FOSTER CARE POLICY SEMINAR

Seminar
on

THE FEDERAL ROLE IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE

THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM AND MORE

Seminar held in Washington, DC, July 23, 1999

Special Report #13

Sponsored by
The Policy Exchange
of the Institute for Educational Leadership

Additional copies of
The Federal Role in Helping Young People Transition from Foster Care: The Independent Living Program and More
are available for $2 prepaid from the Institute for Educational Leadership,
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036.
Telephone: (202) 822-8405. Fax: (202) 872-4050. E-mail: iel@iel.org.
Copies may be downloaded from the Internet at www.policyexchange.iel.org.

THE FEDERAL ROLE IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE

THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM AND MORE

Special Report #13

Transcript of an IEL Policy Exchange Seminar

Edited by
Margaret Dunkle

with
Megan Briggs

The Policy Exchange
Institute for Educational Leadership
1999

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The IEL Policy Exchange is grateful to many people who contributed their ideas and expertise to producing this seminar.

The Federal Role in Helping Young People Transition from Foster Care: The Independent Living Program and More was sponsored by the IEL Policy Exchange.

Margaret Dunkle, Director of the IEL Policy Exchange, planned and moderated this seminar.

Jolie Bain Pillsbury, President of Sherbrooke Consulting, provided skillful co-facilitation.

Megan Briggs, Scott Gates, Lauren Handel and Gabriel Migdal provided important organizational assistance.

Barbara Pryor and Bridget McIntyre in the Office of Senator John D. Rockefeller IV provided valuable substantive and logistical assistance.

Neal R. Gross and Co., Inc. provided transcription services.

Margaret Dunkle, with assistance from Megan Briggs, edited this transcript for publication.

The work of the IEL Policy Exchange is supported generously by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and other funders.

PRESENT

MARGARET DUNKLE	Director, IEL Policy Exchange
JOLIE BAIN PILLSBURY	Co-facilitator
SENATOR JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER	Speaker (by videotape)
KAREN SPAR	Speaker

PANELISTS

SUE BADEAU
JOAN BERKES
ROBIN DELANY-SHABAZZ
GEORGE FERGUSON
SUSAN K. HATTAN
TERRY LEWIS
PAMELA LITTLEWOOD
HASKEL LOWERY
ROBIN NIXON
KRISANN PEARCE
LISA PEASE
ROBYN RAYSOR
JUDY RHOADES
FRANK SHAVLIK
DOUGLAS STEIGER
KATHRYN J. WAY

CONTENTS

PREFACE

More than half a million children and youth are in foster care in the United States. Some live with foster parents, some with relatives, and others in group homes and other settings. These young people are a substantial—and an especially vulnerable—part of all the major "systems" affecting children and families: education, training, juvenile justice, health care, housing, welfare and mental health, as well as the child welfare system.

Recognizing the need to discuss how these many systems across all levels of government affect youth as they transition out of care and into adulthood, the IEL Policy Exchange held a July 1999 seminar on *The Federal Role in Helping Young People Transition from Foster Care*. This publication is a transcript of that seminar.

Given participants' positive response to the seminar (they rated the event 8.6 out of a possible 10) we are confident that the seminar was both moving *and* informative. And when asked *what is the most significant or important thing you will take away from this seminar?*, participants' responses included:

> *The children and youth who make up the foster care population … have needs that stretch across the board.*
>
> *Independent living is a myth.* Interdependence *is what needs to be addressed.*
>
> *Public education through the mass media and churches may well be more essential then anything governments can do. Governments can help but their work will always fall short without the participation of people who care.*

A primary audience of the IEL Policy Exchange is federal policy makers, both in Congress and in the Executive Branch, with responsibility for programs and policies affecting children and families. We are pleased that Senators Jeffords and Rockefeller issued a "Dear Colleague" letter (reproduced on the facing page) encouraging other senators to send their staff to the seminar.

The Policy Exchange does not routinely publish transcripts of its seminars, but we decided to publish this transcript because it was

both compelling and enlightening to hear, in their own words, the powerful "stories" of those involved in the foster care system and the many other systems affecting children in care.

The seminar began with an introduction and overview of federal foster care policy. Next, seminar participants viewed a short documentary video, *Searching for Family* (which shows the lives of three youths in Seattle in foster care).

Following the film, a 16-member panel shared their diverse perspectives about what would help Jamil, a 14 year-old boy in foster care in the film, become a successful adult. Next, the panel responded to questions from the audience. After this open discussion, Senator John D. Rockefeller IV (via video) outlined his views on the federal role in helping young people transition from foster care.

Also contained in this publication are the seminar agenda; a list of panelists, speakers and participants; a summary of pre-seminar feedback from participants about their views on foster care transition; a brief on foster care facts and data; an overview of federal child welfare programs; and a summary of the newly enacted Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.

Armed with this information, seminar participants worked in small groups to answer the question: *What one thing would you change to make the systems work more effectively for Jamil and other children in foster care as they move from adolescence to adulthood?* The transcript ends with final remarks from the panelists.

This seminar aired on the cable television network C-SPAN.

—*Margaret Dunkle*
December 1999

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

MS. DUNKLE: Good morning. I want to welcome all of you today to a special seminar on the federal role in helping young people transition from foster care.

Welcome to those of you in the room, all of whom have expertise in one (sometimes many) areas concerning foster care, and also welcome to our C-SPAN audience that is joining us.

I am Margaret Dunkle, Director of the Policy Exchange at the Institute for Educational Leadership. The Policy Exchange works to connect ideas and policymakers across systems, levels of government, ideologies, with a goal of making programs and policies for children and families work better.

As I begin, I want to give a special thanks to Senator Rockefeller of West Virginia and his staff for helping us get this room in the Hart Senate Office Building, and also to Senator Jeffords of Vermont for joining Senator Rockefeller in sending a bipartisan "Dear Colleague" letter to other Senators urging them to send members of their staff to this seminar today.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the need for the types of connections that the Policy Exchange tries to make across systems and programs and levels of government than the issue of foster care and the many issues that face young people as they turn age 18 and transition out of the formal foster care system.

There are more than half a million children under age 18 in this country in the foster care system. These are children who have been removed from their natural families for one reason or another. These numbers in themselves are impressive, but the implications for the well being of our country go far beyond the half a million children in foster care. These young people in foster care are an especially vulnerable part of every public and private system that affects children and families—education, health, social services, juvenile justice, mental health, substance abuse, housing, nutrition—every single system, from our big public systems to our religious institutions, neighborhoods and families.

Also, young people in foster care are the proverbial “canary in

the coalmine" when it comes to the systems affecting them. You may remember the analogy—the distress of the canary warns that the miners in the coalmine are in imminent danger. When public systems fail children in foster care, they are almost always also failing many other children as well. It's just that the effects may not be as immediate, or they may not be as apparent or immediately devastating.

Foster care issues transcend the political spectrum. They touch so many people. If you talk to someone—your friends, your neighbors—you may well find that they have a connection to foster care that you never knew about until you actually asked about it.

There is also increasing awareness about the point at which young people age out of foster care, when they turn age 18 and have new risks and new responsibilities. My guess is that most of you have probably read an article in your local newspaper in the past six or eight months about children in foster care or foster parents. President and Mrs. Clinton announced a foster care transition initiative earlier this year. This past June the House of Representatives passed a bill, "The Foster Care Independence Act," aimed at making the transition from foster care to independent living easier. Similar legislation has been introduced in the Senate, and I think we can expect some action on that bill a little bit later this year. [See Appendix F for information about this bill.]

Summaries of a lot of information about foster care are in the packet of information that those of you sitting in the room have. And we're also putting this information on our web site so that you can download it at home or in your office. There is background information, summaries of the bills and other information. [See Appendix D for "Foster Care in Perspective" and Appendix E for "An Overview of Federal Child Welfare Programs."]

Our Web site is www.policyexchange.iel.org.

Our seminar today is an interactive seminar and it is progressive. It involves learning some facts. It involves actively listening to people and perspectives that you might not normally hear, and we hope it involves gaining some insights that will enable you, when you go back to your office, where ever your office might be,

to make better decisions and choose better options and policies on issues affecting children in foster care.

All of you have in your packet an agenda, which, as you can see, is very full. [See Appendix A for the seminar agenda.]

We're going to start by getting some solid information from Karen Spar of the Congressional Research Service. We're then going to move on to the human side of foster care, not the policy side, through a short video, *Searching for Family*.

Next, we will build a mosaic to understand how the many systems and levels of government affect young people in foster care, and we're going to use one of the people in the video—14-year old Jamil, who will all-too-soon be reaching his 18th birthday and aging out of the foster care system—as our focal point.

If you look at the size and variety of the panel and their organizations, it's daunting, awesome, impressive, and it's probably still incomplete. The number of systems and levels of government that are important for young people in foster care is staggering.

I'm especially pleased that Jolie Bain Pillsbury, former Deputy Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare, will facilitate the panel portion of the seminar today. After the panel, we'll hear from Senator Rockefeller, one of the sponsors of the Senate foster care bill now before the Senate Finance Committee.

Then, we'll work in small groups around our tables to use all of the information that we've gotten to try to identify ways in which the foster care system might be more effective for Jamil and other young people like him.

We're not going to have any formal breaks. Please feel free to get up and help yourself to coffee and refreshments in the back of the room during the session.

To work together, it's helpful to know who we are and where we come from. If you take a look at the pink sheet in your packet, we asked all of you on your response forms to tell us about how to improve programs and policies for young people in foster care. [See Appendix C for Issues Raised by Seminar Participants.]

Your answers spanned a very broad range. Thirty percent of you talked about doing a better—and an earlier—job of helping

young people live independently after they turn age 18. Another 30 percent of you talked about the need for multiple supports, including after care. Twenty percent talked about improving education and training. Another 20 percent talked about supporting community efforts. Almost as many stressed that foster care funding should continue past age 18. And others of you talked about such things as focusing on the client perspective rather than the system perspective.

I urge all of you to take a look at this summary of your responses because we used your words. We did not homogenize what you said, and the different perspectives come through quite clearly. We're also going to be putting this information up on our web site.

Speaking of the different perspectives, how many of you people know at least half the people in this room? (Show of hands.)

Ten percent of the people? Okay. One of the things about foster care is it brings together people from many different perspectives and across many different systems.

What I'd like for you to do—and we'll also put this on our web site—is to look at the list of featured guests and participants. It's the blue sheet in your packet of information. [See Appendix B for a listing of seminar panelists and participants.] We have people here from congressional offices, from many agencies in the Administration, from the White House, from congressional support agencies, from advocacy groups, from think tanks, and from the state and local levels.

We also have another important group of people here, and that is people who have formerly been in foster care themselves. And I think it's important to have the perspective of people who experience the foster care system to inform the policies that we make, that structure and affect that system.

We have only one major ground rule for today, and that is to be candid and be open to other points of view.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT ON FEDERAL FOSTER CARE PROGRAMS

MS. DUNKLE: With that said, I'm delighted to turn over the podium to Karen Spar from the Congressional Research Service, who is an expert on these issues. She is going to give you the context and the history about federal foster care programs, with an emphasis on the transition that happens, whether or not a young person is ready, at age 18 when they are typically on their own and age out of federally subsidized foster care.

MS. SPAR: Thank you. Good morning. As Margaret said, my job this morning is to give an overview of foster care issues as background for the rest of today's program, and to emphasize specifically the issues that affect older children in foster care, especially those children who are most likely to still be in foster care when they turn 18.

In foster care jargon, these are the children who age out of the foster care system at age 18. These are the most important. And as Margaret said, you'll meet some of these kids later in the videotape that will be shown.

As everyone here knows, our child welfare and foster care systems are complicated. And for older children in foster care, especially those who have been in foster care for a significant period of time, these systems are especially complicated. These are the children who are least likely to return to their family and the least likely to be adopted. For these children, the system literally is their parent.

Many of these children may have entered care originally because their families were unable to take care of them safely at home. Most likely these children were abused or neglected or possibly abandoned.

