts and Personal Documentation. Lastly, we considered two outcomes that are included among the stated goals of many general independent living programs, including LST: helping youths acquire personal documents (e.g., Social Security card, driver's license) and open (and properly manage) bank accounts.

Nearly half of each group (control: 41.4 percent; LST: 46.4 percent) reported having no banking (or other financial) accounts at the second follow-up. Conversely, most youths in the sample reported having a Social Security card, birth certificate, and some form of state-issued ID card. Considering that most youths in the sample lived in Los Angeles, it is perhaps of note that only about a third (control: 35.8 percent; LST: 31.6 percent) reported having a driver's license. Neither with respect to personal documents or the possession of bank accounts, however, were any significant differences found vis-à-vis assignment.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 of this report served several purposes. First, the chapter provided an overview of the analytic methods employed in the impact study, including the intent-to-treat (ITT) analyses and the extensions of these analyses, the treatment on the treated (TOT) and local average treatment effect (LATE). Chapter 4 also provided additional context as to the services that the youths had received by the second follow-up interview. As expected, significantly fewer control group youth reported that they had attended a class or group session that prepared them to live on their own than LST group youth. However, there were few other differences between the LST and control group youths in service receipt at the second follow-up. The primary focus of chapter 4 was to present the impact findings of the study. Concrete measures of the transition to adulthood were examined (e.g., educational attainment, employment, earnings, avoidance of economic hardship, homelessness, etc.). The impact evaluation found few impacts on any outcome assessed. After adjusting significance levels to account for the possibility of false positive results, no significant impacts remained. The following chapter, chapter 5, puts the findings displayed here into some context and offers some potential lessons for the field that result from the evaluation of the Life Skills Training program.

TABLE 4.7. RESULTS OF ITT ANALYSES AND EXTENSIONS FOR EVALUATED OUTCOMES

Measure	Assignment Groups				Estimated Effects ^g						
	Control		LST		ITT Analysis		TOT Analysis		LATE Analysis		
	N =215		N =196		Diff.	sig. ^f	E.S.	Diff.	E.S.	Diff.	E.S.
	n	%	n	%							
Preparedness (mean/SD)											
Overall preparedness	3.5	0.4	3.5	0.3	0.01		0.03	0.03	0.08	0.02	0.06
Job-related preparedness	3.7	0.5	3.7	0.5	-0.04		-0.08	-0.02	-0.04	-0.08	-0.16
Education and employment											
High school diploma or G.E.D.	126	58.6	117	59.7	-1.09		0.05	1.48	0.06	2.27	0.09
Currently employed	107	49.8	89	45.4	-4.36		-0.18	-5.93	-0.24	-9.10	-0.37
Attended college	88	40.9	68	34.7	-6.24		-0.27	-8.49	-0.36	-13.02	-0.56
Prior earnings and net worth (in thousands) (mean/SD)											
Earnings	4.4	6.4	3.8	8.5	-0.60		-0.09	-0.87	-0.14	-1.26	-0.20
Net worth	2.5	5.7	3.1	7.7	0.66		0.12	0.81	0.14	1.37	0.24
Economic hardship and financial assistance (Cn=167, LST=147)^a											
<i>Hardship^b</i>											
Begged, sold plasma, pawned, sold recyclables for money	39	23.4	41	27.7	4.54		0.24	6.18	0.33	9.48	0.50
Borrowed money for food, went to food pantry/soup kitchen for money; went hungry	50	29.9	32	21.8	-8.17		-0.43	-11.12	-0.58	-17.06	-0.89
Did not pay rent/evicted, did not pay utility/phone bill	45	26.9	39	26.5	-0.42		-0.02	-0.57	-0.03	-0.87	-0.04
One or more hardships (from above)	90	53.9	68	46.3	-7.63		-0.31	-10.39	-0.42	-15.94	-0.64
<i>Assistance^b</i>											
Received public assistance (i.e., formal assistance) ^c	51	30.5	36	18.4	-6.05		-0.30	-8.23	-0.41	-12.63	-0.63
Females only	38	38.0	31	32.6	-5.37		-0.24	-7.31	-0.32	-11.21	-0.49
Received informal financial assistance ^d	94	56.3	68	34.7	-10.03		-0.41	-13.65	-0.55	-20.94	-0.85
Received any financial assistance	117	70.1	86	43.9	-11.56	*	-0.51	-15.73	-0.70	-24.13	-1.07
5-Item Scale of Hardship and Financial Assistance (mean/s.d.)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	-0.04		-0.16	-0.07	0.27	-0.05	0.19
Housing											
Number of residential moves (mean/SD)	1.5	2.1	1.4	2.0	-0.10		-0.05	-0.20	-0.09	-0.20	-0.09

TABLE 4.7. RESULTS OF ITT ANALYSES AND EXTENSIONS FOR EVALUATED OUTCOMES

Measure	Assignment Groups				Estimated Effects ^g						
	Control		LST		ITT Analysis		TOT Analysis		LATE Analysis		
	N =215		N =196		Diff.	sig. ^f	E.S.	Diff.	E.S.	Diff.	E.S.
	n	%	n	%							
Homelessness	36	16.7	25	12.8	-3.99		-0.32	-5.43	-0.43	-8.33	-0.66
Delinquency											
1 or more delinquent behaviors	66	30.7	68	34.7	4.00		0.18	5.44	0.25	8.34	0.38
Number of delinquent behaviors (mean/SD)	0.79	1.76	0.81	1.45	0.02		0.01	0.12	0.08	0.03	0.02
Became pregnant (n=130)^e	30	23.1	29	24.4	1.30		0.07	1.77	0.10	2.71	0.15
Financial accounts											
Checking	107	49.8	92	46.9	-2.83		-0.11	-3.85	-0.15	-5.91	-0.24
Savings	89	41.4	67	34.2	-7.21		-0.31	-9.82	-0.42	-15.06	-0.64
Other	16	7.4	11	5.6	-1.83		-0.30	-2.49	-0.41	-3.82	-0.62
Any	126	58.6	105	53.6	-5.03		-0.21	-6.85	-0.28	-10.51	-0.43
Important documents											
Social Security card	200	93.0	183	93.4	0.34		0.05	0.47	0.07	0.72	0.11
Birth certificate	183	85.1	173	88.3	3.15		0.27	4.29	0.37	6.58	0.57
Driver's license	77	35.8	62	31.6	-4.18		-0.19	-5.69	-0.25	-8.73	-0.39
Driver's license state I.D. card	190	88.4	176	89.8	1.42		0.15	1.94	0.20	2.97	0.31

a – Asked only of those youths over 18 and out of care.

b – During last 12 months.

c – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Women, Infants and Children program, food stamps, general relief payments, and other welfare payments (not including Supplemental Security Income).

d – Financial help from a youth's (a) caseworker, mentor, or Independent Living Program, (b) relative or friend, and (c) community group, like from a church, a community organization, or a family resource center.

e – Among female youths.

f – Unadjusted significance.

g – Effect sizes for interval-level variables were based on the difference in means divided by the standard deviation for the control group youths. Effect sizes for nominal variables were based on the difference in proportions divided by an estimate of the within-group standard deviation. Although this index is thought to underestimate the population standardized mean difference, it was used here because it easily accommodates the rescaling used to calculate the TOT and LATE estimates (Sanchez-Meca, Marin-Martinez, and Chacon-Moscoso 2003).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4.8. RESULTS OF ITT AND IV REGRESSIONS FOR EVALUATED OUTCOMES

Outcome	ITT Regressions						I.V. Regressions					
	Covariates			Covariates & Baseline Outcome			Covariates			Covariates & Baseline Outcome		
	B	se	sig. ^e	B	se	sig. ^e	B	se	sig. ^e	B	se	sig. ^e
Preparedness												
Overall preparedness	0.026	0.032		0.052	0.029		0.060	0.067		0.123	0.063	*
Job related preparedness	0.004	0.046		0.027	0.046		0.006	0.097		0.056	0.097	
Education and employment												
High school diploma or G.E.D.	0.047	0.220		–	–	–	0.048	0.286		–	–	–
Currently employed	-0.108	0.213		-0.122	0.216		-0.129	0.271		-0.144	0.276	
Attended college	-0.352	0.222		–	–	–	-0.533	0.256	*	–	–	–
Prior earnings and net worth (in thousands)												
Earnings	-367.2	764.0		–	–	–	-852.2	1603.3		–	–	–
Net worth	520.1	689.6		–	–	–	1315.6	1444.5		–	–	–
Economic hardship and financial assistance												
<i>Hardship^a</i>												
Begged, sold plasma, pawned, sold recyclables for money	0.422	0.287		–	–	–	0.580	0.355		–	–	–
Borrowed money for food, went to food pantry/soup kitchen for money; went hungry	-0.428	0.289		–	–	–	-0.406	0.353		–	–	–
Did not pay rent / evicted, did not pay utility/phone bill	0.029	0.269		–	–	–	0.121	0.366		–	–	–
One or more hardships (from above)	-0.002	0.035		–	–	–	0.029	0.075		–	–	–
<i>Assistance^a</i>												
Received public assistance (i.e., formal assistance) ^b	-0.580	0.294	*	–	–	–	-0.602	0.320		–	–	–
Females only	-0.622	0.347		–	–	–	-0.674	0.388		–	–	–
Received informal financial assistance ^c	-0.362	0.240		–	–	–	-0.451	0.316		–	–	–
Received any financial assistance	-0.607	0.254	*	–	–	–	-0.681	0.300	*	–	–	–

TABLE 4.8. RESULTS OF ITT AND IV REGRESSIONS FOR EVALUATED OUTCOMES

Outcome	ITT Regressions						I.V. Regressions					
	Covariates			Covariates & Baseline Outcome			Covariates			Covariates & Baseline Outcome		
	B	se	sig. ^e	B	se	sig. ^e	B	se	sig. ^e	B	se	sig. ^e
5-Item Scale of Hardship and Financial Assistance	-0.036	0.030		–	–	–	-0.051	0.064		–	–	–
Housing												
Number of residential moves	-0.047	0.089		–	–	–	-0.155	0.403		–	–	–
Homelessness	-0.144	0.237		–	–	–	-0.115	0.291		–	–	–
Delinquency												
1 or more delinquent behaviors	0.191	0.238		0.193	0.250		0.215	0.299		0.243	0.295	
Number of delinquent behaviors	-0.007	0.086		0.004	0.085		-0.005	0.179		0.031	0.170	
Became pregnant^d	-0.089	0.340		–	–	–	0.038	0.393				
Financial accounts												
Checking	-0.131	0.212		-0.124	0.213		-0.206	0.272		-0.187	0.272	
Savings	-0.328	0.218		-0.309	0.220		-0.408	0.261		-0.385	0.268	
Other	-0.380	0.431		-0.393	0.432		-0.300	0.406		-0.311	0.410	
Any	-0.248	0.215		-0.254	0.218		-0.359	0.267		-0.360	0.269	
Important documents												
Social Security card	0.231	0.458		0.330	0.468		0.034	0.594		0.194	0.572	
Birth certificate	0.162	0.336		0.217	0.339		0.114	0.379		0.200	0.387	
Driver's license	-0.204	0.225		–	–	–	-0.257	0.286				
Driver's license state I.D. card	0.125	0.350		0.226	0.359		0.185	0.385		0.253	0.396	

a – During last 12 months.

b – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Women, Infants and Children program, food stamps, general relief payments, and other welfare payments (not including Supplemental Security Income).

c – Financial help from a youth's (a) caseworker, mentor, or Independent Living Program, (b) relative or friend, and (c) community group, like from a church, a community organization, or a family resource center.

d – Among female youths.

e – Unadjusted significance.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Chapter 5. Lessons for Independent Living Programs from the Evaluation of the Life Skills Training Program

In the 1980s, concern about the poor outcomes experienced by youth aging out of foster care led to federal funding for independent living services. The accountability and program evaluation provisions of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 called for a new focus on the effectiveness of these programs. Now the child welfare field is not simply asking whether foster youth receive services that are intended to help them make a successful transition to adulthood; policymakers and program managers want to know which services have an impact on transition outcomes. The Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs was undertaken to assess the impact of existing programs on outcomes identified in the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. One of the programs selected for evaluation was the Life Skills Training (LST) program of The Community College Foundation (TCCF), operated under a contract with the public child welfare agency in Los Angeles County, California. In order to better interpret the findings from the LST evaluation, we will consider (1) the current state of research on independent living services, (2) the evolution of such services over time, and (3) the fact that the evaluation was a field experiment and not a demonstration study.