However, at a certain point, these children are faced not only with the problems of their original families, but they are faced with problems and needs of their own, and these needs become especially daunting as they approach their 18th or possibly 19th birthday when society will no longer officially be responsible for them. At that point, these kids are pretty much on their own.

I'm going to give a brief overview of current federal policy affecting foster care, and I'll try to emphasize specifically the policies or how these policies affect older children in care. I'll also try to mention some of the additional complications and the additional systems that touch the lives of these children on a regular basis.

In discussions like these it's always important to start out with the understanding that child welfare in general, and foster care in particular, is a state responsibility and a state program. All states have laws defining child abuse and neglect and setting up procedures for removing children from their homes, if necessary, to keep them safe, and for taking kids into state custody.

The Federal Government does not have the authority to investigate child abuse and neglect reports, and it doesn't have the authority to remove children from their homes and place them in foster care.

Children like Jamil, whom you'll see in the film, are the responsibility of state child welfare agencies and state courts.

As everyone knows, however, the Federal Government plays a very substantial role in child welfare, and it does this by providing funds to the states to help them pay for their child welfare and foster care programs. In fiscal year 1999, federal spending for child welfare services, foster care, and adoption assistance programs totals more than $4.5 billion. Most of these funds actually go to help kids and to help states maintain kids in foster care.

States don't have to accept these funds, but they all do. And in exchange for these funds states have to live with the rules established by Congress, most of which are contained in Title IV-E or IV-B of the Social Security Act.

For the most part, these provisions were created in 1980, but important amendments have been enacted since then which I'll mention. In general, federal policy is intended to protect children, to make sure that foster care is used only as a last resort, and to make sure that foster care is short term and that children are moved into permanent families, preferably their own families, if that's safe, as quickly as possible.

Federal policy requires that states make efforts to avoid the need to place children into foster care in the first place. If children

are removed and placed in care, federal policy requires states to make efforts to try to return them home, if that can be done safely.

The law doesn't spell out specifically what these efforts are to be, but they take the form of a variety of social and other kinds of services.

In 1997, Congress amended the law to recognize that there are sometimes situations where it's not reasonable for states to make efforts to keep a child with his or her family. In these cases, states can begin right away to make other plans for those children—for example, if a parent has murdered another of their children, or lost parental rights to another child, or committed a felony assault against a child. Then federal law does not require that the state has to make efforts to reunite the child and parent.

At the same time, however, federal law doesn't prohibit states from making these efforts, if that's considered to be in the best interest of the child.

Federal law also requires that foster children's cases be reviewed frequently, and that a permanent plan be developed for each child. As the law now is written, states must provide administrative reviews of every child's case every six months, and there must be a judicial hearing to determine a permanent plan for the child no later than 12 months after the child comes into care.

In extreme cases such as those I just mentioned, the state doesn't have to make efforts to reunite a parent and child. A permanent plan must be developed and a hearing held no later than 30 days after the child has entered care.

For most children who are placed in foster care, the permanent plan is to return them home. But if that's not possible, the preferred permanency plan is generally adoption. Other permanency plans might be placement with a legal guardian or with a relative, and if none of that's possible, the permanent plan might be some other permanent living arrangement, which can often take the form of long-term foster care.

Especially for some older children who have been in care a long time and who may not want to be adopted, long-term foster care may end up as their permanent plan.

I mentioned that Congress amended the federal foster care law

in 1997. A key feature of the 1997 legislation is a new requirement that after children have been in foster care for 15 months out of the most recent 22-month period the state must file a petition to terminate parental rights on behalf of that child.

This doesn't mean that the courts must grant the petition, only that the state must initiate the process. And, in fact, the process itself can take months and sometimes years to complete. Once these petitions are filed, they are not necessarily heard because of backlogs in the court and various other reasons having to do with the courts. It can take months for these cases to be heard. It can take months for them to be decided. And they are often subject to appeal, which can add additional time to the process.

Nonetheless, the goal of the provision was to ensure that children wouldn't linger indefinitely in foster care and that parents would be on notice that they had only a limited time in which to get their lives restored, so that their children could be returned to them.

How does this provision apply in the case of older kids? The are some exceptions allowed to the TPR [termination of parental rights] requirement, such as when a child is being cared for by a relative, or if the state hasn't provided necessary services to the child and the child's family, or if the state has another compelling reason for believing that termination of parental rights would not be in that child's best interest.

It's possible that for some older children who have deep bonds to the families, even though they have no hope of returning to those families, termination of parental rights might not be in their best interest. However, this is clearly a judgment call, and different caseworkers and different judges are going to have different opinions with regard to every individual case.

This TPR [termination of parental rights] provision is only now beginning to take effect around the country. It's only now beginning to be implemented around the country, and the video that you'll see was filmed before this provision was enacted.

As you're watching this video, it might be interesting to contemplate how this provision might have affected the lives of these kids had it been in effect at the time these children were first put in

foster care. And it also might be interesting to ponder whether you think this provision would even have been applied had it been on the books at the time these kids entered foster care, or whether you think it should have been applied in these particular cases.

There are lots of other requirements in federal law that states must meet in order to receive federal funds. For example, the federal law requires that children must be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting that's available and that is consistent with the child's special needs and best interests.

This clearly establishes a preference in federal law for foster family homes as opposed to group homes or institutions or other residential group placements for kids. However, the law does anticipate that for some children group homes and institutions might be appropriate, and the law allows federal funds to be used for those placements within certain constraints. For example, federal funds cannot be used for large, public institutions, and federal funds cannot be used for detention facilities.

Again, for older children, this is an important provision. Some older children, especially those who have been in numerous foster family homes, may prefer group homes with other kids their age. And some children may have severe emotional or behavioral or other problems that might require specialized treatment that may be available only in a treatment facility.

How effective is federal policy in meeting the needs of older children and youth in foster care, who are literally growing up in foster care and will eventually age out of the system? First of all, it's important to remember that Congress intended federal policy would prevent children from growing up in foster care, except in relatively uncommon cases where no permanent family could be found for a child. Permanency, preferably in the form of family reunification or adoption, was Congress' goal in 1980 when the first major child welfare legislation was enacted, and it was the goal again in 1997 when the most recent reforms were passed.

Most of you are probably familiar with the history of what happened after the 1980 law was enacted. Initially, the number of children in foster care went down, and the amount of time—the average length of time that children spent in foster care—also went

down.

Many of the states had actually started reforming their child welfare systems before the federal law was enacted in 1980, and the combination of the state reforms and new federal provisions had a substantial impact in the early 1980s. But as probably everyone knows, things began to change in the middle to late 1980s, and the number of children entering foster care started to climb.

Since 1985, according to the data we have, which is admittedly not the best, the total number of children in foster care at any one time has increased every single year. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there were 520,000 children in foster care in 1998, which is actually more than the number of children who were in care in the mid to late 1970s, which is when the debate over child welfare reform actually began.

It is generally felt that what happened in the mid 1980s to cause this crisis in child welfare and increased number of kids in foster care was the introduction of crack cocaine. And, in fact, substance abuse continues to be a factor in the vast majority of child welfare and foster care cases today.

Congress tried again in passing the Adoption and Save Families Act in 1997 to make sure that children don't grow up in foster care, and that they are moved either back home or into another permanent family as quickly as possible.

As I said before, it's too early to know how some of these procedural reforms in this legislation will work, since they are only just now taking effect. Especially for older children and youth, it's too early to know what impact these provisions are going to have.

It's important to understand, though, that federal policy, especially in the child welfare area, doesn't always have its intended effect on every single case. For example, the law requires case reviews and permanency hearings to be held according to a prescribed time table, and envisions that final decisions will be made at these hearings and that actions will be taken to move these children out of foster care and into some other permanent, more desirable placement.

But in reality, even if these reviews and hearings are held according to schedule, which they are not always, they don't always

result in a timely resolution of the case. Even if states make reasonable efforts to return children to their families, as they are required to do by law, these efforts aren't always successful.

As most of you know, child welfare families are fragile. And even for parents with the best of intentions, drug addiction and other dysfunctions are hard to overcome. One step forward is often followed by two steps backward, and during that process the children remain in care.

The new TPR [termination of parental rights] provision in the 1997 law was intended to put the children's needs ahead of the parents' needs, and to make sure that children don't remain in foster care indefinitely while parents make endless attempts to restore their lives. How this provision is implemented will become extremely interesting to watch in the next few years, and may be one of the most important current issues in foster care and child welfare in general.

In describing federal foster care policy as it affects older children and youth, I also have to mention the Independent Living Program, which was added to the law in 1986 as an initiative of Senator Moynihan. The impetus for this program was the realization that children who are aging out of foster care were having a really tough time making it on their own. They were disproportionately homeless, unemployed, involved in the criminal justice system, and had a variety of other not good outcomes.

Right now, the independent living program receives an annual federal appropriation of $70 million, and these funds are divided among the states to provide various services to children who are aging out of the foster care system to help them prepare for independent living.

Interestingly, in the 13 years since this program was created, it has received relatively little attention until this year when a bipartisan consensus kind of emerged, sort of almost overnight, that something needed to be done for these kids. And, as Margaret said, and as you'll hear, legislation has passed the House. Similar legislation, not identical, is pending in the Senate, and is also supported by the Administration. There does seem to be a convergence of common thought on this particular program.

Finally, I want to mention something about the various other systems and programs that affect the daily lives of foster children, especially older kids. When looking at ways to improve the situations of these young people, it's important to keep in mind just how complicated their lives are. As I said at the beginning, for some children the child welfare system literally is their parent, and at best it's an imperfect parent.

This “parent” comes in the form of a lot of different people who are constantly changing over time. For example, there is the foster parent, or possibly another supervising adult if the child is in a group home, or a group of adults. There is also the caseworker from the state or another agency that's handling the child's case. There's also the judge who oversees the child's case, and probably a guardian *ad litem* or a CASA [Court Appointed Special Advocate] volunteer who may represent the child in court. That's the *child welfare system* and how it deals with kids.

But these kids also come into contact with lots of other adults and lots of other programs and systems beyond the child welfare system. Especially in the case of older kids, there may be psychologists, other kinds of social workers, substance abuse counselors. There are teachers (these kids go to school like all other kids) school principals, doctors, health care providers, potentially mental health care providers, and there may be numerous others.

However, when the children turn 18, or possibly 19 depending on their state, a lot of these relationships come to an end. The child welfare system no longer is the child's parent because the child is no longer legally a child. Their needs for counseling, education, housing, employment skills, job training, health care, and various other things continue.

But it's now up to the child himself, or the young person, and not their case worker, to help meet those needs.

Not surprisingly, a lot of these young people go back to the families that they came from because they have no place else to go, even though those families were not considered safe by the courts and satisfactory by the child welfare system as a permanent home for these kids. One of the goals of the pending Independent Living legislation is to provide some kind of continuing services for these

youth for some period after they legally emancipate from the child welfare system.

In terms of current issues affecting foster children, the new Independent Living bill and the 1997 Adoption and Save Families Act are attempts to address some of them, to the extent that they can be addressed through the child welfare system alone.

However, as I said, and as I think Margaret has implied, these children's lives are complicated. They are seen by numerous people, agencies, programs, and systems, and changes in child welfare law can only go so far. To really improve the transition of these youngsters to adult life, I think it's important to keep in mind just how complicated their lives are and the lives of their families.

MS. DUNKLE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

Thank you so much, Karen. We couldn't have asked for a better grounding on the issues around foster care, especially federal programs, as they affect young people in foster care, not just in the traditional child welfare sense but also the whole array of federal programs that are so important to children in foster care.

For the next 20 minutes, we're going to take a different look at the issue of foster care, thinking of young people in transition to adulthood. We're going to see a video that was filmed in 1997. It shows the challenges and the opportunities of foster care through the eyes of three young men living in Seattle, and their foster mother, Tess.