First, from a historical context on the Multi-Site Evaluation, the LST evaluation marks the first time independent living services have been subjected to experimental evaluation; to date, evidence supporting the effectiveness of independent living services has been limited to anecdotal information and a small number of quasi-experimental studies (Montgomery, Donkoh, and Underhill 2006). Given that federal policy and funding have supported independent living services for more than twenty years, it is noteworthy and commendable that the child welfare field has embarked on the kind of rigorous knowledge generation that will be necessary to develop a sound evidence base for interventions aimed at assisting foster youth in transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the field is only at the beginning of rigorous program evaluation.

Second, although the empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of independent living services has not developed much over the past two decades, child welfare practice with adolescents and young adults has evolved significantly (Child Welfare League of America 2005). Government and philanthropic funding has helped create a network of service providers that has shared practice wisdom and models, leading to a rapid proliferation of ideas and programs. The Multi-Site Evaluation may be seen as the beginning of rigorous evaluation of independent living services, but it sheds light on the effectiveness of only a handful of currently available approaches to assisting foster youth in transition.

Third, the Multi-Site Evaluation was intended to evaluate existing programs of potential national significance as they currently operate (i.e., it is a field experiment), not to develop and evaluate such programs *de novo*. In other words, the programs being evaluated were not designed by the evaluators or under the control that is sometimes the case in an experimental demonstration project. For example, TCCF and the community colleges in which the LST program was offered served as gatekeepers to the program. The evaluation team was not in a position to make sure that only those youths assigned to the experimental condition actually received LST services. This resulted in a crossover rate exceeding that which would likely have been encountered in a more controlled demonstration project organized by evaluators.

Focusing on existing programs also means that the evaluation is unable to manipulate elements of the intervention in order to address particular concerns of the field, meaning that specific questions that might be answered by a demonstration tailored to answering such questions go unanswered. Given that this was a field experiment, the evaluation team had limited input into the program model's ability to answer questions about the impact of these program characteristics. Thus, in interpreting the findings of the Multi-Site Evaluation, it is important to keep in mind that the programs being evaluated do not necessarily represent the ideal version of a particular service.

The impact evaluation of the LST program failed to detect an impact (positive or negative, and of sufficient size to be policy relevant) on any of the concrete indicators of a successful transition to adulthood that we assessed (e.g., educational attainment, employment, earnings, and avoidance of economic hardship). Evidence suggesting that LST youth were less likely to receive financial assistance, and less likely to attend college, was relatively weak, and did not withstand adjustments made for multiple significance tests.

What implications do these findings have for the delivery of life skills training to foster youth? We neither believe that the LST evaluation provides conclusive grounds for removing life skills training from the toolbox of independent living services providers nor that child welfare authorities should dismiss the evaluation results as irrelevant to their own operations. Drawing lessons from the LST evaluation for the broader child welfare field requires an assessment of (1) what kinds of help acquiring life skills foster youths are receiving from sources other than life skills training classes and (2) how representative LST is of other life skills training programs.

The large percentage of foster youths who reported receipt of help in acquiring various kinds of life skills from sources other than LST calls into question whether classroom-based life skills training can add much to what foster youth are already obtaining from other sources. Over half of the youth who had not participated in LST reported receiving help from some other source (for over half of the categories we measured). For some of the other items, the relatively low rate of reported help may be more a function of the fact that some survey questions may have been inappropriate given some youths' circumstances (e.g., asking about SAT preparation for a youth two years behind in school; asking about completing an apartment application for a youth living in kinship foster care) than a lack of access to help.

Where are youths getting this help if not through LST? For most youths, it appears that independent living assistance comes from a variety of sources. Although the most commonly reported sources of independent living assistance included biological parents or other original family members and teachers and schools, sizable proportions of youths report receiving assistance from foster parents, caseworkers, and independent living programs (table 5.1). Interestingly, about 40 percent of the youths who did not participate in LST reported receiving some type of assistance from an independent living or life skills program. Also of interest is the finding that youths who participated in LST were generally more likely than those who did not participate to report receiving help from a "caseworker" or a "mentor." This provides some support for the role of the LST outreach advisors in providing help and referrals to other sources of help to youths participating in LST, because youths may have seen outreach workers as caseworkers or mentors. At least in Los Angeles County it appears that many if not most foster

youths have multiple sources of help in acquiring life skills, which may help explain why LST showed no positive impact on transition outcomes. Child welfare authorities would be wise to assess how available these other sources of help are to youths in their jurisdictions when considering investing in classroom-based life skills training.

TABLE 5.1. SOURCES OF LIFE SKILLS ASSISTANCE BY SERVICE PARTICIPATION

LST Participation	Independent Living Program/Life Skills Coord./Classes	Biological Parents/Other Original Family	Teacher or School	Foster Parents	Caseworker	Mentor	Group Home Staff
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Preparing for your education							
Participated	37.2	35.2	64.3	33.2	35.7	14.6	7.0
Did not participate	22.4***	32.7	59.8	25.7	28.0	6.5**	4.2
Job-related help							
Participated	54.8	37.7	51.3	36.2	31.7	14.1	5.0
Did not participate	24.3***	42.5	57.5	29.4	22.9*	7.0*	3.3
Understanding how to handle your finances							
Participated	54.3	43.2	23.6	36.2	20.6	8.0	5.5
Did not participate	22.0***	54.7*	27.1	33.6	12.1*	1.9**	4.2
Obtaining housing							
Participated	28.1	11.1	3.0	6.5	10.6	2.0	3.0
Did not participate	7.0***	13.6	1.4	3.7	5.1*	1.4	1.4
Preparing for daily living							
Participated	29.1	51.3	20.6	45.2	18.6	7.0	5.5
Did not participate	16.4**	55.6	24.8	39.3	13.6	2.8*	3.7
Any of the above							
Participated	73.9	66.3	77.4	59.3	53.8	22.1	13.1
Did not participate	40.2***	70.6	77.1	57.5	43.0*	12.6*	10.3

Notes: LST = Life Skills Training Program, Los Angeles County, California.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Unfortunately, there are no reliable data on the availability of independent living services around the United States with which to assess how representative LST is of other life skills training programs, making it difficult to know how well our findings might generalize to other life skills training programs. Nevertheless, our trips around the country to identify promising programs for evaluation and our conversations with practice leaders leave us with the clear impression that LST is not a particularly unusual program, and that some of the ways in which it is unusual may make it superior to many other life skills training programs. The numbers-driven nature of LST recruitment appears to lead at least some outreach workers to focus their recruiting efforts exclusively on the easiest-to-reach youth, but this limitation is likely common to many programs offered by private sector providers under contract to public agencies and many public-agency workers charged with recruiting youth for life skills courses.

In addition, it may be unreasonable to expect that a 10-week, 30-hour classroom-based intervention is going to significantly alter the trajectory of foster youths. Yet, many programs are

of similar or shorter duration. LST may be more limited in the experiential components of its training than some programs, but again, many if not most life skills training programs do not provide any more hands-on experiences than LST. LST instructors do not always follow the TCCF-desired curriculum, resulting perhaps in more between-instructor variability in program content than is ideal, but we are not convinced that LST exhibits any less consistency than many other programs around the country. In short, to the extent that other programs are more intensive, extensive, experiential, theoretically driven, or structured than LST, the results of the LST evaluation may not do justice to the impact such programs have on foster youth outcomes. Nevertheless, there is little reason to believe that LST is a relatively weak intervention compared with common practice in the field.

LST also had some positive attributes that are absent from many programs. The fact that LST employs outreach workers to try to engage youths in life skills training, arrange transportation, and serve as information resources, means that it most likely exceeds the norm in terms of youth engagement. In many jurisdictions, “outreach” for life skills training classes consists of little more than a mailing to youths or their out-of-home care providers, and perhaps a financial incentive for youths to participate. There are no reliable data available to put LST’s 76 percent enrollment rate into context, but given all of the potential obstacles to enrolling all eligible youths in life skills training programs, LST may very well have set the bar fairly high for the field.

LST was offered at community colleges as part of an explicit strategy to make foster youths familiar with these community resources. Community colleges might be an important part of a strategy to support educational attainment given the educational deficits many foster youth bring with them to the transition to adulthood. Community colleges often provide opportunities for remediating educational deficits, acquisition of the credentials needed to enter college (e.g., General Educational Development courses), and a way for young people to begin postsecondary education at a low cost and close to home. However, our evaluation did not show specific evidence that LST participation increased the likelihood that young people would attend college, though it may still be too early to assess education outcomes given that less than three-fifths of the young people in the evaluation had a high school diploma or its equivalent at follow-up.³⁶ However, providing transportation to life skills training courses at community colleges may make some intuitive sense, and is not the practice of many life skills training programs.

If LST can be seen as a fairly representative example of classroom-based life skills training, with perhaps a bit more aggressive outreach than many programs, what should be made of the findings of this evaluation? The evaluation results call into serious question the notion that classroom-based life skills training in and of itself is likely to have much impact on the well-being of foster youth in transition to adulthood. This is not to say that life skills are unimportant to success in the transition to adulthood, but classes intended to impart such skills appear to have little impact on more concrete outcomes. Child welfare authorities should not expect classroom-based life skills training alone to suffice as a strategy to prepare foster youth for adulthood.

³⁶ Respectively, 34.7 and 40.9 percent of LST and control group youths reported having attended a two- or four-year college at some point during the evaluation. In neither the intent-to-treat nor the extensions analyses was this difference found to be statistically significant.

As noted above, programs that go far beyond what LST provides may achieve better results; the LST evaluation should not be the definitive statement about the effectiveness of all life skills training. Nevertheless, the findings of this evaluation make it more important than ever for such programs to demonstrate beneficial outcomes in the context of rigorous evaluation. The cost of these programs should also be considered in assessing their proper role as part of an overall strategy for assisting foster youth in the transition to adulthood. In the case of LST, the costs are estimated to be \$1,536 per youth based on TCCF's annual contract of more than \$2.15 million to serve 1,400 youths. How much should be spent on life skills training as opposed to other services and supports directed toward foster youth?

Finally, assuming that various life skills play an important if yet poorly understood role in the transition to adulthood for foster youth, *from whom should foster youth learn life skills, and what are the best methods for providing them with such skills?* Foster youth spend much of their adolescence under the care and supervision of out-of-home care providers (i.e., relative and nonrelative foster parents and staff of group care settings). It is arguably these adults who should take primary responsibility for teaching youth life skills and giving them the trial-and-error opportunities that are the normative path to acquiring life skills in the United States. Our evaluation provides strong evidence that foster youth are already getting some of this kind of help from their foster care providers, though there is room for improvement. Of course, being provided with life skills training does not necessarily lead to the acquisition of life skills. Our evaluation did not try to assess whether the independent living services the youth received actually translated into life skills. Further research should be conducted to understand the degree to which foster youth acquire independent living skills from their caregivers and whether knowledge thus gained is more enduring than knowledge gained through classroom-based training. In addition, promising approaches to training foster care providers to teach independent living skills should be rigorously evaluated.

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Appendix A. Evaluation Methodology and Challenges

Introduction

The main source of data for identifying program impacts comes from interviews with foster youths. For each program, we drew samples of eligible youths and randomly assigned each youth to either treatment, referred to as “LST group,” or the control group. Our target was to interview 450 youths at the baseline. Each respondent was asked to participate in an initial interview as well as two follow-up interviews, with expected first and second follow-up retention rates of 85 percent and 80 percent, respectively. Each follow-up interview was to take place approximately one year after the previous interview with that respondent. Cases were made eligible for interviewing in the next follow-up, 11 months after their initial or first follow-up interview.