As you watch the film, especially pay attention to one of the young men, Jamil. He is 14. He has been in foster care on and off since he was age four. As Karen said also, as you look at the film, look at the human side. And also think about what programs or policies at the federal, state, local, community level have helped or hurt these young people (especially Jamil, since he will be the focus of our conversation) in their struggle to become successful adults.

Immediately following the film, Jolie Bain Pillsbury of Sherbrooke Consulting is going to facilitate a dialogue among our panelists. Jolie has worked at the state, local, and national levels, and she has helped coordinate the National Foster Care Awareness

Project activities since its beginning several years ago.

Our panel is like a mosaic—many pieces creating one whole. We're going to start from the perspective of the child in foster care, the client, the result, the reason for these programs. Then we will move through the many systems and levels of government that affect this young person.

SEARCHING FOR FAMILY

(Whereupon, a video entitled *Searching for Family* was shown.)

Searching for Family is available free of charge and is accompanied by a discussion guide. To order copies, please contact Elena Lamont at the Casey Family Program:

Elena Lamont
The Casey Family Program
Suite 400
1300 Dexter Avenue North
Seattle, WA 98109
(206) 298-5146

PANEL REACTION TO *SEARCHING FOR FAMILY*

MS. PILLSBURY: I am Jolie Bain Pillsbury. Where we are in today's seminar is that we're at the point where we want to flesh out and add to this documentary. This was just a film of people's lives. You heard people speaking in their own voices.

What we want to do now is go to our panel, and our panel is going to give you little glimpses of their reactions and ideas that they have that are stimulated by that version of foster care reality.

My role as facilitator is a very difficult one. You'll notice there are 16 people on this panel. We have 30 minutes to listen to them. That means each of these wonderful people who are dedicating their lives to making things better for families and children has two minutes. And every time they hear another voice on the panel they will want to respond to that voice just like you will. So they all have notepads in front of them, and when they have a response they won't be able to speak it; they'll have to write it and save it for later. I'm inviting you to do that as well.

The purpose of this panel is not for everyone to have the same ideas or the same view. It's purposely designed to get multiple perspectives from many different people—in many different ways on this very important issue. And we have color-coded our panelists; you can follow along. Your yellow agenda is your cheat sheet. They will be speaking in the order that you see them here. [See Appendix A for the seminar agenda.]

From the Customer, Client and Front-line

MS. PILLSBURY: We will start with probably the most important voice, and that is the voice of Lisa, who actually started her life at one point as a foster child. Lisa?

MS. PEASE: Hi. Good morning. I'm going to speak as fast as I can.

(Laughter.)

I was most moved by the look on Jamil's face when he was visiting his mother. Those eyes so sad—only a foster child knows what it feels like to want something so very much but can't have it.

Yes, I can relate to each one of those children in the film, having been in the system or more formally a ward of the court—I don't know which sounds better. For 10 years, I experienced the full range of placements and survived. Yes, I graduated from the child welfare system, with honors I might add.

I was very fortunate, first, to be in a county [Montgomery County, Maryland] that served its children well. I think one of the most important pieces for me was that I had two wonderful people at juvenile court who were always there for me—Judge Tracey, whose genuine and caring manner and his decisions about my welfare showed me that I mattered; and Pam [Littlewood], who is here with me today, met me when I was 11 years old. She was very, very patient with me and watched me grow all those years. She was the one that I could count on and even now is the person who reminds me of how I was back then.

The other very important piece was the opportunity that I had to begin college at age 17, and I continued in college while I was in the Independent Living program until age 21. Little did I know that the words Judge Tracey said to me when I was 15 years old would come true. He said, "You know, you'd make a good social worker someday."

(Laughter.)

Well, how could I not give back to the system what was given to me? You know, children in foster care have wings, but they need someone to teach them to fly, someone to lead them in the right direction, someone to be there when they fall. I am here today because of those people who taught me how to fly.

Thanks.

MS. PILLSBURY: That's beautiful. Thank you very much.

And it's very, very nice that we now can hear from Pam, who was Lisa's partner over the years.

MS. LITTLEWOOD: My name is Pam Littlewood, and I'm a social worker with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. I'm assigned to Juvenile Court, and because of that I'm always there. And so every time the kids come to court they always get to see Pam, fondly known as "the M&M lady."

(Laughter.)

I think I didn't have M&M's when Lisa was little. That was later. She didn't get to enjoy those.

And because of that, and because I kept that same position, Lisa did see me. But while Lisa was in care, I probably can count that she had at least six, seven, eight different social workers. And when I watch this film I kind of wonder just how many different social workers Joaquin and Robert and Jamil have had. [Joaquin, Robert and Jamil were the three young men in foster care featured in *Searching for Family*.] Realize that each time it changed it was another loss, another loss that compounded all of the losses that they have had before.

So, to me, what hits is that I've been part of the disconnect system. I wasn't for Lisa, fortunately, but for a lot of other kids, I and colleagues have not been able to be there to be part of the team that wraps the love and care and nurturing around them that they need.

I know that kids in foster care have to have some kind of roots and have to have some kind of anchor. Jamil has a mother, but he has a mother who is drug-addicted, and that pulls him and pulls him. In my experience, what happens with some of these kids is that they feel that they have to go rescue those parents. And when they do, they put themselves at great risk. And Jamil is already experiencing that with his drug addiction.

So, like Tess says, Jamil needs other people in his life. Hopefully, he needs a social worker who will stick around long enough and have a small enough case load that he or she can pay attention to him. And he needs lots of other people in the community—his teachers, his mentor, anybody who can pay attention to him and help give him the anchors that he needs.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much, Pam.

Betty Brown isn't with us, so we're going to go now to Frank Shavlik, who works with youth a lot. Frank?

MR. SHAVLIK: My position has been with an agency that works with families in crisis and kids in crisis. We were fortunate to help start the first Independent Living program—residential program—in our state [Delaware].

And I was privileged and really motivated to do that because

my wife and I had taken in several kids over the years who did age out of foster care and had no place to go, and really no place else to turn. So it was really extra motivation to help set up the Independent Living program.

One of the things that I've seen over and over, and I could see it with Jamil as he rested his head on his mother's lap, the kind of pain that he was going through and that a lot of foster kids go through—the pain and the fear.

We know what that pain and fear can turn into. We've experienced it in Colorado, in Columbine. I'm not suggesting that he might turn in that direction, but pain and fear add up to some pretty drastic things sometimes.

Another reaction that I had to this was the fact that Jamil reads at a second or third grade level, something like that, but he is in the ninth grade. We've failed him somewhere along the line there, and that, again, is going to add to the problem.

What I would hope in sort of looking ahead at things that we, as adults, need to somehow develop some kind of program that is going to help Jamil take charge. You sort of want to depend on guardian angels, I guess, for kids like this to get through. But somehow, as a government, as a state, as professionals, we've got to sharpen our skills in helping kids like this turn that corner and want to take charge of their life, of the rest of their life.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much, Frank.

Sue [a foster parent who is also a Kennedy Fellow in the Office of Senator Rockefeller] brings a transition perspective. Sue?

MS. BADEAU: I think that my reactions, both to the film and the things I wanted to say in this sort of transitional role here, is that in order to do a good job with this whole concept of Independent Living, we first have to shatter the myth of independent living and independence in general, both in people's lives as well as in systems.

If we ask ourselves the question, how many of us really live independently?, I don't think anyone would really raise their hands. We all rely on other people for some aspect of our lives, whether it's to get advice, whether it's for help with day-to-day chores, whether it's to spend the holidays somewhere.

And in that same way, we have to understand that our kids in foster care are going to continue to have that need to have people to rely on. And it may be able to be back with their birth family, it may be an adoptive family, and if it's neither of those, then there still needs to be someone there that they can continue to rely on even after some magical [18th or 19th] birthday is passed.

And just in the brief time I have, I wanted to share two quick little stories. One of our sons that we adopted (he was actually 19 when we went to court to finalize his adoption) was 18 when he moved in with us. When we were at court, the judge said, "You're 19. Why do you want to be adopted? What's the point? You're already an adult." And our son said, "I expect someday to have children, and I want my children to have grandparents." And that's really the concept of that continuity and those connections.

The other story didn't have such a happy ending, and that is a young lady that I worked with when I was doing infant adoption work. She was a pregnant young woman that came to me to talk about placing her yet-to-be-born baby for adoption. She was 21, and she was living in a psychiatric hospital which she had just gone into as a result of becoming pregnant. She was homeless on the street prior to this.

When she told me her story, she had been in foster care her whole life as far back as she could remember. She had been in a number of different foster homes, and then when she was 18 she was living in a residential facility. On the day of her [18th] birthday a knock came on her door, and she was told to pack her things because she was moving, which really wasn't unusual for her. She had moved so many times in her life she didn't even question it. She just packed her things and went to the front desk and said, "Where am I going?" The staff person opens the door—and this was December in New England, by the way—said, "You're going anywhere you want. You're 18. You're on your own now."

She became immediately homeless, and a couple of years later pregnant. And as a result of being pregnant she is now able to get services again.

She shouldn't have had to go to that extreme to be able to get health care, to be able to get housing, to be able to get the kind of

services and supports that she needed, which brings me to my last point: As we're working on policy, we have to shatter the myth of independence not only for our own lives, but our own kids' lives, but for the systems that we work on setting policies for.

None of these systems are independent of one another. As Karen [Spar] said at the beginning, we need to really look, as we shape these policies, at: How does foster care relate to child welfare? How does the mental health system relate? How are we providing educational services? They are all interdependent on one another for every child and for every person, but especially for these kids in the foster care system.

Thank you.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you. That was wonderful, Sue.

From Congressional Staff

MS. PILLSBURY: We're now going to shift to the congressional perspective.

I've never had that happen before. Thank you. And I'm moving over here because I was blocking the camera, so it's all for TV.

(Laughter.)

So here we're going to go to Susan Hattan [Deputy Director of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions]. Susan is going to share with us some of her ideas about what are the one or two most important policy issues that these comments have raised. Susan?

MS. HATTAN: I think that the first thing that strikes me in being asked this question is that the thing that had struck me, and I think was echoed in all of the remarks we just heard, was the absolute critical importance of some kind of a stable adult connection with these kids.

And, unfortunately, there is no policy in the world, or no piece of legislation, that can create those kinds of people. So I think, from a policy perspective, what we have to do is to figure out if there is any way to identify, or at least to emphasize, identification of someone that can be a stable presence.

Also, in terms of the discussion—and I think it's obvious that

the lives of these kids are complicated, and that there are a number of kinds of things that are around that might be available—but just figuring out where those things are and how they might be found.

I think that public policy can do a lot more in attempting to move things towards a single point from which you can go off in a lot of directions. In our committee, just as one example, in terms of job training and workforce, we, in the last Congress, approved legislation [the Workforce Investment Act] that built on the concept of one-stop shopping, such that there is one place that you can go and kind of get hooked into what kind of job training or further education opportunities that there might be.

The trick, of course, is to find someone who can show you where the one-stop is and go from there. But nevertheless, those kinds of things do help, if you don't have—no single person certainly can be aware of all of the resources available, but a conscious effort to have the ability to make contacts with other kinds of services from a single place rather than having to search in a fairly disjointed way on a one-need-at-a-time basis.

And then, certainly, at a very broad policy level, I think things like education to prevent reaching a crisis point late in life, rather than prevention earlier on, has been significant.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, Susan.

The panel has done wonderfully so far. Especially on time.

(Laughter.)

If you can't hear in the back, I'm going to ask the panelists to really project their voices to make sure, because we're worried about the mikes.

Krisann [Professional Staff Member with the Committee on Education and the Workforce].

MS. PEARCE: We've heard a lot this morning about transition and moving towards independence. I'd like to talk about transition within the special education perspective. We [Congress, when it reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Act] made some changes in 1997 that clarified how advocates and schools should treat transition for kids with special needs.