A small number of respondents completed the initial interview, but did not complete the first follow-up. These respondents, referred to as “wave skippers,” were promoted to the second follow-up despite not having completed their first follow-up interview. In order to keep wave skipper respondents on a schedule similar to their peers, these respondents were promoted 23 months after their initial interview.

Below we provide detail about creating the sample for each study, including the source of each sample, the random assignment process, the ways the evaluation affected The Community College Foundation (TCCF) procedures, response and retention rates, and explanations of out-of-scope determination. This is followed by a description of the questionnaire components and information about data collection and the fielding of the survey. Finally, this discussion concludes with a review of the evaluation challenges faced during the evaluation of the LST program.

LST Sample

Sample Overview

The LST analysis sample consists of 467 youths born between March 1986 and February 1987. The youths were in foster care placements under the guardianship of the Los Angeles Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). To be in scope for the study, the youths had to be 17 years old, in out-of-home care, eligible for Chafee services, and able to benefit from life skills training.³⁷ We chose to include 17-year-olds based on conversations with staff at TCCF. They felt that youths younger than 17 frequently are difficult to engage in thinking about independent living. Also, with more youths referred than can be served, they prioritize those youths who are closest to emancipation age.

To create the sample, lists of all 17-year-old foster youths were obtained from DCFS, excluding probation youths and those in adoptive placement status. Given the apparent number of youths in this age group, we determined that approximately one quarter of the age group would be selected each academic quarter from autumn 2003 through spring 2004, which matches the academic

³⁷ The determination that a youth would not benefit from services is made by the Department of Child and Family Services and according to its policy means that the youth is physically or mentally unable to benefit from independent living services.

cycle of LST classes. In order to reduce variability in outcomes caused by differences in age, we decided to select the sample based upon month of birth, choosing those who were age 17 to 17.25 at the time the file was created. We set a target of 450 completed interviews. Based on an assumption of 90 percent completion rate, we planned to draw a sample of 500 youths across the three academic quarters, or 167 youths per quarter.

For the autumn sample, we matched DCFS records to TCCF's records to exclude any youths referred previously to LST. This initially yielded exactly 167 youths. After the sample was put into the field, we discovered that KinGap youths are not eligible for services under Chafee. Our 167 youths included 60 youths in KinGap. Given that many youths were automatically referred to LST by county Independent Living Coordinators, we had to relax the exclusion restriction. We adjusted our sample definition to include youths who had been referred, but had never been contacted by TCCF. This provided a second list of 107 youths who met all the criteria, from which we randomly selected 60 to replace our KinGap youths. Shortly thereafter, we discovered nine more KinGap youths in our sample. We removed them, but did not replace them at that time.

After the autumn sample was well under way, we observed a much higher out-of-scope rate than we had anticipated. DCFS records were frequently not up-to-date, or sometimes did not include information we needed to determine whether a youth was in scope. This led to two further adjustments for our winter and spring samples. First, we consulted with DCFS and were able to obtain additional data that allowed us to identify more out-of-scope conditions up front. Second, we expanded our range of birth months to provide a bigger sample to account for the higher out-of-scope rates that would still result from out-of-date records. We also augmented the winter sample to offset the lower in-scope rate in the autumn. In winter and spring, we again matched the DCFS records to TCCF records and eliminated any youths who had been previously contacted for LST, with the winter and spring quarters capturing five and four birth months, respectively. The final complete sample represents one full year of birth dates.

The following present the details of each sample draw:

- Autumn: Dates of birth between March 1, 1986, and May 30, 1986, selected from a DCFS file dated 5/30/03, released in two batches on 9/12/03 and 9/24/03.
- Winter: Dates of birth between June 1, 1986, and October 30, 1986, selected from a DCFS file dated 11/24/03, released on 12/12/03 and 12/18/03.
- Spring: Dates of birth between November 1, 1986, and February 28, 1987, from a DCFS file dated 2/9/04, released on 3/3/04.

Out-of-Scope Youths

Youths who were not in scope for the study were identified at three points of the process. First, we attempted to screen out any ineligible youths from DCFS files. As described above, we were more successful at this in the winter and spring quarters when we had additional information on

each youth. Youths deleted from DCFS files at the time of sampling were those who met any of the following conditions:

All quarters:

- Placements outside L.A. county
- Non-speakers of English or Spanish
- Youths in the KinGap program
- Specific DCFS offices
 - Asian Pacific Project
 - Deaf Services Unit
 - Bureau of Specialized Programs
 - Foster Care Eligibility/Review Enhancement
 - Runaway Adolescent Program

Winter and Spring only:

- Payment codes indicating mental/physical handicap (codes F1–F4)
- Legal guardianship (based on “caregiver” field given as “guardian”)
- Runaways/AWOL

As part of the matching of youths in the DCFS file to TCCF records, we deleted youths who met the following conditions:

- Previously enrolled, attended, or graduated from LST as determined by the TCCF accountability file.
- Previously contacted by a TCCF outreach advisor as determined by either a record in the accountability file or by asking outreach advisors directly.³⁸
- Placements where no classes were being offered the next quarter.
 - College of the Canyons—all quarters (only offers summer classes)—resulted in dropping two youths
 - Los Angeles Trade Tech—did not offer a class in Spring 2004—resulted in dropping 11 youths

After matching DCFS files with TCCF files and removing all ineligible youths, we randomly assigned each youth to either the LST group or the control group using the statistical software program SAS. Each youth was given a probability of 0.5 of being assigned to LST or control. TCCF program staff assigned LST youths to the appropriate college based on geography and provided us with class schedules.

Ideally, all out-of-scope determinations would be made before the sample is created and before assignment to LST or control groups. However, DCFS records proved to be sufficiently inaccurate or out of date that when interviewers approached the youth or the youth’s foster family, they sometimes discovered that the youths met one of the out-of-scope conditions. In

³⁸ Asking outreach advisors to identify any youths on our lists that they had previously contacted was a very imprecise method. It suffered from several obvious deficiencies including recall error and staff turnover. However, the paucity of information in the TCCF files made this the only sensible alternative. While we cannot definitively quantify the amount of error, our attempts to determine how much error might have occurred indicate an amount that would not likely be harmful to the evaluation.

these cases, the interviewer would report the situation to the field manager. The field manager would contact DCFS and verify with either central office staff or the caseworker that the observed condition held. Only when verified by DCFS did we then designate that youth as out of scope. In all but one case, DCFS confirmed the condition. We made every effort to treat all cases the same regardless of their assignment to LST or control. There is no evidence that either the LST or control group was more likely to contain ineligible youths after random assignment.

Two other situations arose that resulted in declaring a youth out of scope once data collection began. If a youth was AWOL when the interviewer contacted the household (and this was verified with DCFS), we would close the case as ineligible if the youth remained AWOL for three consecutive months.

The other situation occurred when, at the beginning of the interview, we asked the youth to confirm his or her birth date. If the youth corrected the birth date to outside of the acceptable range, we dropped them from the sample (after confirming with DCFS that the corrected birth date was accurate). In this case four respondents were interviewed and discovered to be out of scope only after the data were checked at the National Opinion Research Center's (NORC) central office. Given the large number of out-of-scope cases identified after interviewing began, we ended up drawing 599 foster youths to achieve our 467 completed interviews.

Changes to TCCF Process

In order to facilitate an experimental design, we had to change the referral process to TCCF for the LST Program. Normally, youths are referred to TCCF by caseworkers, independent living coordinators, foster parents, or others. However, we made use of the DCFS lists of all age-appropriate foster youths. Thus, youths who were never referred by anyone in authority were presented to TCCF for service. This may have dampened eventual take-up rates. Some proportion of these youths likely had not been referred to the program previously because they were deemed not to be good candidates for LST or were unlikely to enroll. It is impossible to know how many youths in the study might fall into this category.

Because we had changed the nature of the referral process, we felt it necessary to reduce the potential negative impact on take-up rates by altering TCCF's process in another way. Normally, if an outreach advisor (OA) cannot contact a youth due to a change in placement, the OA will not continue to pursue that youth. During the interviewing process, NORC would locate youths who had moved. NORC would share the new contact information with TCCF so that OAs could contact the youths in their new placement. New contact information was provided only for LST group youths. We estimate that new contact information was provided for 152 youths in the LST group, or roughly 64 percent of the group. Furthermore, of the LST youths who ever enrolled in LST, we estimate we provided contact updates for 101 youths, or approximately 56 percent.

Response and Out-of-Scope Rates

Data collection far exceeded our expected response rates. We completed interviews with nearly 97 percent of the in-scope sample. Youths were very cooperative and interested in participating as evidenced by the very small number of refusals. Gatekeepers, on the other hand, were more problematic and account for the majority of non-interviews (see the discussion of challenges of the evaluation).³⁹ Response rates do not differ greatly between the LST and control groups, with rates slightly higher for controls.

Cases determined to be out of scope after sampling constituted over 19 percent of the total sample. As can be seen in table A.1, the largest category involves youths who were found to have been reunited with their parent(s) or were living with a legal guardian. Two dozen youths were found to be mentally deficient and caseworkers deemed these youths not able to benefit from classroom training in life skills. Twenty-one youths were AWOL when the interviewer attempted contact and remained AWOL for at least three months, according to DCFS. As discussed above, a much larger share of these totals is accounted for by the autumn sample draw than the draws for winter or spring as we gained access to better records from DCFS.

TABLE A.1. LST SAMPLE			
	LST Group	Control Group	Total
Completed Cases	222	245	467
<i>Non-interviews</i>			
Youths refusal	3	1	4
Gatekeeper refusal	7	2	9
Other	2	0	2
Total in-scope	234	248	482
Response rate	94.9%	98.8%	96.9%
<i>Out-of-scope (OOS)</i>			
AWOL	8	13	21
Out of area	6	4	10
Reunited/legal guardian	17	21	38
Moved into KinGap	6	5	11
Mentally incapable	12	12	24
Prison/juvenile justice	5	2	7
Out of age range	3	3	6
Total out-of-scope	57	60	117
Total sample	291	308	599
Out-of-scope rate	19.6%	19.5%	19.5%

³⁹ The distinction between youth refusals and caregiver refusals is murky. Some caregivers would tell us that the youths refused to do the interview. We always tried to get the youths to indicate this to us directly as we find that many times caregivers are not truly speaking for the youths. In cases where the caregiver would not allow us to speak with the youths, we coded the case as a gatekeeper refusal.

Retention in Follow-up Interviews

Given that the youths in the LST sample were likely to age out of care after the baseline interview, we anticipated a difficult time locating the youths for follow-up rounds. However, we were once again able to exceed our projections. Table A.2 gives the number of completed cases by rounds and the retention rates for the two follow-up rounds. The retention rate reflects the percentage of baseline respondents who were interviewed in the given follow-up round. Youths interviewed at the second follow-up who were not interviewed at the first follow-up were asked retrospective questions to fill in the missing time period.

As can be seen, in both the first and second follow-ups, we were very successful at locating and interviewing these youths. By the second follow-up only a handful of youths were still in care.

TABLE A.2. LST SAMPLE RETENTION			
	LST Group	Control Group	Total
Interviewed at baseline	222	245	467
Interviewed at first follow-up	203	224	427
Percent of interviewed at baseline	91.4%	91.4%	91.4%
Interviewed at second follow-up	195	215	410
Percent of interviewed at baseline	87.8%	87.8%	87.8%
Second follow-up non-interviews			
Youth refusal	4	4	8
Unlocatable	11	17	28
Inaccessible (military/prison/mental hospital)	4	2	6
Deceased	2	2	4
Other	6	5	11

Fielding the Youth Survey

Recruiting and Training Interviewers

The Los Angeles interviewing staff was supervised by a Los Angeles-based field manager, who speaks English and Spanish. This skill proved important for dealing with many caregivers who spoke only Spanish. She also served as the local liaison for the evaluation team, meeting weekly with TCCF staff, working with staff at DCFS, and making other relevant contacts such as with the juvenile justice system.