If we assume that Jamil is in special education, we know that he's 14, we get into the realm of what needs to be done for him

transition-wise. The [IDEA] law was clarified to say that when a child turns 14, everyone needs to start thinking about what are the transition needs of this child, so that, you know, we're building awareness at that point.

Then, when the child turns 16, you need to really start giving the child services moving towards that transition. Is this some type of vocational education? Is it some type of advanced placement? It's just starting to think about, what are the educational transition needs of that child?

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much.

Doug [Welfare Professional Staff with the Senate Finance Committee] is going to be our last voice from the congressional perspective, again highlighting the one or two important policy issues that occurred to you.

MR. STEIGER: Well, in the immediate term, obviously, we're working on a [Senate] bill to help states work with folks beyond 18. But in Jamil's circumstance where he's still a little younger than that, I was particularly struck by the difficult relationship with his mother.

And in the additional information we were given, it suggests that he has had four or five caseworkers in the last four years. And to manage that relationship with his mother, with the continually changing mix of caseworkers, I imagine to be tremendously difficult.

We are asking states and localities to make some very hard decisions on that borderline relationship. At what point do they [states] try to terminate relations? At what point do they decide to keep the family together in some intermediate step? At what point do they try to reunite them because Jamil's mother has perhaps gotten clean? Those difficult judgment calls, I would think, would require a lot more experience with the child.

And at the federal level, I'm struck at how little we can do to provide additional support for case workers and to increase the stability of the case worker/child relation that Pam [Littlewood] was talking about.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much.

From Staff of the Systems That Affect Foster Children

MS. PILLSBURY: We will now be shifting to another perspective, and this is the perspective of people who are working on all of the other systems that touch children in foster care and their foster parents, and their birth families.

We're going to start with Judy Rhoades [from the Medicaid program at the Health Care Finance Administration], who will be looking at it from a health insurance perspective.

MS. RHOADES: If Jamil's foster care is provided under IV-E [Title IV-E of the Social Security Act], which we assume it is, he is automatically eligible for Medicaid as long as he is in that kind of foster care. Almost all other foster children are also eligible for Medicaid, because the foster care payment itself does not count as income to the child. So unless a child in foster care has his or her own income from something like a Social Security check, they are going to be eligible for Medicaid.

Medicaid will provide all medically necessary services, which includes rehab services, such as treatment for the drug and mental health problems that Jamil has. He has apparently been in a drug treatment program before, and Medicaid would pay again if it was medically necessary for him to go again. The Federal Government pays at least 50 percent of the cost of these services, and the state or the local government pays the rest.

Even when he is no longer in foster care, Jamil is likely to remain eligible for Medicaid until he is age 19, because the State of Washington [where Jamil lives] has chosen to cover all children under age 19 to 200 percent of the [federal] poverty level.

The coverage of older children varies greatly from state to state. Once children are out of foster care, they are very likely to become part of the greater problem of the uninsured in this country.

They may be eligible [for health insurance coverage under Medicaid] to age 19 as a poverty-level child, or under the new CHIP [Child Health Insurance Program] program for uninsured children. But it's possible that even a very low wage job would make them ineligible [for Medicaid or CHIP]. And once they

reach age 19, almost any job is going to make them ineligible for Medicaid.

The other thing that was brought up was Jamil's mother, because he does have that attachment to his mother. Unless she is permanently and totally disabled, she also is among the uninsured in this country. Medicaid would not cover her. She is not a parent with a child in her care. She is not disabled. And she is not elderly. She is not covered by Medicaid, so there's no way for Medicaid to provide drug and rehab services to the mother if that was something they wanted to do.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, Judy.

You can hear from each of the next voices, as they try to fit their programs and services and benefits into these needs, just how complex these issues are. You'll recall from the film that there were significant issues around housing. So now we're going to hear from George Ferguson, who will give us one of those perspectives on housing.

MR. FERGUSON: I represent the Interagency Council on the Homeless [at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development]. We don't administer programs or fund programs, but we represent federal agencies that have resources for homeless people.

Having viewed the video, there are two perspectives that we have. One is the prevention aspect, to prevent people like Joaquin and Jamil from becoming homeless in the first place, because the homeless network is not someplace you want to end up.

We encourage local providers to talk with some of the mainstream service providers to find out what went wrong in the mainstream services programs that might have some of the kids become homeless or leave the foster care network. The goal there is to reconnect them with the mainstream programs as quickly as possible.

I think we saw some evidence of that with Joaquin when they alluded to the fact that he had gone into the homelessness jungle. But somehow—we don't learn from the film—he got reconnected with a transitional living facility.

Our other major role, of course, is if, unfortunately, after leav-

ing foster care the former foster kids become homeless to provide a network of emergency services and transitional housing and permanent housing to make sure that people get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

We haven't had a lot of information about the connection between foster care and homelessness heretofore. There have been a lot of studies which have documented locally connections and links between foster care and homelessness. Because we didn't have information, we included some questions on foster care in a national survey [on homelessness] that we recently completed.

This survey was conducted in 1996. We interviewed 4,200 users of services nationwide. And one of the key questions was whether or not they had had experience as a child or as a teenager in a foster home or a group home. This report is being released in the next month. We will have good national information about the percentage of people who report that they were in foster care or a group home. [Copies of the report, *1996 National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*, may be obtained from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Web site at www.hud.gov.]

We hope with that data we can then go back to other federal agencies, have them focus again on the mainstream programs that we've heard about today, and find out what's going wrong in that system that might make people like Jamil and Joaquin more vulnerable to homelessness.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, George.

Now, Robyn Raysor will give us another perspective on housing.

MS. RAYSOR: Good morning. I also work with George [at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development], but I work on the program side of our homeless funding. Some of you may have heard of the McKinney funded legislation that provides funding across the country on a competitive basis, but generally almost all communities get some level of homeless funding.

As George indicated, we probably do not have programming [through HUD] for children under 18. As wards of the court, by definition, these young people are not homeless. But there are

some children that do fall through the cracks, and we do have some programming for them. There are some organizations that have McKinney funding, but it definitely is very rare.

Now, as the children age out of foster care, and as they do become homeless, they are eligible for what is considered the continuum of care. And one of the things I would urge people or individuals or organizations that are interested in these children, their situation, is to work with the local coalitions that collaborate in order to apply for "continuum of care" funding, because sometimes within that collaboration there are prevention funds.

HUD does not provide prevention funds, but that is part of the continuum. So that's a good place to be in order to work and network with people to get the kind of funding that might help prevent children of this age from becoming homeless. Or, in fact, if they have to [become homeless] after the age of 18, there are funds. Again, we pay supportive services, educational living skills, drug treatment, mental health services, AIDS counseling, case management. All of that is in our homeless programs.

So you need to talk to your local providers, your local coalition. If you have any other questions about this, you can come to me. We have a telephone number [(202)708-1234 x4891]. I can give you information.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, Robyn.

We're going to pause for a moment before we go to Haskel. I think this is well worth it, since this will make this dialogue available to a larger group of people.

Can you all hear in the back? Okay. If you can't, just wave, and we'll ask the panelists to speak up. Haskel, we're not deducting this from your two minutes.

MR. LOWERY: Thank you.

MS. PILLSBURY: Give him a hand. Grace under pressure. We're all watching you.

(Applause.)

Haskel, from the perspective of jobs and employment and training…

MR. LOWERY: Okay. I noticed that one of the top three needs in terms of improving opportunities for youth in foster care

is to improve opportunities for job training and assistance. And, fortunately, I work [at the U.S. Department of Labor] with the program, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which at least tries to meet some of those needs.

The way the program is designed is it works with youth from 14 to 21, and in some instances goes up to youth age 24, to be able to provide a series of services within the community. The program is administered by the Department of Labor at the federal level. It goes out to the states and the local communities, so that the service is available at the level where the youth are actually located.

The services are provided in what we call a one-stop system, so that, for example youth in foster care could come in and be able to array all of the services, not only at the Department of Labor level, but all of the other federal agencies that have different programs.

As Jamil begins to age through the system, or progress through the system, from 14 to 21, there's a different type or a different level of services that would be available. Take, for example, the case of Jamil who is 14. The types of services he would probably get which are age-appropriate would be basic skills, where he would get help in reading and math. He could get a tutor. He could get peer-to-peer counseling. He could get summer employment. He could get introduction to the world of work and workplace skills.

As he gets older, then he can array and access a different level of services. And at this point, I also include Joaquin, because as you get older and move into the Independent Living sort of situation, then services like GED [high school equivalency degree] or high school diploma could be assessed. There is also help in getting into post-secondary education, occupational skills training, help in finding employment, advanced training, and what we call "soft skills," skills like leadership development, citizenship skills. What does it mean to be a good student? What does it mean to be a good citizen? What does it mean to be an adult, as you progress through the system?

Then we can also access other services which are available un-

der the Act, things like Job Corps. We can get a number of these services in a residential setting. And we also have connections with apprenticeship programs and other federal programs.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Joan [from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators], who will bring a perspective about student financial aid.

MS. BERKES: Thank you. At age 14, Jamil is still three or four years away from entering a post-secondary school, but he is just at the right point to be planning that phase of his education. Now, not many 14-year olds know how to do that, how to plan it at that point, how to set educational goals, whether it's a short career training or a longer—even four-year liberal arts program.

So Jamil might especially need extra help to get ready, to get in, and to stay in post-secondary school.

Many schools and organizations have early awareness campaigns, but if he is lucky Jamil might have access to the federal TRIO programs. These are authorized under the Higher Education Act. The TRIO programs are designed to identify individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who could benefit from post-secondary education.

Under TRIO—specifically, the Talent Search and Upward Bound programs reach out to 6th through 12th graders to assist them in completing secondary school, and in acquiring the skills, like reading, for example, that are needed for success in a post-secondary school.

After getting ready and getting in, the next step, of course, is staying in [postsecondary training]. And as important as the academic preparation is, the focus here often comes down to financial reasons—financial support. That usually would involve public funds, and where public funds are involved rules evolve.

However, the student financial aid system does recognize that some students do not fit a traditional mold. If Jamil was a ward of the court, the federal aid system would consider him an "independent" adult. But for us, being "independent" means that he would not have to provide information or signatures from his parents. It does not mean that he no longer qualifies for help. On

the contrary, he would be getting help.

The school's financial aid administrator also has considerable latitude to consider Jamil's unique circumstances when they determine his need for financial aid.

Now, for example—and this was emphasized I think in the film—a student from a traditional family background probably has things like blankets and pillows and alarm clocks to bring along with him. But Jamil might not have that and might need extra help—financial help—to buy those kinds of basics. The [school's financial aid] administrator can help him do that. Jamil might need to make a special effort, though, or be guided to be able to find the aid administrator so that he can get that help. And he will probably have to document his circumstances.

Finally, there is one other aspect, which is that there are certain expectations of a student financial aid recipient in terms of academic progress in order to keep receiving financial aid. But even there there is latitude that he needs to be aware of, or the people helping him need to be aware of. If his background and his circumstances at the time legitimately hamper his ability to make academic progress at the expected rate, then he needs to know that he can appeal that with the school.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, Joan.

Now we'll shift to the perspective of the juvenile justice system with Robin. Thank you.

MS. DELANY-SHABAZZ: Good morning. I'm Robin Delany-Shabazz, and I work in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [at the U.S. Department of Justice], which I'm sure most of you know works to strengthen the justice system and to prevent delinquency.

Foster care youth, like Jamil, exhibit many of the same risk factors as delinquent and troubled youth who come into the delinquency system. And so this has significant implications for the delinquency system, since without intervention far too many young people like Jamil will end up either in the juvenile justice, or later the criminal justice, system.

So there are a number of ways that we work to prevent delinquency that have application for strengthening foster care youth

and their transition into adulthood. I'm going to speak to some broadly, and then a little more specifically about some programs.

First of all, what we have found to be very important is judicial leadership, dependency court judges and delinquency court judges, in encouraging—what I think it was Sue [Badeau] talked about—the interdependence among the various agencies that work with young people. The judicial leadership has given rise to such programs as CASA [Court Appointed Special Advocate], which help to supplement the foster care workers, the social services workers, by doing fact finding for the court and give a voice to the young people.

We also work to improve the effectiveness of the dependency courts, so that they can make better decisions on behalf of young people.

The other area that I think is very important, which we can bring, is the research. Our office focuses on identifying effective and exemplary programming for delinquency prevention, but again this applies to foster care youth.

I want to share some specific strategies with you. There is also some material on the back table around some of these strategies. The first one is what's known as a treatment foster care model. And despite its name, it has been applied in the delinquency prevention field. It is an alternative to correction and group home care, and it places needy youth in families that have significant training, so that they can provide the appropriate support services to these young people.

They are closely supervised at home, in the community, and in the schools. They develop individualized programs, bringing together juvenile court probation, schools, child protective services, probation, and parole, all to participate in supporting the youth. They realize very positive outcomes.

People have talked about a significant relationship with adults. Mentoring programs are a program that our office supports and helps to replicate. We all know about Big Brothers/Big Sisters. They are juvenile mentoring programs.

And they all present clear and convincing evidence of a wide range of benefits in terms of decreasing anti-social behavior,

initiation of alcohol and other drug use, as with Jamil, improvement in school attendance and confidence, and positive family and peer relationships.

The other one I want to mention is a new pilot program that is occurring in New York City. Project Concern is a pilot that specifically addresses foster youth who enter the delinquency system, by providing them with advocates who help to bring together integrated, coordinated services around the young people to immediately help them with their placements.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you. If you're like me, this feels a little overwhelming right now. Right? Take a deep breath. We've heard from only some of the systems that touch on children and foster parents and communities. We've heard from health, education, housing, employment, training, and criminal justice. That is just a sample and not all.

From the Federal and National Levels

MS. PILLSBURY: We're now going to shift to the perspective that Kathi Way will bring us, because all of these come together at the state and local level.

Kathi [formerly Director of the Delaware Division of Family Services].

MS. WAY: Thank you. The challenge here for this group is to identify what Jamil needs to become strong and independent. I want to go back to what Sue Badeau and others have said, and that is that none of us, as adults, operate independently. We are always interdependent and relying on other people throughout our lives.

And so, if we could assist Jamil in some way, in my opinion the one thing that we could do that would be of most benefit to him is to provide stability and consistency for him as he transitions from a teenager into adulthood and throughout the rest of his life.

In the best case scenario, that may come from the state or the local government that is responsible for him, either under court jurisdiction or through the state's jurisdiction. Unfortunately, I need to tell you that that's not likely to happen.

We do not, on the line, see social workers who are parts of state and local governments establishing long, enduring relationships with children who are in foster care.

We've heard that staff turnover is high. It's very high, folks. And I don't see that it is going to change in the near future.

It does present some opportunities, however, by having the national spotlight focused on Independent Living through the current legislation. It gives states the opportunity to have conversations about Independent Living and about how there may be some other ways in their communities to provide for children, either through involvement in the private sector.

Frankly, in the state [Delaware] that I worked in for a number of years, we saw a lot of enthusiasm in a lot of companies for being involved with children. But they need to know exactly what the expectations are, and what you want them to do. Too often states and the government are at fault in asking for volunteers, and then not being able to tell people what it is that we want them to do.

We have to be clear about what people like Jamil are going to need, and about the fact that they're going to need it for a long time.

I don't think that this is rocket science or anything new. We've had Big Brothers and Big Sisters around for a long time. But we've tended to stop that when children become teenagers. And for those of us who have had the experience now of parenting our own children into adulthood, we know that their needs are just as demanding at this point as they were when they were much younger.

I want to say something else. While the Foster Care Independence Act provides the opportunity in the state for new discussion and conversation about best ways to transition children, and to help them with their educational and housing plans as they age out of the system, I think people need to understand the reality.

I don't know how many of you are parents, but when my kids were little they played soccer. And when they were real little we used to call it "herd ball." Wherever the ball was, that's where all the kids were.

(Laughter.)

They just kind of moved, and they kind of looked like those little soap sud commercials from time to time. That's what happens in state and local government. There are never enough resources, either financially or in terms of personnel, to cover all of the services start to finish.

So whenever you emphasize in public policy, wherever the money is flowing, whatever the hot topic is, is where you see the people centered. If you're going to talk about foster care and independence, you're going to have a lot of emphasis on that. But understand that the states are not sufficiently resourced to cover the entire waterfront.

I want to raise one other final issue, and this is very different. We need to think about who is in the foster care population. I read a report recently that said that 25 percent of mentally ill children are in the foster care system and are in the custody of the state because their parents can't access services for them unless they give up their custody to the state. They're tapped out in private insurance. They no longer have the resources.

The needs of those children, I would suggest, may be different from the traditional kids who are in the foster care system, like Jamil.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, Kathi.

Now we're going to be hearing from Terry [of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services], who from a national perspective maybe can share with us a little bit about what works and what doesn't work.

MS. LEWIS: Okay. I'll try. Let me start off by saying, as Karen [Spar] talked earlier, the Adoption and Save Families Act of 1997 set as its goal for children in the foster care system safety, permanence, and well being. I think if we take a look at Jamil, that system has failed Jamil. He was in the foster care system for 10 years. He had 14 placements. He was in 10 different public schools. And as somebody already said, he had three or four social workers.

I don't think that Jamil considers himself safe. I don't think he feels that he has had permanency or stability. And I suspect that

well being is not really a part of the things that he feels within his own life right now.

The problem is that Jamil has begun a very difficult developmental stage. Adolescence is the time for him to venture out, the time for him to get involved in activities, both social and economic, where he will contribute to his own lifestyle, where he will contribute to the community around him. It's time for him to practice making decisions on his own, so that when he becomes an adult he has that kind of experience. But because he has not been safe, because he has had little permanence, it's going to be very difficult for him to do this.

There is definitely hope, though. I think that there are opportunities to provide Jamil with a climate of sustained caring, a sense that he is valued, that he counts, that he has a voice in what he does in the future. And I think that one of the ways we're going to do that is through the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

We're going to start with younger children and talk about permanency of one kind or another. We're going to talk about safety, and we're going to talk about the well being of these children. We're going to work with the states to see if that can be implemented. They are going to need that as a basis for their growth and independence in later years.

For Jamil, and also for Joaquin, there is the [federal] Independent Living program. There is the Transitional Living program. I think our policies need to be looked at. The Transitional Living program is only available to young people after they are homeless. And if you noticed in the video, Joaquin had to become homeless before he could make it into a Transitional Living program.

I think with the new legislation related to Independent Living we've got a model that we can look to where kids won't have to leave the system in order to be able to get services.

I want to make one other point, which has to do with gaps in understanding. Look at all of us up here. Other panelists have been telling me things here that I didn't know. Negotiating all of these different systems is virtually impossible for me, and I'm real old and I'm real experienced.

(Laughter.)

There is no way I could have done this at 18, and I had a safe and stable situation. How can we ask somebody like Jamil or Joaquin to do that? It won't work.

I think that Kathi [Way] is right. We can't put all our eggs in the new legislation related to Independent Living. But it's certainly a start. It's new legislation. It's bipartisan. Everybody likes it. And the Administration is in support of it, and we hope it goes through.

Thank you.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you.

Now, for our last perspective we turn to Robin [Director of Youth Development at the Child Welfare League of America]. Robin is someone who has spent most of her life working with youth in transition and still does, and also has been an advocate at the national and the state level to improve things for youth and children.

MS. NIXON: I just want to add one more sentence onto Terry's words—and at the fully funded level.

(Laughter.)

And is needed to provide sufficient support for these young people.

The systems that serve Jamil, as well as the other young men in the movie, are like most of our other big systems. There are people in there who are honestly committed to helping make a better life for those young people with the resources that they have.

Like all other systems, it has its assets and its flaws. For Jamil, and obviously for Robert especially, and Joaquin, instability is clearly the number one issue that those young people face. So we need to look at stability, educational placement, family placement and connections in the community as the number one priority for all kids in foster care.

Independent Living is not a permanency plan in the traditional sense that we think of it in child welfare. In a logical and how we all look at the world sense, Independent Living is the permanency plan for everybody. Right? We all want everyone to grow up to be self-sufficient, contributing citizens who belong to

other people.

In order to ensure that that happens, the systems that are in place need to provide a continuum of preparation that begins with observing and supporting developmental readiness from infancy and continues on. It's a formal Independent Living preparation and support through the middle and adolescent years, and it goes on to provide critical early adult supports like housing, educational assistance, and people who believe in you, which is what young people themselves report that they would like to have during those ages.

Last, but certainly not least, Jamil and every other young person in foster care needs to know that their opinions matter, that their views about the system, what needs to change in the system, what has happened in the system, and how they can contribute to positive change, matter.

Their participation in the plans that affect them, and the decisions about their lives, matter. And their participation in events like this today really, really matters.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you. That was a wonderful…

(Applause.)

Open Discussion and Reactions to the Video and Panel

MS. PILLSBURY: We are now moving to another stage of the dialogue where we hope among the panelists and among you we'll spend about half an hour kind of exploring some of the issues, really probing your perspective as a representative of a part of the system, as someone who is sincerely interested in foster youth. What might people do?

So we're going to open it up to that dialogue. And after we hear from Senator Rockefeller, then the dialogue will shift to small group discussions at your tables. Every one of the panelists also has a colored dot indicating which small group discussion they will join. For example, Lisa will join the green group.

At your tables you will have an opportunity to use the collective wisdom and understanding that's in this room today to come up with some powerful ideas about what can be done to improve

things for foster youth and the transition out of care.

Who on the panel has just got a comment? An issue burning in their pocket? I'll just give you a sequence. Robin and then Sue.

MS. DELANY-SHABAZZ: We have constructed an interesting mosaic here, but there is one piece that I would like to add to the mosaic. It is a fact that, in both the child welfare and the delinquency system, youth of color and youth of Hispanic origin are over represented. So there is an issue around cultural competence in the agencies that serve them, as well as cultural competency for the profession. I just want to add that to the mosaic to talk about.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you.

Sue?

MS. BADEAU: Two things that struck me as everyone else on the panel were talking. One was the number of people that raised the issue of Jamil's relationship with his mother. As I think in terms of thinking through policy and practice, we need to understand that termination of [parental] rights is not the same as termination of relationships.

We need to find ways to make it possible for a child like Jamil to get the permanence he needs, which doesn't necessarily mean terminating that relationship with the mother, even if she is not going to be the one that can provide the permanent, stable home for him.

And the other thought that struck me (and that Terry mentioned as well) was that we are all hearing things [during this seminar] that we didn't even know before ourselves. One of the key missing ingredients is cross training. As we look at implementing legislation, implementing policy, and, again, at the practice level, we need to improve learning from one another and find ways to provide the funding and the actual mechanisms to make that cross-training happen.

How many caseworkers knew the kind of things [about job training and student financial aid] that Haskel [Lowery] or Joan [Berkes] were talking about? I know that my kids' caseworkers didn't know any of the financial aid stuff.

(Laughter.)

So I think in terms of the courts, you know, there's a court bill

out there right now that would provide cross training for people in the court system. But I think that's really one of the missing pieces is just for this kind of dialogue [across systems and levels of government] to happen at every level.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you. Powerful issues.

Terry?

MS. LEWIS: One of the things that we did as a result of the Adoption and Safe Families Act is develop a report on the relationship between child abuse, neglect, and substance abuse. We looked at the relationship between child welfare and substance abuse.

One of the things that we discovered was that the child welfare people in the field, at the federal level, and probably at the state level, and the substance abuse treatment people at all of those levels had tremendous difficulty communicating. They spoke completely different languages. They dealt from different models. As a result, it was very hard to get treatment for either young kids or mothers whose children were in the child welfare system.

We spent a lot of time trying to work that out and come up with something that would make sense to everybody, that would help steer us in the right direction at all different levels. I suspect if we got more involved with all of these different groups that have been talking at the seminar today, we'd have the same problems. That is something that has got to be worked out.