Thirteen Los Angeles-based interviewers were trained in September 2003 and given their initial cases to work immediately. The number of interviewers trained reflected the number of cases and expected hours per case, in addition to average interviewer attrition, plus additional interviewer attrition anticipated due to the potential reaction some interviewers might have dealing with this population. However, after a couple of months, we found that the quality of the interviewers was high and no involuntary attrition occurred. Interviewers found they enjoyed interviewing this population and no voluntary attrition occurred either. Because the sample size did not warrant such a large interviewing staff, the staff size was reduced in stages. In late autumn, we realized that a large number of cases were located in Antelope Valley (AV).

Antelope Valley is at the north end of Los Angeles County and is a far commute for an interviewer living in any other part of the county. We thus recruited and trained an interviewer who lived in Antelope Valley. Over time, the large number of cases there still required another interviewer to travel over two hours to complete many AV cases.

After the various staff reductions, seven interviewers handled the bulk of the work. These seven interviewers continued through the follow-up rounds. As the second follow-up was winding down, we reduced the field staff to five core interviewers. When necessary, the field manager would also conduct interviews.

Six of the fourteen interviewers and four of the seven core interviewers were bilingual in Spanish and English. Although only nine youths were interviewed in Spanish, the ability of the interviewers to speak with the foster parents in Spanish was useful in gaining cooperation.

Advance Letters

Each respondent received an advance letter before being approached to participate in the study. Similar letters were drafted and sent to each youth's foster care provider or parent as appropriate. This advance letter included the following information:

- Introduction to the study and its purpose
- Description of the involvement of NORC, the Urban Institute, and Chapin Hall
- Explanation of how respondents were selected
- Emphasis of the importance of their participation
- Summary of the study's confidentiality procedures
- Description of the respondent fee
- Contact information for arranging an interview or obtaining more information

Approximately one month before each youth's follow-up interview, which was 11 months after the baseline and first follow-up interviews, a new advance letter reminded the youths of the upcoming follow-up interview and summarized important information about the study. Parental advance letters for the second follow-up, only sent to parents or guardians of respondents under the age of 18, were slightly different for foster parents and for biological parents with whom the youths had been reunited.

Advance letters for the second follow-up contained information that was similar to the advance letters for the first follow-up. To simplify the process, the foster parent and biological parent letters were consolidated into one version. As with the previous follow-up, the second follow-up advance letters were mailed approximately one month before the second follow-up interviews.

Interviewing Priority

In order to try to interview LST youths before the module began, we set target dates for completing each youth's interview based on the class schedule. Although interviewers were not restricted on when they could make contact with a youth, we targeted for interviewing those youths assigned to modules that occurred earlier in the quarter before youths whose modules began later in the quarter.

An "interview by" date was provided to the interviewer in the case management system to aid in setting priorities. LST youths were assigned an interview-by date within two weeks of the start of their classes, hoping to minimize the potential impact of any classes on baseline measures. Control youths were worked in a similar fashion, but given four weeks from when the class would have begun (had they been assigned to the LST group). Each quarter, interviewers received new caseloads as described in the section that describes the sample.

Field Period

Baseline interviewing took place over a nine-month period from September 2003 through June 2004. First follow-up cases were released to be worked 11 months after the case was completed in the baseline, with the intention being that most first follow-up cases would be completed within 11 to 13 months of their baseline interview. However, due to a court order that temporarily stopped the study, interviewing for the first follow-up began after interviewers were trained in November 2004. First follow-up interviews were completed through September 2005. Because the questionnaire typically has 12-month reference periods, we decided that the second follow-up interview should occur 11 to 13 months after the first follow-up interview. Thus the second follow-up began when interviewers were trained at the end of October 2005 and concluded in October 2006.

Respondent Payments

Youths were offered monetary incentives to participate in the survey. The amount of the payment varied by sample and by round. LST sample members were paid \$30 for their participation in the baseline interview and \$50 for participation in each follow-up survey. Deviations from these amounts were not allowed, although some nonmonetary gifts such as \$5 Starbucks gift cards were provided when a youth was particularly inconvenienced. If a telephone interview was conducted with the youth on a cell phone, we reimbursed the youth for the cell phone charges.

Telephone Interviews

Some respondents moved out of the immediate area at some point after their initial interview. In cases where a respondent no longer lived within reasonable driving distance of Los Angeles, usually about two hours, the follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone. No telephone interviews were allowed for the baseline interview. Telephone interviews were authorized by the field manager and project staff only after careful consideration of the respondent's distance from existing field staff and other considerations, including whether or not the respondent might be

returning or visiting Los Angeles. Most of these telephone interviews were conducted with youths living in other states, although a few were with youths in the military. Table A.3 shows the number of telephone interviews was relatively small but grew between rounds as youths moved away from Los Angeles County.

Follow-up Round	LST Group	Control Group	Total	Percent of All Interviews
First	8	5	13	3.0
Second	12	18	30	7.3

Incarcerated Respondents

Incarcerated youths presented a difficult challenge to maintaining high response rates for follow-up interviews. Youths in prison are particularly difficult to make contact with, and because their communications are both tightly restricted and often monitored, special procedures were devised to approach these respondents in a way that prioritized their right to confidentiality while maximizing their likelihood of participation. Because all youths were in foster care at the baseline interview, this procedure was necessary only for the follow-up interviews.

Because many forms of communication are monitored in prisons, incarcerated youths were initially approached through a letter that described the study in a way that would remind the respondent without disclosing the name of the study. That letter also asked the respondent to return a special consent form that allowed project staff to disclose the name of the study, but no other confidential information, to prison staff in order to arrange for the interview. Until this consent was received, project staff did not reveal the name of the study, which often made interview arrangements, or even unmonitored communication, difficult or impossible. Once the consent was received, however, interviewers were more easily able to work with prison staff to obtain the needed access to the incarcerated respondents.

Evaluation Challenges

Deriving the Study Sample

The first challenge we faced was creating the evaluation sample. We had to make use of two sets of administrative data, child welfare records and records from TCCF’s accountability file. Like all evaluations that rely on administrative systems, these data were collected for other purposes and do not necessarily have all the information needed to draw a sample consistent with our definition of eligibility. For example, youths with severe disabilities deemed unable to benefit from LST could not be directly identified. Instead, we used a proxy measure from the payment code in the child welfare records. This code may have included youths with disabilities that would not have excluded them from the study, but we were unable to differentiate.

Child welfare records are not always up to date and may be inaccurate for many reasons. Placement changes often happen frequently and quickly in foster care and the records are not always updated quickly. Other changes, such as moving into legal guardianship may not be updated immediately. Even if case files are up to date, the information may not make it into the

electronic data system for some time. The data in the file could be well out of date. In our first sample draw in September 2003, we were given a file that had only been updated through the previous May 30.

The TCCF accountability file exists to account for the status of all referrals to LST. It identifies whether a referred youth enrolled in a course, the number of classes attended, and whether the youth graduated. OAs also report contact attempts with referred youths and codes are entered on the results of those contacts.

Initially we matched this file with child welfare files to eliminate any youths who had previously been referred to LST. Matching two administrative data sources is problematic. Although the county assigns each foster youth a unique identification number, data entry errors result in some non-matches that should have been matches. As with the child welfare records, various errors occur in the TCCF files. In addition to data entry errors, the accuracy of the database reflects the degree to which OAs turn in various forms and whether they fill out those forms accurately and completely. In particular, we found very few codes indicating contact with youths who did not eventually enroll. Since we doubted the accuracy of these fields, we asked OAs to identify any youths in our initial sampling files with whom they had had any contact. This procedure was subject to recall errors and lack of knowledge from new staff.

Imposing on Established Procedures at TCCF

A second challenge was in making the random assignment work within the framework of established TCCF procedures. Our goal was to interfere with their procedures as little as possible in order to evaluate the program as it routinely operates and to minimize the burden of participating in the evaluation.

In practice, not all eligible foster youths are referred to LST. Furthermore, TCCF was successful at enrolling a high percentage of those who were referred. This left an insufficient number of youths from which to create a control group. By using child welfare records to draw the sample, we were *de facto* providing referrals. This created somewhat of an imposition on their procedures as there was no person behind the referral such as a caseworker or group home director. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, prior to the evaluation, if an OA does not make contact with a referred youth, the OA would move on to the next youth on the list. The evaluation caused the OAs to expend more effort in order to recruit the sampled youths.

The existence of a control group imposed a common problem encountered in social program evaluations as TCCF was required not to pursue, or, to turn away, some referred youths. In LST, this proved considerably problematic (see discussion of crossovers in chapter 3).

Adherence to the Random Assignment

We faced a significant challenge in maintaining and monitoring adherence to the random assignment. The OA is critical to the recruitment process, and many OAs found the conditions of the evaluation problematic. One obstacle we faced was the need to provide OAs with the names of both LST youths and control youths. OAs can receive referrals directly and had to know who

should not be recruited. More important perhaps is the fact that some OAs do a considerable amount of recruiting themselves.

As discussed in chapter 2, OAs have monthly recruitment quotas. The OAs often visit group homes or foster homes with multiple youths to help meet their quotas quickly. In these situations, they were unlikely to check the list of control youths; in fact, this situation made it nearly impossible to enforce a “control” assignment. We did not feel we could ask them to change their recruitment methods since their contract specified a quota for youths served.

Other problems occurred with the OAs. Confusion apparently resulted from receiving new sample lists each quarter. Some OAs did not understand that the each quarter’s list was cumulative and included the previous samples. They claimed that they had probably only checked “old” lists of control youths when they got a direct referral. Furthermore, some OAs did not support the evaluation. A few OAs only loosely adhered to the random assignment conditions. Rather than show a total disregard for the rules, they generally would not expend sufficient effort to make sure to follow them.

OAs reported difficulty in keeping control youths out of the study in the face of someone advocating for the youth to be in the class. This occurred with foster or group home providers and with youth self-advocacy. The latter case typically occurred because youth would hear about the classes from other foster youths.

During the course of the evaluation, several staff left TCCF and were replaced. The evaluation was explained to each new staff along with what was expected of them. However, dealing with the conditions of the evaluation usually took second place to learning their jobs. They did not yet have a context for engaging in the evaluation and were likely to forget what they were supposed to do.

Monitoring the random assignment on an ongoing basis proved problematic. We used the NORC field manager who lived in Los Angeles as an on-site liaison. As discussed in chapter 3, she would meet regularly with the OAs (generally once a week), communicate with the OAs by phone and e-mail, and use whatever means she could to obtain the status of each LST youth. She would obtain lists that showed all enrolled youths who were to be picked up on the TCCF-provided bus. Despite all of the methods employed and the regularity of communication, many OAs did not comply with supplying updated information on the status of the youths in the LST group. Furthermore, other than the bus lists, there was virtually no way to discover on a real-time basis if a control youth had been recruited. Only after classes had been going and enrollment records were obtained would we discover a violation.

Working with the Foster Care Population

Some youth in foster care experience frequent and rapid placement changes. This presented several challenges to conducting the evaluation.

- In the baseline round, youth could quickly move out of scope, which we would not discover until an interviewer made contact with the youth.

- Invalid addresses made getting advance information about the study to the youths problematic.
- After gaining cooperation from a caregiver in one round, the process might have to be repeated with a new caregiver in subsequent rounds. Frequently the youths moved into a group home. These required DCFS help to gain access to the youths.
- Most important, many youths had to be located for follow-up interviews.
 - These youths were highly mobile while in care, as well as after exiting care. At the time of a follow-up interview, they had left their placement and the caregiver likely did not know their whereabouts. This was especially true when the youths emancipated from the child welfare system.
 - Many foster youths run away from care, and the child welfare system does not know where they are.
 - After leaving care, it is not uncommon for youths to couch surf, live on the streets, or end up incarcerated.⁴⁰
 - Locating challenges were substantial for LST youths. At baseline alone, 130 LST youths required additional locating efforts.