It's probably more important that it get worked out at the local level than it get worked out here. But getting it worked out here would help, too.

MS. PILLSBURY: Frank?

MR. SHAVLIK: One of the things that I was struck with from my history of working with families that are in some kind of crisis is that there are not very many Tesses [Jamil's foster mother] around, as we saw in the film. There are not many Tesses or Rodgers [Tess' helper].

We've got to find ways to entice people. With more families needing to have two incomes, we've got to find a way to enable those families to exist financially and move into being foster parents.

Then we have to give them special training so they can deal with the special needs these kids have and understand those needs—whether it's some kind of drug abuse prevention strategy, whether it's knowing how to access the systems that exist, having all of the information that all of these panelists have. Somehow we've got to figure out a way to do that.

MS. PILLSBURY: I really appreciate the candor and openness of the panel. They are bringing out powerful themes, issues of diversity and cultural competence, the need to maintain relationships over time, and the interactions with profound societal problems like substance abuse, and what can be done to support foster parents.

Are there other issues that the panel would like to raise before we go to the audience and hear some of their questions or observations?

Robin?

MS. NIXON: I just wanted to add to that. As you heard, a number of the comments referred to services that became available to young people leaving care after they are already in trouble in the delinquency system or in desperate need and homeless. We have to at every step along the way be looking at ways to promote their development earlier on.

And by "promote their development" I don't mean meet their special education needs or meet their psychiatric needs or meet their health needs, though those are important as well. I mean, providing the supports and opportunities that allow them to be contributing community members, that allow them to feel like they belong to communities and that they have things to offer, and that who they are is of value to their family and to their school and to their community, because that's the only way we're going to help them become whole human beings as adults.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you.

Bob, would you introduce yourself and make your comment or question? Thanks. Bob Reeg?

MS. REEG: I am Bob Reeg, National Coalition for the Homeless. I have two comments. One relates to something Sue [Badeau] had mentioned about the difficult circumstance that the

young woman who was 21 and discharged [from foster care] into homelessness. An area where we're really focusing on is discharge planning in the mainstream system, and really assuring that each system takes some responsibility for not moving someone along to the next stage unless we know that the next stage is there for them.

We can talk about: "Well, I don't get funding to do that" or whatever. But from a consumer perspective it makes no sense to kick people into the next phase unless the next phase is ready. And the phase that wants to move someone along has as much responsibility to make sure that that next system is in place as the receiving.

The second point is I thought the information you all provided on this side about what other services are available, that's really helpful.

But we didn't talk much about capacity. Yes, we have runaway and homeless youth programs, but how many slots are there for runaway and homeless youth? Yes, we have a mental health system. How long is the waiting list for treatment?

So we can talk about all of the wonderful institutions and systems that have been established in this country, but until we invest resources that are adequate for meeting the needs we're not going to really fix it. Thanks.

MS. PILLSBURY: Joy, if you could just introduce yourself…

MS. WARREN: I'm Joy Warren with the Office of the First Lady of the White House. I am a former foster youth. I am also sitting with another former foster youth here.

One of the enormous challenges that I think that we all face is mental health care. I'm not just talking about psychiatric care, more the emotional health that these children have. If you look at Jamil, you look at the pain and the fear as we said. I think he is—when he is getting ready to transition to adulthood, there are going to be so many issues inside of him he is probably not even aware of—feeling abandoned by his mother, wondering why she was taking drugs instead of taking care of him. And you can see that all in his face.

I worked with a large organization in California made up of foster youth, and even the most high achieving ones, even the very

bright ones and the ones who did very well in school, who went on to college (although many of them dropped out) lack self-confidence. They have some real issues that they have not dealt with, and I think that's what you need to focus on.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much, Joy.

MS. WARREN: Thank you.

MS. PILLSBURY: Other observations? Yes, over here. And if you'll just introduce yourself.

MR. USDAN: Sure. This is a sensitive mike? I'm a sensitive Mike also.

(Laughter.)

Mike Usdan. I would like to elicit from this panel the basis of your collective experience and wisdom, your reactions to the role of public schools in this whole issue, because obviously public schools have a social penetration that no other institution has. All of these kids are going to spend six or eight hours a day in the schools.

And recognizing the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of generalizing about the 14,000 very diverse school systems in the United States, I wondered if you'd care to just comment in terms of relationships with schools. Do any of these programs provide incentives so that somehow the disconnect, which is so prevalent between schools and the other human and social service delivery systems, can be bridged?

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you.

Sue?

MS. BADEAU: Schools are probably the single area where the concept I was talking about—cross training—is most crucial and least available currently. Schools that I've had experience with, both personally and through other work that I've done, seem the least invested in these kids because they view them as "temporary." They're just going to be in my school maybe a week, maybe a month, maybe a whole school year at the most. But I don't really have to worry about them because they are going to move on.

I find that there's a lack of knowledge on the part of the practitioners in the schools about the issues and the needs, like Joy

[Warren] said, from the emotional needs to the educational needs of the kids, and also a lack of a sense of investment [by schools]. Schools don't view [young people in foster care] even as part of the community that they are responsible for serving.

Often kids are placed in foster homes in a different town than the town that their family was from, so that they are even viewed as outsiders, kind of coming in and snatching away some of the community resources. So I think just that whole concept of cross training and really helping the school officials understand the needs of these kids and how they can make investments in them is critical. I also think [educators] underutilize special education services because [these students] are not in the school often long enough to really get a full evaluation and then an IEP [Individualized Education Plan] and services that the law requires. And it starts all over again when they move, instead of picking up from where it was at the last school. So I think the schools are a crucial piece that are really under-recognized.

MS. PILLSBURY: We're going to go over here to Pam.

MS. LITTLEWOOD: Just having dealt with a school system, one thing that I found being in child welfare is the school system assumes that all of the other systems are going to solve the problem. That school staff are going to call you up and say, "Johnny has been acting out and do something about it." It's not their responsibility.

And that's one of the most difficult areas that we have in working with schools is getting them to understand that they are a partner in this. Frequently, you'll find they're not sitting at the table with you. Even when you're talking about planning, there are often few school people at the table. Recently in Montgomery County [Maryland] we have worked very hard in developing a comprehensive strategy to prevent delinquency, and child welfare played a key part in that. But I think that in many, many meetings there weren't very many people there from the school system, yet they had the biggest chunk of the day and the biggest piece of the population. So it is a struggle.

Individually, you can meet people [in a school system], but you constantly have to remind them that they own a piece of the

problem themselves.

MS. PILLSBURY: A number of people want to comment on this and we'll go there. But we thought it might be particularly helpful if Susan Hattan or Krisann Pearce has an observation, since there is that word "education" in your…

(Laughter.)

MS. HATTAN: I think—and Pam's [Littlewood] comments were interesting because educators we hear from will put forward the exact opposite view—that, in fact, they cannot effectively deliver education because they are spending 90 percent of their time dealing with issues unrelated to education and a great variety of needs outside the home.

So it's really interesting. You see the different perspectives. Also, the infinite variety in the schools around the country is clearly an issue. Obviously, there are a lot when you look at school nurse offices, and in some instances their health facilities. Certainly, schools have had a big expansion in non-education services than they used to in the past.

On the other hand, I suspect they would not necessarily see that as their primary mission. It does become difficult to figure out. Although it's a large chunk of the day, you also have a move for high [educational and achievement] standards for all students and a greater emphasis, actually, in spending much more classroom time on direct instruction, so it becomes a huge juggling act in those situations.

MS. PILLSBURY: Krisann?

MS. PEARCE: I would just comment that I think probably everyone is right. You know, some schools are doing it great, some schools just don't have the resources, the commitment from the teachers, whatever it may be. But I think as far as what's in the law, if we can make sure that it's implemented correctly, good things will happen.

There is an emphasis right from, you know, the pre-K programs for the young kids all the way through for parents to be involved. For instance, in the IEP [Individualized Educational Plan] process the parent (or whoever stands in place of a parent) is a member of that team who is to be part of these meetings, informed

of all of the information, and helping to make the decision of the best placement for the child.

MS. PILLSBURY: Great.

Robin, did you want to go? And I think then to the audience. Thank you.

MS. NIXON: I think that the schools are evolving like the rest of us. And that if we look at movements like [public] charter schools and community schools and full-service schools, there are communities where schools have been brought to the table with other youth services and community services and mental health services and made to be part of a team that addresses a community's needs together.

MS. PILLSBURY: Okay. Here and then Frank. If you'll just introduce yourself.

MS. PRYOR: Barbara Pryor with Senator Rockefeller. It seems everybody on the panel talked about the importance of stability, and then we get to schools. L.A. is trying a new thing in their communities. I think it's funded by a Casey grant, with the idea that you do everything you can to keep the kid in the same school. It seems so simple. But I don't think it's a big priority, you know, community-wide or nationwide.

If you're trying to keep some form of stability, I think that's a thing where there ought to be a policy solution because the tricky thing is that there are so many things we really can't legislate and can't do policy, but that's a piece we ought to be able to work on. But I'm not sure how we do that or how we incentivize that at the policy level—and it's tricky because recruiting foster families is really hard.

MS. PILLSBURY: Yes. And that initiative in Los Angeles is called Family to Family. It's the idea of keeping that stability for the child and the family.

Frank?

MR. SHAVLIK: Yes. Coming from Colorado, it's hard to say the word "kids" and not think about Columbine. We get bombarded with something about Columbine in our papers every day, and so it's on my mind. One of the things that is happening there is that schools are trying to figure out whether it's a responsibility

or an opportunity to help kids feel like they fit, both in school and with their families. I don't know exactly how this is going to spin out, but it is certainly something that is going to have an impact on a whole lot of kids.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, Frank.

Kathi?

MS. WAY: Yes. A couple of people have alluded to this fact, but I just want to be clear about this. At the line level, I think we need to understand that the schools have not traditionally been enthusiastic participants.

(Laughter.)

It has been difficult. There are some strategies where individual child welfare agencies have been able to establish good relationships with teachers. And I think we need to continue to work on cross-training and strengthening those kinds of relationships.

But I also think we need to think about the role of the foster parent or the agency in advocating for the needs for children. They may not be special ed kids, but they may have moved around a lot, they may have some unique educational needs or some unique abilities that could be enhanced by the school that they arrive at because of their displacement.

And, certainly, I think we need to do what we can to keep kids in a consistent place, or at least in the same school system, if not in the same school building.

But I think that there is an awful lot of work that needs to be done with regard to connecting schools, the teachers that are in the classroom, and the social workers. I often felt when I was with the child welfare agency in Delaware that there was probably no one other than the foster parent or parent who knows more about that child than the teacher who is with that child in the classroom.

Social workers are often not using this information or establishing the kinds of relationships that they need to establish on a one-to-one basis with the actual teacher to form a good partnership and to make best use of all of the information that's out there.

So, we can talk about cross-training and big things, but it all often comes down to person-to-person—social worker, teacher, and child. And somebody needs to work that way.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you.

We'll go here in the audience, if you'll introduce yourself.

MS. HARRAK: My name is Terry Harrak. I'm a former foster youth, and I've been interning with Casey [the Annie E. Casey Foundation]. I have a thousand things to say, but I'm used to Jolie's facilitating, so I'm really trying to make it really fast.

(Laughter.)

With the school system, in my senior year of high school I was homeless. I went through my senior year of high school being homeless and everybody knew about it. I went to two different types of high schools. I went to a private Christian school, and then I went to public school.

It seemed like all of the teachers and workers just didn't know what to do with me. They were kind of like, they didn't want to get involved because they were scared. They didn't know how to react to it.

I think if the school had been more involved, and they knew what kind of programs were out there, you know, they could have told me and they could have helped me.

There was just—I was lucky because I had great teachers who would kind of like—they'd say, "Come over here," you know, and kind of try to help me. But the school itself just kind of let me slip through, and I just went bouncing around. So I wish schools were more involved.

And then just to go back to kind of what Barbara was saying about juvenile delinquency, I think that kids in foster care can so easily go—fall into that category, and I'm just lucky that I could run fast enough and never got caught doing things that I did.

(Laughter.)

I could have easily been in that category [juvenile delinquency], and I would like to see the school system develop some type of program for that. Like I got suspended repeatedly, repeatedly, and repeatedly, and sometimes I would do things just for somebody to come and help me, you know, just so I could get some type of help. And I never did get help.

I'd go to school, five-day suspension, come back, five-day suspension. They totally like let me slip through the cracks, and

somehow I made it through, but there are other kids that don't.

And I think the most important thing that I can say right now is with this big push on independence I think everybody is getting the whole idea so wrong. Independence is something that you learn from just by… As soon as you're born, independence starts, you know? From the part where you're getting, you know, potty-trained and you learn how to tie your shoe: those are independence skills I'm taking with me today and hopefully for a long time.

(Laughter.)

People think that independence is something that you push in foster care at the age of 16. At 16, I had to take this big packet of tests to see if I was ready for independence. I failed that test because I was so scared. I knew all of the questions. You know, do you leave the iron on all day? And I was like, yes, all day long, you know?

(Laughter.)

And maybe independence is realizing that you're always going to be dependent on other people. Maybe that's what independence is, not this whole idea of where you have to do everything alone, and realizing that you can use other people and there are other people out there.

So maybe a dependent person is someone that thinks that they are independent, and they don't need anybody else. So if systems would realize that aspect, then kids wouldn't be so scared of independence and they'd realize that it doesn't mean you're all alone. There are other things that you can access.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you, Terry. That was wonderful. Thanks.

Other responses or comments? Yes? We'll go to Terry. Everyone in the group who would like to speak, I just want to see your hands. After Terry, we'll go here, then all the way in the back, and then one forward.

Go, Terry.

MS. LEWIS: I was actually done. I was thinking maybe a better term might be "interdependence," we have to gain our interdependence.

MS. PILLSBURY: That would be great.

So we're going over here. Introduce yourself, please. And the sensitive mike will come towards you.

(Laughter.)

MS. JAMES: I'm Donna Walker James from the American Youth Policy Forum. And, in terms of cross-training, I just wanted to say that we have been collecting information on effective practices for all different types of youth from a variety of fields, both things that are happening in schools, out of schools, in the juvenile justice system, and in a variety of after-school programs.

The overwhelming things that we're finding from the publications we have on these different types of programs are many of the things we've been talking about. The things that youth need most are caring, knowledgeable, well-trained adults who stay with them for the longest period of time possible; long-term services, as well as long-term follow-up; a holistic approach bringing to bear all the different practices possible for each youth based on individual needs assessment; and an increasing use from all the different systems of involving parents very closely, parents and guardians, and involving the community fully.

So there are, at least that we've looked at, 95 very good research-proven examples of systems across the board who are using all of these strategies. And another strategy that keeps coming up which was very strong is using youth as resources and involving them in leadership roles, decision making, and giving back to the community, because so many of you have said how important it is for them to feel like they fit, can give back and have a role.

MS. PILLSBURY: Terrific. Thank you.

I'm going to go way in the back, and then here, and then there. Yes? Introduce yourself.

MS. EPSTEIN: My name is Heitzi Epstein. I direct the Child Welfare Project at the National Association of Child Advocates. One of the things that I've heard a lot here is the importance of coordinating all of the various resources that already exist.

It seems to me that we have a model for something like that, coordination as well as for having some kind of consistent adult in a child's life and that is in the foster care system in the CASA [Court Appointed Special Advocate] model. That model, quickly,

is that a volunteer from the community is trained in a variety of resources that a foster child is entitled to, or foster parents as well, and that they have a responsibility for one child or one sibling group to visit with that child on a consistent basis every week and to be sure that everyone else in the system is in the loop and doing their job.

I guess what I'm hearing from the child advocacy community in the states is that where there is a CASA [Court Appointed Special Advocate], oftentimes one can bridge the transition between social workers and so on. It seems to me if we can institute something similar to that where you have volunteers from the community who are trained in all the different resources that are available, we stand a better chance of coordinating effort and information sharing as well as having that individual in the child's life consistently.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much.

We're going to go here and then there.

MS. BURNS: I am Judy Burns with the Casey Family Program. I have a suggestion, particularly listening to the two young women up front who are former foster youth: that we not lose sight of that resource—former foster youth—to mentor the younger kids.

And my thought was, you know, Jamil needs help with reading. Maybe there is a former foster child or an older foster child in the area who could help him.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much.

Yes?

MS. REICH: Hi. I'm Kathy Reich from the Social Policy Action Network. Actually, building on the previous comment, if you look at a population that has some things in common with kids who are aging out of foster care—the population I'm thinking of is low income, non-custodial fathers, unwed fathers who have a lot of the same issues with anger, involved with the criminal justice system in many cases, lack of attachment to the community and social institutions…

One intervention that is working for a lot of these men is peer support groups that are facilitated by a professional, but teaching these men that they can rely on each other, and, in fact, building a

network where none exists. And I'm wondering whether foster kids might find the same thing helpful. It seems to me that nobody would understand a foster kid like a foster kid.

The second idea is around this issue of social workers and retention. I know that a number of states are experimenting with teacher retention programs, things like debt forgiveness or scholarships for people who commit to a certain number of years in the field, senior or master teacher programs that reward people who have a proven track record in the field. I'm wondering whether the same kind of programs could be employed to great effects for social workers.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you.

Joy has been nominated to speak by Robin.

(Laughter.)

MS. WARREN: Thank you. I was just going to talk about this organization called the California Youth Connection. It's made up of all kinds of former foster youth from the ages of 14 to 24, and they advocate to improve foster care in the State of California. They do social worker training, cross-training. There are peer support groups for each other.

They speak to administrators, directors of child welfare agencies, and they really try to get their constructive input and put it into policymaking, decisionmaking, and also legislative thinking.

MS. PILLSBURY: Great. Thank you.

Maybe we have time for one or two more comments. Way in the back.

MS. PIZZIGATI: I'm Karabelle Pizzigati. I'm with the Child Welfare League of America and have a couple of observations. I've had the privilege of participating in a number of these conversations. And I was really struck this morning with how we are really talking about interdependence rather than independence. I think we need to be cognizant of the language that we use with respect to the discussion of helping and supporting young people make the transition.

There was a great deal of conversation, too, this morning about involving various sectors who have to be involved because this is about interdependence rather than dependence and inde-

pendence. In that regard, we are talking about those in the social services community, the juvenile justice community, the education community, the health care community and so on and so on.

As we talked about education it struck me that we have some of our colleagues who could speak to a national perspective around education, but we don't really have local or state people who are so very important. In fact, education happens like everything else happens with respect to children and families—in the communities where they live.

I would hope that in future conversations that we have on this subject, and I am pleased that we will have them, that we include those in the front-line—the teachers in the schools, the social workers in the schools. Obviously, this is a sector of this concern that we really haven't explored as fully as we might.

MS. PILLSBURY: Thank you very much.

So you've heard some powerful themes. You've heard themes about needing to make connection, needing to create stability, the concept that this idea of interdependence and independence has to start very early, that there are enormous gaps as you think about what the foster youth are trying to manage and what their foster parents are trying to deal with.

Many people have mentioned things that are working and people right now are dismayed about things that are not working. Where we're going now in this dialogue is the panelists will join their tables, and they know which one because of the "dot" colors [on their nametags].

As they join these tables, we're going to be queuing up a tape, so that we can hear from Senator Rockefeller for about 10 minutes. And after that will come what last year was the most exciting part of the day, when each table will have about 20 minutes to think of at least one important change that could be made in the system that could actually make things better for foster youth.

And we will challenge you, as you think of that thing, to talk about what you might do, because it's always easier to say what someone else might do. So we're offering that to you as a key challenge in your 20-minute conversation.

So, panelists, one final round of applause for your wonder-

ful…

(Applause.)

And now, if you'll find your table, and we'll get the tape ready.

MS. DUNKLE: Again, I want to thank our wonderful panel for all of their insights and comments, and Jolie for her skillful facilitation of a group that probably needed the Colosseum to be adequately housed.

THE FEDERAL ROLE IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE

MS. DUNKLE: We're now going to hear a tape from Senator Rockefeller, who has been a long-standing advocate on the issue of foster care, and is a co-sponsor of the Senate bill on this issue. The Senator had planned to be with us in person today. Unfortunately, he was called away and has to be in West Virginia on an important issue. However, we really appreciate the fact that he took the time to videotape comments.

We think that his perspective on the congressional mood, the federal mood, some of the issues around foster care and child welfare issues will help enrich the discussion in the small group session.

So I'd like to ask the people in the back to join their tables, and we will begin the tape.

Thank you.

(Whereupon, a videotaped presentation from Senator Rockefeller was shown. The text follows.)

SENATOR ROCKEFELLER: Thanks so very much for inviting me to participate in this important discussion about our favorite subject, which is foster care and child welfare issues.

Obviously, I had hoped very much to be with you today. Obviously, I am not with you today. I am on whatever we call this. But there is a major development in my state where I have to be, and that is where I have to be. And, therefore, I'm taking advantage of this thing called technology to be in two places at the same time, and I hope very much that you'll understand, and I believe that you will.

Like you, I believe that foster care is a major issue for our nation. Tragically, this issue does not command the time or the attention that the 500,000 children in foster care, in fact, deserve. As many of you know, I have been involved in child welfare issues for a very long time.

And as Chairman of the National Commission on Children in the late 1980s, which went on for about four years, I had a unique opportunity to take a very close look at children and family policy,

including foster care.

During that time—I remember it very well—I spent a day at a Los Angeles juvenile court. And I had the head judge who was sitting next to me in one of the benches whispering in my ear as we watched how foster care cases were decided in literally a few minutes.

I think they averaged something like four or five minutes per case, usually without any basic information, often without the parent there because of a mix-up on timing, no real help to the child, no real reason to make the right decision about the future of the child, and their family.

It was a terrible, terrible situation to see, and the judge was ashamed of it, as all of us on the Commission were.

Because of that experience, and a lot of subsequent work, I am very deeply committed to changing and to improving how we do all of this—in other words, the system. The children in our foster care system deserve the very best support that we can provide to them, and we are clearly not doing that. Some progress has been made in recent years to draw attention to the needs of abused and neglected children.

In 1993, working with Senator Bond (R-MO) and with the Clinton administration, we did expand investment and prevention services with the five-year Family Preservation and Support Act. In 1997, we passed the Adoption and Save Families Act, which was a major overhaul of child welfare policy and which put children first, so to speak, in terms of safety and health and the rest of it.

Now, this law makes the children's health and safety paramount, and requires reasonable efforts to be made towards adoption if that is in the best interest of the child.

At the time of the adoption law signing, I said that we had a good foundation and strong bipartisan support. But I also was very clear that we needed to build on that foundation to fill in what are very large gaps and to provide the support to make the tight timeframes for permanency work.

For example, if we expect a judge to decide whether or not to terminate parental rights within 22 months, that judge needs good

information, and those parents should have access to support services. We need to invest in the courts, so that they and the state agencies can work together for the safety and health of the child.

That is why Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH) and I are promoting a special bill on the court system. But we also need to address other big issues in the child welfare population. The issue of parental substance abuse is crucial, and the adoption law required a detailed study that includes recommendations to improve federal policy in that area.

We need to follow through on these ideas. With grandparents and relatives caring for about four million children today, we also need to discuss the growing issue of kinship care. But today's seminar is specifically about the 20,000 teens who "age" out of foster care and the need to do much more to ease their transition into adulthood. That is what you're discussing.

I want you to know that I am working with Senator John Chafee (R-RI) and a bipartisan Senate coalition on the Foster Care Independence Act. Our bill would give states the financial incentive to expand support services and housing to foster care teens from age 18 to 21 years old.