Placement changes could be upsetting to foster youth. Also, new placements involve a settling-in period. If a change was recent, we sometimes found it difficult to engage a youth to conduct an interview as the youth might be working through various emotions. These situations could be exacerbated by mental and behavioral problems, which tend to be more prevalent in foster youth than adolescents as a whole.

Certain situations for foster youth had to be watched for and addressed in ways not typical in conducting surveys. Surveys typically have protocols for dealing with situations where a respondent may be at risk of harming him- or herself or others, or of being abused by others. However, these protocols are rarely implemented. In the evaluation, we encountered “at-risk” incidents five times for LST youths, four times at the baseline interview, and once in the first follow-up. No at-risk cases were encountered in the second follow-up. Nearly all of these incidents occurred when the youth indicated that he or she had suicidal thoughts. Interviewers were trained specifically to deal with these situations. They would ask a set of follow-up questions to determine if a youth was currently at-risk. They would immediately call the field manager who would take responsibility for notifying the child welfare agency and alerting the public mental health team. In most cases, the interviewer would notify and discuss the situation with the foster parent or staff worker in a group facility.

⁴⁰ “Couch surfing” is an informal term used by youths and independent living program staff to describe a situation in which a youth sleeps on friends’ couches, often moving from one friend’s apartment to another.

The Interviewing Process

Timing of baseline interview. One challenge was to get interviews completed before service began so that it could not influence baseline responses. In LST, this meant trying to interview the youths before classes began. For modules that began early in the quarter, this required us to monitor cases closely and direct the interviewers to work harder on youths whose modules were about to begin.⁴¹ Nearly all interviews took place before the first class was attended. Only 17 youths were interviewed after the first class (one additional youth was interviewed on the day of the first class). Of those 17 youths, eight were interviewed within the first three weeks of the module, and the other nine were interviewed after the module ended. At the other extreme, some youths did not begin classes until well after the baseline interview. A handful took the LST module more than a year after the baseline interview.

Gaining consent to be interviewed. Youths were generally quite cooperative; however, we usually had to gain access to the youths through their caregivers. During the baseline, when all youths were in care, foster parents, relatives, and group home staff could not legally prevent us from connecting with the youths; however, many felt they had that right. This was particularly true with grandparents. In trying to work through these “gatekeepers,” we enlisted the aid of DCFS. We discovered that caseworkers and independent living coordinators were rarely informed about the evaluation and sometimes counseled caregivers not to cooperate. Although letters were sent at the beginning of the study to group homes, staff generally was unaware of the study and required written notification from DCFS to allow the youths to participate.

Although time consuming, we were generally able to gain access to youths in all such situations. DCFS staff was again helpful, making phone calls and providing letters to case workers, foster parents, and group home directors to help us gain access. These small numbers mask the amount of effort spent gaining cooperation from gatekeepers. For youths in the LST sample, interviewers experienced 56 gatekeeper problems in the baseline, mostly in group homes.

When youths were reunited with their biological family, we faced a new set of challenges. Many parents were antagonistic toward the child welfare system for having taken their child away. These feelings led to mistrust of anything related to the child welfare system, including our evaluation. Furthermore, parents either did not think the survey was relevant given that the youth was no longer in foster care or felt that the youth should not answer questions that caused them to relive their time away from home. Gaining the cooperation of biological parents was not often required but proved an additional challenge to the interviewers.

A key element to overcome these challenges was having a person within DCFS who was expected to provide help to the study. DCFS staff were helpful in various ways. We relied on them to help resolve whether or not a youth was out of scope by looking up information in records or contacting caseworkers. One DCFS staff member in particular proved invaluable for helping to locate youths after the baseline. In addition to providing updated address information for youths in new placements, she would delve extensively into case records to find information that would be helpful in finding youths who had left care. NORC’s field manager is an excellent

⁴¹ For control youths, we identified which community college they would have been recruited to and matched their interview timing to the start date of classes at that college.

locator, and electronic databases helped find some youths. However, the help of this DCFS staff member accounts for a significant amount of the high locating rate we attained. Having a person who has these responsibilities as part of her job was an immense help to the evaluation.

Appendix B. Los Angeles County Context

Introduction

Social service programs are dynamic and do not operate in a vacuum. Therefore, the two programs under evaluation must be placed in context to be fully understood. There are two layers of independent living services and policies because child welfare services in California are county-administered and state-supervised (unlike the majority of states). Below we lay out some of the relevant state policies, followed in greater detail by the relevant Los Angeles County policies.

California State Independent Living Policies

Independent Living Eligibility

Child welfare services provided through each county are supervised by the California Department of Social Services (DSS). According to the DSS Child Welfare Services manual, youth are eligible for independent living services up to their 21st birthday provided one of the following criteria is met:

- 1) Were/are in foster care at any time from their 16th to their 19th birthday. This does not include youth placed in detention facilities, locked facilities, forestry camps, training schools, facilities that are primarily for the detention of youth who are adjudicated delinquent, medical and psychiatric facilities, voluntary placements, wraparound program participants, youth placed pursuant to an individualized education program, and guardianship placements in which the youth is not a dependent or ward of the court.
- 2) Were/are age 16 to 18 and in receipt of the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP) assistance. (Note: youths between the ages of 16 and 18 who either were receiving Kin-GAP in the past or are receiving it now are eligible for independent living programs.) (LA County DCFS 2004)
- 3) Eligible youth younger than 16 years old may participate in an independent living program for younger youth if the county of jurisdiction has a county plan that includes such a program. Youth younger than 16 years of age placed outside their county of jurisdiction may participate in an independent living program for younger youth only with prior approval of the county of jurisdiction. Participation in an independent living program for younger youth prior to age 16 does not qualify a youth for independent living services eligibility.
- 4) Independent living program participation is deferred only if the youth is physically or mentally unable to benefit from the independent living program as determined by the youth's primary care physician or health or mental health care professional or if the youth declines to participate in the independent living program. If participation is deferred, the social worker or probation officer on behalf of youth in foster care or the independent living program coordinator on behalf of Kin-GAP youth and other eligible youth shall document, in the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP), the reason(s) for the

deferment. A redetermination of deferment shall be made at least every six months and documented in the TILP.

- 5) Eligibility for the independent living program shall not be determined by outside agencies such as contractors or vendors (California Child Welfare Services [CWS] 2003).

No California statewide guidelines could be found regarding the eligibility of adopted children.

Emancipation Preparation

According to the Welfare and Institutional Code, social workers and the independent living coordinators are jointly responsible for preparing youth in the independent living program for emancipation. The Code states that county social workers/probation officers shall assist youth in the program to ensure the development and implementation of TILP goals, services and activities, including addressing transportation needs. Counties shall encourage providers to participate in the development of the TILP (CWS 2003). Supervised housing services are also available to youths age 16 to 18 who are participating in or have completed an independent living program.

Services for emancipated youth are laid out in the Welfare and Institutions Code (Sections 10609.3(e)(1) and (2)). These include a stipend for eligible emancipated youth to assist the youths with bus passes, housing rental and utility deposits and fees, work-related equipment and supplies, training-related equipment and supplies, and education-related equipment and supplies. The state pays 100 percent of the nonfederal cost associated with the stipend program (CWS 2003). Former foster children are also eligible for Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid plan) coverage until the age of 21. The enrollment process, however, is not automatic. In order to enroll the state is required to determine the youth's eligibility by verifying with the emancipating foster youth the following:

- The youth's consent to continue with the Medi-Cal services.
- The youth's current address.
- Whether or not the youth has additional health insurance. If applicable, a youth's health insurance must be reported to the eligibility worker.

Los Angeles County Independent Living Policies and Services

Permanency Partners Program (P3)

A new youth permanency program was first field tested in February 2005, with department-wide expansion expected for the fiscal year 2005–06. The Permanency Partners Program (P3) is a concentrated effort to assist workers in finding legally permanent homes and connections for older youths (12–18 years old) who are in planned permanent living arrangements (formerly known as long term foster care). Adult connections are established through the youth identifying important people in his or her life, and an additional worker (the permanency partner) reading the case to identify possible adults as a resource for the youth. These adults are then contacted by the

permanency partner and discussions are held to see whether this new resource is open to a possible relationship of some kind. If there is a possibility of a relationship, the permanency partner working with the youth and adult will develop a written agreement to help define the relationship and determine services that will assist moving the youths into legal permanency (LA County DCFS 2005a).

Redesigning Emancipation Services in Los Angeles County

Throughout the past few years, there have been significant changes in the Los Angeles County Emancipation Services/Independent Living Program due to increased interest and concern about the effectiveness of the programs by several public and private organizations in the community. Nine county departments are involved in the Emancipation Services/Independent Living Program, including the Chief Administrative Office, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Probation Office, the Community Development Commission, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Community and Senior Services, the Department of Public Social Services, the Department of Health Services, and the Department of Consumer Affairs. In addition, a few groups that are county-related but not specifically county agencies have a stake in these programs, including the Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Board (WIB), the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education. There are also several community groups which have been involved with the Emancipation Services/Independent Living Program. These include the Los Angeles County Economy and Efficiency Commission, the Commission for Children and Families, the United Friends of Children, the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council, and many charitable organizations like the United Way of Los Angeles County and Catholic Charities of Los Angeles. In reshaping the Emancipation Services/Independent Living Program, there were several groups that played a critical role in the process.

Chief Administrative Office

In 2001, the Commission for Children and Families raised concerns that the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Emancipation Services and Independent Living Programs were not meeting the needs of emancipating youths in Los Angeles County. The result of these concerns was an intensive meeting in July 2001 where the County Board of Supervisors discussed these programs and soon after heard testimony from speakers representing public and private agencies as well as youth and community advocates (LA County Chief Administrative Office [CAO] 2003). The board requested that the chief administrative officer conduct an assessment of the Emancipation Services and Independent Living Program within 45 days to determine areas for improvement. The CAO hired Sharon Watson, Ph.D., to perform this initial assessment and give a set of recommendations. In conducting her assessment, Dr. Watson viewed a tape of the July 17, 2001, discussion; listened to tapes of Emancipation Oversight Committee meetings; interviewed 37 stakeholders in the emancipation program including county department heads and staff, youth, and service providers; reviewed several program audits and evaluations; and examined key reports and documents (LA County CAO 2003).

The key findings in Dr. Watson's report are listed in the actual Emancipation Program Final Report (July 17, 2003), but some of the highlights of these findings follow:

- A lack of coherence on the vision and goals for the Emancipation Program and Independent Living Program, as well as disagreement concerning the scope of services and populations that these programs should serve. This also translated to a lack of unity and understanding about this program across the different departments;
- An absence of strong and continual departmental and program leadership as well as a lack of cooperation between the programs' public and private partners;
- An overwhelming lack of funding, services, housing, staff, technical equipment and support, appropriate training, etc., necessary to serve the large number of youths who are eligible for these services in Los Angeles County;
- Extensive bureaucratic processes that prohibit the efficient and most effective distribution of services;
- Lack of program planning and development, as well as improperly designed contracts with outside vendors; and
- Selecting only high achievers to participate in the program, thus suggesting that the program does not reach those who are less likely to succeed.

Based on this report, the board made several recommendations about improvements to the Emancipation Program and Independent Living Program in Los Angeles County. A full listing of these recommendations can be found in the Emancipation Program Final Report (July 17, 2003). In summary, however, these recommendations called for a more stable, organized, and unified program, which enjoyed cooperation from all participants and strong leadership. The report also recommended changes in the structure of the program in three key areas: (1) programs and services to youth; (2) administration and management; and (3) structure/governance.

Los Angeles County Economy and Efficiency Commission

At the same time that the Board of Supervisors instructed the chief administrative officer to conduct a review of the Emancipation Services and Independent Living Program, the Los Angeles County Economy and Efficiency Commission began its own review of Emancipation Services/Independent Living Program, funded by the Los Angeles County DCFS, the Probation Department, and a grant from the Productivity Investment Fund. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors created the Los Angeles County Economy and Efficiency Commission in 1964 to "examine any function of County government at the request of the Board of Supervisors, on its own initiative, or as suggested by others. The Commission conducts reviews of all aspects of local government management, operations and policies. After these reviews, the Commission will submit recommendations to the Board with the objective of improving the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local government" (Economic and Efficiency Commission 2003). The commission has 21 members, four selected by each board supervisor and the last member being the preceding year's foreperson of the Los Angeles County grand jury.

Following her selection by the chief administrative officer as the interim team leader of the CAO design team to guide the Emancipation Services/Independent Living Program's redesign plan, Dr. Watson was asked to lend her expertise and assistance to the Economy and Efficiency Commission in completing its report. The commission presented this report, "A Review of Emancipation Services," to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in February 2002. As

part of this review, the commission examined the county's six major housing programs for pre-emancipated and emancipated foster youths, the then current and planned housing resources for the population, the distribution of resources across the county's eight service planning areas, and how the distribution of resources compares with the distribution of the population in need of services. The Economy and Efficiency Commission made recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in several key areas, which included continued assessment and evaluation of the program; the structure and process of service delivery to youths; training and preparation for workers; organization of leadership especially among the heads of departments associated with the programs; updating information and data systems to make them more accessible and more effective for workers in providing the appropriate services to youths; providing more housing options and more beds for youths; and full utilization of resources, monetary and otherwise.

Emancipation Program Design Team

Several of the Economy and Efficiency Commission's recommendations, particularly those concerning housing, coincided with those of Dr. Watson and the CAO and were specifically included in the DCFS Emancipation Program Re-Design Work Plan. In beginning this redesign, the heads of the nine Los Angeles County departments who participate in the program signed an interim operational agreement in October 2001, after the release of Dr. Watson's report, which stated their commitment to improving the program and their cooperation and assistance in making the necessary changes and improvements.⁴² In February 2002 following the release of the EEC's "Review of Emancipation Services," an interim team of six experts plus a team leader and coordinator began the process of restructuring the different elements of the Emancipation Program, including housing, data/tracking, outcomes/evaluation, communications, budget, planning/governance, and service delivery.

Stemming from this interim team was a 20-person, inter-agency, multi-sector design team (which included the interim team, key county departments, the Children's Commission, emancipated foster youths, and community partners), which worked to develop the redesign work plan as well as implementation, policy and planning decisions, and overall program development. Working alongside the design team were a budget committee, governance group, implementation team, and the community advisory group (formerly the Emancipation Oversight Committee), each of which contributed to execution of the new plans for the program and increased community input. These groups met with the directors and deputies of the DCFS, Probation, Community and Senior Services, Community Development Commission, Mental Health, and Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, as well as important community partners to help develop the redesign and make a smooth transition. The design team held 50 outreach meetings with over 2,500 representatives of formal and informal organizations involved with either the Emancipation Program or the population, which this program services. Some of the groups represented included foster parent associations, Association of County Human Service Agencies, vocational skill centers, mental health providers, Independent Living Program Coordinators, TCCF, and youth coalitions. The purpose of these discussions was to gather more community input and

⁴² The nine county departments involved in the program include the Chief Administrative Office, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Probation Office, the Community Development Commission, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Community and Senior Services, the Department of Public Social Services, the Department of Health Services, and the Department of Consumer Affairs.

suggestions for ways to make the Emancipation Program/Independent Living Program as effective in meeting the needs of youth as possible.

As a result of these discussions and planning by county staff, the program's community partners, the CAO, and the design team, the Emancipation Program/Independent Living Program saw significant accomplishments and achievements in numerous key areas. These included changes in programming (housing, employment, mentoring, transition resource centers, foster youth ombudsman); a redesigned service delivery system (transitional independent living plans, training, decentralized and integrated service delivery model); administration (communications, youth data/tracking system, budget, contracts, check writing); and planning and governance (LA County CAO 2003).

More specifically, these changes include the following:

- Service Delivery Infrastructure – ILP plans to create a decentralized service delivery structure, which will consolidate the Emancipation Program's staff and transfer them to offices at Normandie and Wilshire where they will be separated in the office according to the new service delivery structure.
- Data, Reporting, and Tracking System for Eligible Youth – A Youth Tracking System is in development to more effectively track services and outcomes.
- Countywide Network of Alumni Resource Centers – The Alumni Resource Centers, now renamed Transitional Resource Centers, are undergoing a significant expansion, going from three centers to four centers, with another two centers in the developmental stages. The goal is to have a transitional resource center in all parts of the county.
- Simplify and Strengthen Case Planning for Eligible Youth – Comprehensive Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) training for DCFS regional staff and eventually Probation staff will help caseworkers to work more effectively and collaboratively with youth, as well as making sure that transitional planning begins at age 14.
- Develop Mentoring Programs for Eligible Youth – DCFS created the position of Emancipation Program mentor coordinator, who is responsible for overseeing all mentor-related activities for eligible youth with the hope of significantly expanding the mentoring opportunities available to foster youth. Additionally, the “Bridges to the Future” program with the Los Angeles County Bar Association and Emancipation program is fully functional. This program matches a mentor with a foster youth during his or her senior year in high school to help him or her with the transition to adulthood. Finally, DCFS is creating a Mentor Resource Guide for foster youth.
- Countywide Housing – DCFS developed a comprehensive plan for meeting the housing needs of emancipating youths to address this growing need. This plan consists of two parts: (1) assessing and characterizing the housing needs of emancipating and emancipated youth across the county and (2) articulating the goals and outcomes of the program and then implementing programs necessary to address these housing needs. Los

Angeles County is looking for additional programs and organizations to provide emergency shelter, transitional housing programs, and housing search assistance programs and is also working to increase the number of beds available to emancipating and emancipated youth in the county.

- Youth Employment Programs – DCFS is working the Community and Senior Services Department (CSS) to allow CSS to assume the contracting and monitoring responsibilities for the current ILP Vocational Skills Center Programs. This will enable many more foster youths to receive job readiness and career development services, as well as lengthen their participation time from 2.5 months to as much as 8 years (through their 24th birthday).
- ILPOnline Website – DCFS has created and launched an Emancipation Program website (www.ilponline.org) that provides information about ILP and emancipation services to foster youths, as well as listing additional community resources.

Since 2003, many of these improvements have been sought after and are in the process, if not already implemented, of achieving some of the goals set forth in the Emancipation Program design team's final report (LA County CAO 2003). Some of these improvements include the following:

- Service Delivery Infrastructure – There has been an ongoing effort and improvement in the internal procedures and policies. Safes have been placed in regional offices so ILP coordinators have immediate access to items of monetary value for youth in need (e.g., gift certificates, transportation funds).
- Data, Reporting and Tracking System for Eligible Youth – The Emancipation Services/Independent Living Services tracking system is in place as discussed above.
- Countywide Network of Alumni Resource Centers – Transition Resource Centers (formerly named Alumni Resource Centers) have expanded from four (2003) to nine as of July 2005. DCFS also had two more transition centers planned during federal fiscal year 2005.
- Simplify and Strengthen Case Planning for Eligible Youth – DCFS developed refresher training that combined TILP implementation in Child Welfare Services/Case Management System with language linking ILP services/funds. This part, considered phase I of the refresher training, was developed to address the planning function of the document. Phase II is an ongoing effort to engage youth in transition planning early enough (at 14 years old) to create a better chance of success once emancipated. A caseworker handbook has also been published that outlines how to complete documents and contains examples of well-executed TILPs.
- Develop Mentoring Programs for Eligible Youth – During 2004 DCFS has continued the Bridges to the Future Mentoring Program, where youths are matched with attorneys who have committed to at least one year of service. Also, there has been “aggressive

recruitment” through 2004, which involved program presentations given at various Bar Association affiliate meetings.

- Countywide Housing – DCFS has a continued agreement with the Community Development Commission to supply housing services to foster youth. Increased funding has provided more emergency shelter programs, transitional housing programs, and housing search assistance programs. Special needs housing, such as that for youth with mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and gay and lesbian youth are being served by at least one (selected vendor or new transitional housing) program within the county.
- Youth Employment Programs – DCFS has an agreement with the Los Angeles County Department of Community and Senior Services (DCSS) that allows DCSS to monitor the contractors for the ILP Independent Living Skills Enhancement Programs. DCSS has stipulated within the service provider contracts that there are specific performance measures tied to self-sufficiency outcomes of the emancipating and emancipated youths that must be met. Vocational services are now offered to youth through Workforce Investment Act (WIA) WorkSource Centers after they have received services from the ILP Independent Living Skills Enhancement Program for up to six additional years (through to the youth’s 24th birthday).
- ILPOnline Website – The Los Angeles County website for current and former foster youths, www.ilponline.org, has been successful in increasing communication and heightening awareness of events and services offered. There was an almost 40 percent increase in the number of visitors to the website during FFY 2004 compared with the previous year. Further extending communications was the updating and release of 2,000 copies of *The Emancipation Resource Directory: Supporting Youths Through Partnerships* to youths and external stakeholders. The *College and Career Student Guide* with a special insert for foster youths were distributed also (4,500 copies). Additionally, program brochures were released for the first time and 2,500 were distributed.

Emancipation Program Partnership

After the emancipation design team, a permanent agreement was reached among the nine county departments/agencies involved with the Emancipation Program (CAO, DCFS, Probation, CDC, CSS, Department of Mental Health, Public Social Services, DHS, and Consumer Affairs) and the Emancipation Program Partnership (EPP) was created. The EPP is composed of representatives from both public and private entities with approximately 25 members, including youth representatives, community liaisons and providers, county departmental representatives, a Commission for Children and Families representative, and service and delivery staff representatives. Complimenting the EPP are three additional subcommittees: a budget committee, housing committee, and implementation team. The partnership often meets monthly and sometimes bimonthly to discuss issues around foster youths and the emancipation/transitioning process. The issues range from select subcommittee groups focusing on housing and budget to the discussion of new policy and legislation. A vision for the EPP was revised in

November 2005, to give the EPP more direction that some members felt was lacking. Aspects of the EPP vision include the following:

- Concentration on the “big picture” and integration with the larger county efforts.
- To support prevention initiative efforts (led by CAO)
- Provide leadership on countywide issues
- Integrate county resources (such as TRCs and kinship centers); and
- To pull together all resources to solidify county relationships and leverage resources.

Collaborative Efforts with Other Organizations

The Emancipation Services Division collaborates with a number of private and public agencies within the county to provide emancipation/independent living services to foster youths. Some of the organizations that DCFS works with include the following:

- Department of Public Social Services for Medi-Cal eligibility assistance
- Department of Mental Health for assistance in providing transitional housing to youths diagnosed with special mental health needs
- Los Angeles County Community Development Commission in developing transitional housing for eligible youths
- Los Angeles County Departments of Parks and Recreation, Internal Services Department, and Department of Community and Senior Services for providing full- and part-time employment opportunities to youths
- Casey Family Programs in helping to develop the Pasadena Alumni Resource Center
- United Friends of the Children, which works to provide housing and financial assistance for educational opportunities including the Bridges to Independence housing program
- Teague Family Foundation offers annual scholarships to foster youths to help them achieve educational goals at postsecondary institutions
- Association of Community Human Services Agencies

Aftercare Services

DCFS provides aftercare services to emancipated youths through its transition resource centers (TRCs). The TRCs are a major part of improving service delivery and outreach to youths and are designed to provide independent living services to eligible former foster youths or youths preparing to emancipate. As of July 2005 there were nine TRCs. Hours and days vary depending on the TRC, but generally TRCs are open during regular business hours. No TRCs are open on the weekends. The transitional resource centers provide varied services:

- College and vocational tuition assistance
- Financial assistance for education-related fees and services
- Clothing stipends
- Transportation assistance
- Employment counseling, preparation and referral

- Specialized workshops related to college enrollment and financial aid
- Assistance in continuing or reapplying for Medi-Cal services
- Information and referral services (housing, health services, legal issues, etc.)
- Referrals for needed resources (housing, jobs, health services, rent payments, food, utility deposits and charges, moving expenses, and basic household items)
- Assistance toward rent for dorm bills, campus housing, rent payments, food, utility deposits and charges, moving expenses, and basic household items
- Skill building workshops
- Other special events (L.A. County DCFS 2005b)

Emancipated youths can access these services following receipt of a letter from the TRC after their case has been transferred from the regional DCFS office to the TRC. In order to receive these services, the youth must undergo an evaluation by the TRC service coordinators who assess the needs and strengths of emancipated youths. As part of this assessment, the TRC service coordinators determine a youth's needs in terms of educational or vocational goals, career and employment development skills and job experiences, independent living skills, mentoring, and other needs.

TABLE B.1. DESCRIPTION OF INDEPENDENT LIVING POLICIES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND CALIFORNIA

	Los Angeles County	California
Eligibility	Los Angeles County has opted to offer independent living services to youths starting at age 14. ^a The county has provisions to accommodate youths who have spent time in detention centers and participation for physically or mentally disabled youths, who are not currently eligible for the program but may receive a deferral for the program. Youths who reside outside of the County of Los Angeles can receive independent living services as a courtesy from the host county or as arranged by a Los Angeles social worker. Youths who are 16 years of age or older when they are adopted are also eligible.	Youths are eligible for independent living services until their 21st birthday provided one of the following is met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were/are in foster care at any time from their 16th to their 19th birthday - Were/are 16 years of age up to 18 years of age and in receipt of the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment - Eligible youths younger than 16 years of age may participate in an independent living program for younger youths if the county of jurisdiction has a county plan that includes such a program.
Planning for emancipation	Emancipation preparation begins when a youth in foster care turns 14 or a youth comes into foster care at the age of 14 or older. Planning is done through the transitional independent living plan (TILP), which includes the services the youth needs and the youth's goals and future plans.	State laws do not indicate when planning begins. State laws only state that prior to the youth's emancipation, the social worker shall ensure that independent living services are provided as identified in the TILP.
Responsibility for planning	Responsibility for assisting youths is given to the case-carrying social worker and the transition coordinators (formerly independent living coordinators).	Social workers and the independent living coordinators are jointly responsible for preparing youths in the independent living program for emancipation.
Referral process	Caseworkers give the name and phone number of the transition coordinator to the youth or caregiver, as appropriate, prior to termination of jurisdiction and instruct the youth or caregiver to contact the transition coordinator when the youth reaches age 16 to determine ILP eligibility. Workers also complete several forms and give them to the transition coordinator.	Varies by county
Basic services provided	Independent living services include, but are not limited to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life skills training - Counseling and job training - Employment skills - Mentoring - Money management skills - Housing information 	Independent living services vary by county; however, the state does provide stipends to fund some of the following activities and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bus passes - Rental and utility deposits and fees - Work-related equipment and supplies - Training-related equipment and supplies - Education-related equipment and supplies.

Sources: CA CWS 2003; LA County DCFS 2005c; Public Counsel Law Center 2002; LA County DCFS 2002; LA County DCFS 2001.

Note:

a. According to the ILP Online Guidelines, a 14-year-old may complete a transitional independent living plan and then enroll in the ESTEP program.

TABLE B.2. LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND CALIFORNIA DEMOGRAPHICS

	Los Angeles County	California
Population Characteristics		
Population	9,761,037	35,055,227
Percent under age 18	27.9%	27.3%
Percent Hispanic	47.0%	34.9%
Percent non-Hispanic black	8.9%	6.0%
Percent noncitizen foreign-born residents	20.8%	15.4%
Growth 1990–2000	7.4%	13.6%
Birth Information		
Births per 1,000 women ages 15–50	48	56
Per 1,000 women ages 15–19	21	26
Educational Attainment (of Population Age 25 and Older)		
Less than ninth grade	14.4%	10.2%
High school graduates or higher	73.8%	80.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	27.9%	29.4%
Income and Poverty		
Per capita income	\$22,916	\$25,411
Median household income	\$45,958	\$51,185
Percent of individuals living below poverty level	17.9%	13.3%
Households		
Total households	3,194,434	11,972,158
Households receiving cash public assistance	4.3%	3.5%
Labor and Employment		
Unemployment rate (June 2006)	4.7%	4.9%
Total civilian labor force	4,710,269	17,209,892
Employed persons age 16 and older by occupation		
Management, professional, and related occupations	1,469,155	5,609,241
Service occupations	712,415	2,562,266
Sales and office occupations	1,160,448	4,228,850
Farming, fishing, and forestry	8,197	199,973
Construction and maintenance	355,886	1,447,958
Production and transportation	643,481	1,854,868
Self-employed	416,473	1,484,125
Family and Health Profile		
Percent of children living below poverty level (under age 18)	23.5%	18.9%
Percent of families living below poverty level	13.9%	10.5%
Percent of families with female head of household living below poverty level (with related children under 18 years old)	40.0%	34.2%
Median income of families	\$50,598	\$58,327

Source: All demographic data are from U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2004 Summary Tables, generated by Erica H. Zielewski using American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>), accessed June 15, 2006. All unemployment rate data are from California Employment Development Department; Labor Force and Unemployment Data, 2006, <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/databrowsing>, accessed August 3, 2006.

Appendix C. LST Staff Roles and Responsibilities

APPENDIX TABLE C.1. LIFE SKILLS TRAINING STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Community College Program Director	LST Workshop Instructor/Trainer	Outreach Advisor	Peer Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate training dates with TCCF Outreach Advisor and Instructors ▪ Book a classroom at the college for each session ▪ Provide food for each session ▪ Submit appropriate paperwork to hire and pay instructors and speakers ▪ Hire qualified instructors and/or guest speakers for the module, and making sure they do what they are supposed to do ▪ Make sure all instructors and guest speakers sign the confidentiality agreement ▪ Take care of details regarding security, parking, audiovisual materials, etc. ▪ Plan a financial aid workshop as requested ▪ Establish and maintaining a college program budget ▪ Manage program expenditures and reporting them quarterly to TCCF ▪ Agree in writing to maintain the confidentiality of the foster youth names and personal information ▪ Stay connected to resources in the community and on your campus ▪ Attend all program director meetings ▪ Attend a session of each module ▪ Provide copies of the Pre-and Post-Test Questionnaire for each class upon request ▪ Provide supplemental curriculum and handouts ▪ Sign the module Meal Sheet to verify attendance for food purposes ▪ Bill TCCF for expenditures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acquire an understanding of the curriculum and the population of students being trained ▪ Review curriculum with the Program Director and OA ▪ Coordinate training activities with the Program Director and OA ▪ Enhance printed curriculum by incorporating information from the 10 Tangible Outcomes and DCFS' TILP) and by utilizing community resources ▪ Coming to class at least 15 minutes early prepared with appropriate materials/ lesson plans and to set up classroom for receiving students ▪ Motivate students to learn and become involved in the curriculum ▪ Communicate effectively, timely, and professionally with the Program Director ▪ Attend and participate in four trainers' workshops and meetings ▪ Demonstrate skills and knowledge acquired through training opportunities ▪ Accurately report absences and tardiness of participants to the Program Director ▪ Demonstrate appreciation of the student's presence, skills, and talents ▪ Use small group and interactive training/teaching methods, while minimizing the traditional lecture style ▪ Report any unusual situations (lack of supplies, utilization of rooms, emergency, audio visual problems, etc.) ▪ Observe campus/program security standards and rules ▪ Familiarize him/herself of other similar/clusters of curricula offerings ▪ Return room to original condition after each session ▪ Establish relationships with other departments on campus ▪ Agree in writing to maintain the confidentiality of the foster youth names and personal information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruit and promote participation among the youth, as well as promoting independent living to the community ▪ Provide the materials for and conducting the ILP assessment and "Outcomes" survey ▪ Coordinate transportation (buses) for the youth to the classes, providing the bus company with an accurate list that includes the youth's name, address, phone number, pick-up and drop-off location(s). ▪ Ride the buses with youth to the LST instruction site, if not transporting youth themselves ▪ Attend each class session ▪ Mentor the youth to ensure their success in the program ▪ Monitor trainers to ensure proper delivery of appropriate and required information and assisting trainers by giving youth individual assistance if necessary ▪ Handle any discipline problems in the classroom ▪ Track attendance on the Meal Sheet and providing a legible copy of it to the Program Director ▪ Handle emergency situations – includes getting medical consent forms and having caregiver phone numbers ▪ Make sure participants receive the \$100.00 incentive payment and the Certificate of Completion upon completion of 70% of the module 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend LST classes at their individual colleges and working as part of the team which includes the Program Director, Outreach Advisor, and Trainer/Instructors ▪ Ride the buses to and from LST classes with attending youth ▪ Be educated on the particular college and community resources and acting as liaison to connect youth with resources to fit their needs ▪ Attending and presenting information at Financial Aid Workshops ▪ Attend college Foster Parent Advisory Board meetings as a representative of foster youth issues, and needs, when possible ▪ Contact youth for classes, workshops, and meetings, as well as keeping updated listings of appropriate youth for future projects ▪ Assist in mailings to youth, foster parents, group homes, etc. regarding upcoming events ▪ Help with follow-up phone calls to youth after classes have been completed ▪ Be another possible contact for youth who are intimidated or uneasy about speaking to adults from ILP ▪ Be a positive role model for youth who are just beginning to make the transition to adulthood and preparing to emancipate

Appendix D. OA Perspective Form and 10 Tangible Outcomes Form

OUTREACH ADVISOR PERSPECTIVE

Name of Youth _____ Date _____

Birthday _____ State ID Number _____

CSW/PO Name _____ Phone _____

ILP Coordinator _____ Phone _____

Outreach Advisor _____ College _____

Expected Emancipation Date _____ Place of birth _____

Length of time in the system _____ In your current home _____

Have you and your CSW/PO discussed emancipation? _____

The last time you spoke with your CSW/PO _____

School Attending _____ Grade Level _____

Total Credits Earned (to date) _____ Expected Graduation Date _____

Are you on track to graduate on time? _____ Are you currently working? _____

If no, are currently looking for a job? _____ Number of hours you work weekly _____

Short Term Job Goal(s) _____

Long Term Job Goal(s) _____

What are your plans after foster care:

<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know yet	<input type="checkbox"/> Live on my own
<input type="checkbox"/> College/Vocational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military
<input type="checkbox"/> Get a job	<input type="checkbox"/> Return to my family
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

Your biggest concern/fear about leaving foster care _____

Your goal(s) for the next 6mos. _____

What are you currently doing to accomplish your goal(s)? _____

Your greatest accomplishment, to date _____

Your greatest strength _____

Your biggest weakness _____

Name one area where you need the most help _____

Are you currently in a gang? _____ Past gang experience? _____

Do you have a child? _____ Age(s)? _____

Do you have a California I.D.? _____ Social Security Card? _____ Birth Certificate? _____

Do you know how and where to apply to obtain originals or replacements? _____

Tangible Outcomes Using Technology for Foster Youth and Probation

CIRCLE ONE

PRE/ POST

Name:			
DOB:			
College:			
Today's Date:			
			OA ONLY
Please Check			
	YES	NO	OA
1. I have demonstrated that <u>I know how to</u> research banks online, open a personal bank checking and savings account and I am able to write a check.			
2. I have identified a caring adult in my life who can be a trusted advisor			
3. I have submitted the name and contact information of at least one adult who has agreed to opportunities, employment, and/or vocational/career decisions.			
4. I have completed and received results from my:			
a. Vocational Assessment/Personality Inventory and			
b. Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Online Tool for Emancipation Readiness			
5. I (a senior in high school or equivalent) have attended a workshop on Financial Aid; completed a about available college resources from an EOPS staff person.			
6. I have completed an ILP Housing Plan and has identified an adult to assist me with housing			
7. I have visited the various websites and have provided evidence of having the following documents: Youth has received vital document information and is informed as to where and how to			
a. Social Security online - Social Security Card			
b. Vital Statistics Website - Certified Birth Certificate			
c. State DMV web page - DMV Identification Card (with picture)			
d. Educational Records (transcripts)			
e. INS web page - Green Card/Proof of Citizenship or Residence (if appropriate)			
f. Vital Statistics - Death Certificate of Parent(s) (if appropriate)			
g. Medical web page - Medical Insurance			
8. I have completed a tour of a community college campus and am able to name and describe two new resources from the following list:			
a. Recreational and Social Activities			
b. Vocational Education Services and Career Development			
c. Student Services and Special Programs			
d. Health and Counseling			
e. Computer Lab			
9. I have shown proof of my registration at the local One Stop Center.			
10. I have submitted the contact information for an adult advisor who has assisted me in accessing the following computer/Internet sites: vocational training/career opportunities, available housing, college cost and employment sites.			

Appendix E. Impact Study—Methodology and Additional Data

Introduction

This appendix includes additional elements of the impact study that are not included in chapter 4. The appendix begins with a description of how analysts specified the intent-to-treat analyses presented in chapter 4. The appendix also includes a description of how preparedness was measured in the impact study, as well as a table listing the covariates used in the multivariate analyses presented. The remainder of the appendix will present additional data tables from the impact study.

Intent-to-Treat Analyses and Extensions

The following section presents in detail the primary method of comparison used in this study (i.e., ITT) as well as two extensions (or transformations) of the ITT—treatment on the treated and local average treatment effect—are also described.

Intent-to-Treat

Intent-to-treat analyses involve a comparison of the LST and control groups as originally assigned. This is the most rigorous approach to the analysis—and the only one that can be presumed free of bias—since it preserves the original probabilistic equivalence of the groups (except for the effects of attrition from random assignment to the second follow-up interview). This analysis produces estimates of the average effect among those youths to whom LST is made available.

In brief, intent-to-treat analyses involve a comparison of outcomes across experimental group *assignment*,

$$ITT = Y_t - Y_c,$$

where

Y_t = average effect of LST on members of the treatment (“LST”) group⁴³ and

Y_c = average effect of LST on members of the control group.

As has been discussed, portions of each assignment group acted in contradiction to the experimental protocol. The potential for these violations to affect the magnitude of the ITT estimates can be illustrated by expressing Y_t and Y_c as weighted sums of the program impact on compliers and violations, respectively. Specifically, the ITT can be expressed as

$$ITT = (P_{t(\text{compliers})} * Y_{t(\text{compliers})} + P_{t(\text{no-show})} * Y_{t(\text{no-show})}) - (P_{c(\text{compliers})} * Y_{c(\text{compliers})} + P_{c(\text{crossovers})} * Y_{c(\text{crossovers})}),$$

where

⁴³ The treatment group is referred to as the “LST group.”

$Y_{t(\text{compliers})}$ = average effect of LST on members of the LST group who participated in LST,

$P_{t(\text{compliers})}$ = proportion of the LST group who participated in LST (i.e., $N_{t(\text{compliers})} / N_t$),

$Y_{t(\text{no-shows})}$ = average effect of LST on members of the LST group who did *not* participate in LST,

$P_{t(\text{no-show})}$ = proportion of the LST group who did *not* participate in LST (i.e., $N_{t(\text{no-show})} / N_t$),

$Y_{c(\text{compliers})}$ = average effect of LST on members of the control group who did *not* participate in LST,

$P_{c(\text{compliers})}$ = proportion of the control group who did *not* participate in LST (i.e., $N_{c(\text{compliers})} / N_c$),

$Y_{c(\text{crossovers})}$ = average effect of LST on members of the control group who participated in LST, and

$P_{c(\text{crossovers})}$ = proportion of the control group who participated in LST (i.e., $N_{c(\text{crossovers})} / N_c$).

With the simplifying assumption that there is no program effect on LST no-shows or control compliers, the ITT reduces to the following:

$$\text{ITT} = P_{t(\text{compliers})} * Y_{t(\text{compliers})} - P_{c(\text{crossovers})} * Y_{c(\text{crossovers})}$$

This expression makes clear that the magnitude of the ITT effect is diminished where the treatment take-up rate is low or the control crossover rate is high, assuming positive program effects.

*Intent-to-Treat Extensions*⁴⁴

Where ITT impact results are significant, it is fair to ask what the magnitude of those effects might be for certain subgroups. Two extensions of the ITT—*Treatment-on-the-Treated* (TOT) and *Local Area Treatment Effect* (LATE)—were used for this purpose. It should be noted that both of these extensions involve simple re-scalings of the ITT estimate and do not entail any sample delimitations. Thus, the basis of comparison and the level of statistical significance are the same as the ITT estimates.

The TOT estimate is obtained by dividing the ITT estimate by the proportion of the LST group participating in LST ($P_{t(\text{compliers})}$). Using the framework from above, the TOT can be expressed as

$$\text{TOT} = (P_{t(\text{compliers})} * Y_{t(\text{compliers})} - P_{c(\text{crossovers})} * Y_{c(\text{crossovers})}) / P_{t(\text{compliers})}$$

⁴⁴ Discussion of the intent-to-treat, treatment on the treated, and local average treatment effects borrows heavily from H. S. Bloom, ed., *Learning More from Social Experiments*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005.

Given the rate of service take-up among the LST group (73.5 percent), we would expect the TOT to be 36.1 percent larger than the ITT-based estimate. Finally, the LATE estimate is obtained by dividing the ITT estimate by the difference in the proportions of the LST and control groups participating in LST ($P_{t(\text{compliers})} - P_{c(\text{crossovers})}$). The LATE estimate can be expressed as

$$\text{LATE} = \frac{(P_{t(\text{compliers})} * Y_{t(\text{compliers})} - P_{c(\text{crossovers})} * Y_{c(\text{crossovers})})}{(P_{t(\text{compliers})} - P_{c(\text{crossovers})})}$$

Given the rates of service take-up among the LST (76.5 percent) and control (26.6 percent) groups, we would expect the TOT to be 2.1 times larger than the ITT-based estimate.

Measurement of Preparedness

Overall preparedness was specified as a summative scale comprising the 18 items listed below. Youths were asked to judge how prepared they felt to accomplish each task. Possible response options included “very prepared” (4), “somewhat prepared” (3), “not very well prepared” (2), and “not at all prepared” (1). Job preparedness, which was specified as a summative scale, comprised items 2, 11, and 12.

Preparedness Scale Items

How prepared do you feel

1. To live on your own?
2. You are to get a job?
3. You are to manage your money?
4. You are to prepare a meal?
5. To maintain your personal appearance?
6. To obtain health information?
7. To do housekeeping?
8. To obtain housing?
9. To get to places you have to go?
10. In educational planning?
11. To look for a job?
12. To keep a job?
13. To handle an emergency?
14. To obtain community resources?
15. In interpersonal skills?
16. In dealing with legal problems?
17. In problem solving?
18. In parenting skills?

Covariates in Analyses

Table E.1 describes the covariates used in the multivariate analyses depicted in chapter 4 as well as in this appendix.

TABLE E.1. COVARIATES USED IN MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES	
Predictor	Description/Survey Question(s)
Youths demographics	Age Gender Race Hispanic ethnicity
Mental health and behavior	
<i>Mental health</i>	Achenbach Youth Self Report externalizing subscale t score; Achenbach Youth Self Report internalizing subscale t score; and Diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder
<i>Delinquency</i>	Summative scale comprised of the following 15 items. In the past 12 months, have you: (1) Been loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place so that people complained about it or you got in trouble? (2) Been drunk in a public place? (3) Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus or subway rides, food, or clothing? (4) Been involved in a gang fight? (5) Carried a handgun? (6) Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you? (7) Purposely set fire to a house, building, car, or other property or tried to do so? (8) Stolen something from a store or something that did not belong to you worth less than \$50? (9) Stolen something from a store, person or house, or something that did not belong to you worth \$50 or more, including stealing a car? (10) Committed other property crimes such as fencing, receiving, possessing, or selling stolen property, or cheated someone by selling them something that was worthless or worth much less than what you said it was? (11) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them or have a situation end up in a serious fight or assault of some kind? (12) Sold or helped sell marijuana (pot, grass), hashish (hash), or other hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or LSD? (13) Been paid cash for having sexual relations with someone? (14) Received anything in trade for having sexual relations, such as food or drugs? (15) Had or tried to have sexual relations with someone against their will?
Education	
<i>Learning disability</i>	Has a representative from a school or a health professional ever told you or anyone else that you have a learning disability?
<i>Special education participation</i>	Are you currently placed in a special education program?
Social support	Summative scale of the standardized responses to the following seven questions. How many different people: (1) Can you count on to invite you to go out and do things? (2) Can you talk to about money matters like budgeting or money problems? (3) Give you useful advice about important things in life? (4) Give you help when you need transportation? (5) Can you go to when you need someone to listen to your problems when you're feeling low?

TABLE E.1. COVARIATES USED IN MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

Predictor	Description/Survey Question(s)
Care history	(6) Can you go to when you need help with small favors?
	(7) Would lend you money in an emergency?
	Prior substitute care spell
	Duration of current spell
	Prior group home or other residential care placement
	Prior runaway

Additional Impact Analyses Tables

The following tables present additional data about service receipt among youths in the LST sample.

TABLE E.2. BASELINE SERVICE RECEIPT OF CONTROL GROUP YOUTHS BY COMPLIANCE

Service	Compliers (N=160)		Crossovers (N=55)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
Employment (Have ever received the following...)					
Vocational/career counseling	38	23.8	16	29.1	
Help with resume writing	92	57.5	31	56.4	
Assistance with identifying potential employers	56	35.0	16	29.1	
Assistance with completing job applications	108	67.5	35	63.6	
Help with job interviewing skills	94	58.8	34	61.8	
Job referral/placement	53	33.1	18	32.7	
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	89	55.6	27	49.1	
Money management (Have you received the following...)					
Help with money management	77	48.1	20	36.4	
Help on use of a budget	75	46.9	17	30.9	*
Help on opening a checking and savings account	91	56.9	28	50.9	
Help on balancing a checkbook	56	35.0	15	27.3	
Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)					
Training on meal planning and preparation	111	69.4	34	61.8	
Training on personal hygiene	107	66.9	41	74.5	
Training on nutritional needs	115	71.9	39	70.9	
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	89	55.6	26	47.3	
Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?	69	43.1	25	45.5	

* $p < .05$.

TABLE E.3. BASELINE SERVICE RECEIPT OF LST GROUP YOUTHS BY COMPLIANCE

Service	Compliers (N=144)		No-Shows (N=52)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
Employment (Have ever received the following...)					
Vocational/career counseling	35	24.3	19	36.5	
Help with resume writing	90	62.5	25	48.1	
Assistance with identifying potential employers	56	38.9	17	32.7	
Assistance with completing job applications	103	71.5	33	63.5	
Help with job interviewing skills	89	61.8	34	65.4	
Job referral/placement	44	30.6	16	30.8	
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	80	55.6	25	48.1	
Money management (Have you received the following...)					
Help with money management	78	54.2	23	44.2	
Help on use of a budget	76	52.8	22	42.3	
Help on opening a checking and savings account	68	47.2	20	38.5	
Help on balancing a checkbook	46	31.9	13	25.0	
Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)					
Training on meal planning and preparation	97	67.4	32	61.5	
Training on personal hygiene	100	69.4	31	59.6	
Training on nutritional needs	106	73.6	35	67.3	
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	70	48.6	23	44.2	
Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?	59	41.0	18	34.6	

FIGURE E.1. BASELINE PREPAREDNESS BY PREPAREDNESS CHANGE SCORE