We also believe it's critical for young people up to 21 years old to have health care coverage. Therefore, we have a provision that ensures that health care for every teen is a condition of new funding for Independent Living. States can opt out, but we hope they will make this modest investment of health care for teens.

Now, we just introduced our bill, and we have a very busy and kind of an uncoordinated Senate going on, and we're

(Laughter.)

…working to get a hearing on this in the Senate Finance Committee as the next step. Like you, I am very committed to long-term work on child welfare. Some say that the easiest answer for child welfare is funding through a block grant approach. I've just never agreed with that, whether it was the CHIPs [Child Health Insurance Program] program or anything else.

I've always felt that we could do things better from the federal level, but then governors disagree with that, Republicans disagree with that, and, generally speaking, I've lost that battle. So you

work with what you can.

(Laughter.)

During the welfare reform debates, I opposed making foster care a block grant, and I still think I'm right. But I don't think we should ever impose a limit to help an abused or neglected child. These children are victims, and they deserve our committed and sustained support.

While I don't support block grants, once again, I know that we need further reform of child welfare and the financing of our present system. I'm not unrealistic about that. Some suggest that we should move to performance-based funding or outcome measures. This sounds good, but forging a consensus on outcomes is, in a Senate much as we live in today, absolutely impossible.

For example, an increase in the number of reports on neglect is not necessarily a bad outcome. It might mean that we are doing a better job in catching maltreatment earlier before it becomes abuse. My hope is that seminars like the one that you're having today, or that you're in the middle of, wherever I fit into this program…

(Laughter.)

…will help get advocates to discuss options for helping abused and neglected children. We need to work together to find the solutions and to build consensus on ways to help our children.

Thank you very, very much for your commitment to this issue. It's unique, it's sustained, and it's powerful. And thank you for inviting me to join you today.

MS. DUNKLE: And thank you, Senator Rockefeller.

(Applause followed by laughter.)

A special thanks for Senator Rockefeller's commitment and insights and candor and humor, even about the United States Senate and even about these issues that are so important and often don't want to make one laugh.

What we're going to do now is move into small working groups. You all have a colored dot on your name badge. We put the groups together to represent different perspectives, because part of the idea here is to bring together diverse people and perspectives and have a kind of cross training for different perspectives and systems.

Your task is to figure out what you can do to make the systems work more effectively for Jamil and other young people like him in foster care. You do have different perspectives. We don't expect you to reach consensus on your ideas. But what we would like to ask you to do is come up with ideas that are as specific as you can, and always go back to a basic question: Will the idea, in reality, when put into practice, really work and improve Jamil's transition to adulthood?

Don't worry about whether an idea is politically correct. Don't worry about people agreeing. Worry about what one or two things might make a tangible difference in the life of Jamil and other young people who will soon age out of the foster care system.

You have some white worksheets in the center of your table. They are really simple. It says, "What one thing would you change to make the systems work more effectively for Jamil and other children in foster care as they move from adolescence to adulthood? And why?"

The question is simple. The answers may not be quite so simple. But be as specific as you can, focus on the important issues as you and your group see them. It might be education. It might be health. It might be housing. It might be mental health. It might be substance abuse. It might be training. It might be Independent Living and child welfare. It might be higher education. It might be how all of those connect. Focus on what you think is the most important.

Begin by introducing yourself, and follow the fine example of our panelists of being incredibly brief.

(Laughter.)

Each group will have 20 minutes to come up with some ideas. Be sure to identify one person at your table who will, at the end of the session, have the important and exciting job of reporting back to the whole group on your table's answer to the question on the white work sheet: "What one or two changes would you make for Jamil and other children to make their lives better?"

We will run until about 11:30 a.m. in the small groups. Then we will report out table by table, two minutes each, and at the very

end of the seminar give our panelists one last chance for a final sound byte.

After that, the important work starts, where you can take the ideas, the information, the insights, and the power from this group and go back to your offices and your workplace to try to figure out how to implement all of that.

We'll reconvene at about 11:30.

(Whereupon, the proceedings in the foregoing matter went off the record at 11:00 a.m. and went back on the record at 11:30 a.m.)

REPORTING OUT FROM THE SMALL GROUPS

MS. DUNKLE: As the groups conclude, I'd like for the person who is going to report out to come to the front so that we can use these microphones to report out. We're also making a transcription of this seminar, and if anyone wants a copy, we'll be glad to share it with you.

I think we now have all six groups represented up here. I had the opportunity to listen in for at least a few minutes on all of the groups, and I was struck by the richness of the conversation, the passion of the people around the table, and the strong opinions people had about what should or should not be done. I was also struck by the wide range of opinions.

And that's why you're here today—to share those different opinions and to develop a dialogue, so that we can start a process that will hopefully continue in other venues and identify ways to better make the connections and address the issues that affect young people in foster care.

First, a couple of housekeeping comments before we have the reports from the groups. We have copies of the *Searching for Family* video you saw in the back of the room on my right. If you would like a copy and have use for it, please help yourself.

Also, in the back of the right side of your packet there is an evaluation sheet. If you can, help us by filling it out and giving us some feedback to help us with future efforts in the area of foster care, and also other activities of the Policy Exchange.

What we have now is the six groups represented up here. We've asked each group to give specific, pithy, candid, and detailed comments in two minutes…

(Laughter.)

…to answer the question, "What one thing would you change to make the systems work more effectively for Jamil and other children in foster care as they move from adolescence to adulthood?" I have great faith that this group is going to follow the wonderful model of our panel by doing all of those impossible things that I just suggested a second ago.

Who would like to start? Bob? And if you could, just start by

saying who you are and which group you represented.

MR. REEG: Okay. I'm Bob Reeg with the National Coalition for the Homeless and represent the Orange Group. And I…

(Laughter.)

…would say that if there really was one thing that we would change we probably could just leave in about two minutes. But this was a very unrealistic task.

(Laughter.)

And I'm also sitting [in the chair] where the congressional staff [on the panel] were sitting, so maybe my words will have some extra impact or something. We consolidated all of our many themes into a global request: specifically, that we expand capacity across the system and use a planning mechanism with youth and family participation to assure their coordination and most effective implementation.

So we really said, since there are many silos involved, we need to increase the resources in them, develop a way to link them together, and ensure that the people most affected by the systems are involved in the decisionmaking.

MS. DUNKLE: And can you give one or two sentences about what that would look like specifically for Jamil?

MR. REEG: Oh, gosh.

(Laughter.)

I think we were talking about both at an individual level and at a system level. So in terms of the system, it would be the community Jamil lives in having a planning process to identify where there are gaps in resources and services for him and others like him, and figuring out where the gaps were, and then how to obtain resources from various places to make that happen.

At an individual level [for Jamil personally], one thing we talked about was a CASA-type [Court Appointed Special Advocate] model where there would be a person who had some special strengths in networking across systems to assure he could get in wherever he needed to be.

MS. DUNKLE: Good. That modeled a good example of a general recommendation and then some specifics that give life and energy to the recommendation.

Who would like to go next?

MS. BURNS: I'm Judith Burns from the Casey Family Program in Austin, Texas, and I am representing the Red Group.

(Laughter.)

We didn't boil it down to one. I think we came out with maybe three and they're sort of intertwined. The most concern that we had was around the area of early planning. In Jamil's case, you know, why are we waiting until he's in ninth grade? We should be looking at planning for Independent Living from the day that these kids enter the system.

We had a young woman in our group who is a former foster child, and her comment, which I thought was quite pithy, was the system doesn't provide emotional support for youth to move from home to home in the early years. So why does the system expect an easy transition *out of foster care*? And I think that's really an important point.

Within that, we wanted to see a reduction in moves [from one foster care home to another], and we all know how easy that is to say and how hard it is to do. But it's pretty obvious to everybody that having many moves is a really debilitating factor in these young people's lives.

A second area was empowerment. It seemed so important that youth have someone in their lives, and often that will not be one stable family or one stable social worker. And so if we can identify other people to be that person and get some motivated former foster youth, which is my bandwagon, or CASA [Court Appointed Special Advocate], those models really need to be looked at as many filling some of the gaps of someone important—an anchor so to speak.

A third thing that we talked about is the opportunity for second chances. There are lots of good programs out there right now. I know that in Texas a youth who is in the state [foster care] system and graduates from high school can go to college with free tuition. However, a lot of kids aren't around at 18. They left [foster care] at 17 or, even if they are 18, they're not necessarily wanting to do what we want them to do or what the state provides for them to do.

But by the time they're 20, maybe they are ready. And so we would like the opportunity for them to be able to come back and avail themselves of these services when they're ready, not just when the calendar says that they're old enough.

MS. DUNKLE: Good.

MS. BURNS: Let's see, that was it. And then we were commenting on teaching hard skills. You know, every state has its program—we call it "the PAL program" in Texas—Preparation for Adult Living. And it's really good to teach how to write a check and all of that, but sometimes you're ready to learn that at 16. Sometimes you're not ready to learn it until you actually get a checking account.

And so we discussed the idea that the teaching of the hard skills should not be a one-shot deal, but something that is ongoing and starts in the early years and keeps on.

MS. DUNKLE: Good.

MS. BADEAU: I'm Sue Badeau, and my group was the Yellow Group. And I decided to go next before everyone else said everything that we wanted to say…

(Laughter.)

…because I think we're all hitting on a lot of the same themes. For example, that whole second chance idea… We didn't use that phrase, but the idea of being able to come back if you don't take up the opportunity for something immediately when you're 17 or 18, as maybe many of us didn't either. To have the opportunity to come back was one of the ones that we talked about.

We had four main points that sort of all related to the final one that I'm going to say. The first is that there really is no magic age when anyone is ready to be independent, interdependent, whatever we want to call it. And so we need to have a way of providing what you might term in a program way as "after-care" or some kind of seamless continuity from one phase of life to the next without thinking that there is some magic about a particular birthday.

The second is that, therefore, the only resource that's really going to continuously be there in our lives is family, and the more we can connect kids to permanent families at the earlier stages the better chance of success we have.

The third is lack of information and coordination that even the permanent families have to really be able to be successful— never mind the foster families, never mind the kids when they become independent.

So the whole concept of providing cross-training—and all of those pieces fit together, and the primary recommendation from our group, which was the idea of looking at the community networks that already exist in particular communities and then building capacity and really making them feel strong enough and confident enough to provide for the needs of the people from their community.

MS. DUNKLE: Good.

Barbara?

MS. PRYOR: Barbara Pryor, and I represent the Green Group. We had kind of a wide-ranging discussion, but there were two key themes in it. One was kind of communities and collaboration. And I think the way we discussed tells you the problem of collaboration, because we want to force it.

(Laughter.)

And then we realized that that wasn't a real great way to get collaboration and so we spent a lot of time talking about how you push collaboration, you get them to buy into it, and you force it.

(Laughter.)

But I think that was one of the big things, because you have to get the collaboration to reach all of the people. I know we were supposed to come up with a new idea, but we talked about the idea of investing in things that are out there and are working—Big Brothers and Sisters, foster grandparents, CASA's [Court Appointed Special Advocates], tapping into former foster care youth, and trying to figure out ways to kind of do more with what we have confidence in and building on that.

MS. DUNKLE: Good.

MR. PATRONG: Hi. My name is Patrick Patrong, and by the democratic process of "you do it" I represent the Black Group.

(Laughter.)

One of the things we talked about was developing more of a comprehensive system based on building access as opposed to

merely focusing on fixing what's wrong. The services we provide to young adults have more or less been in a "let's fix what's wrong" mode prior to looking at how we build on what's right. We're looking at including public/private sector with strong community involvement.

Another loop or gap we fall into is that we sort of treat a young person as a pie on Thanksgiving Day where everyone takes that part of the pie that they like. Education takes their piece, health takes their piece, maybe HUD takes their piece, so there's an unspecified piece that is uncertain.

Well, regardless if you don't take the entire pie, education is really not involved. What good is a 4.0 GPA, perfect attendance, without social skills? What good are social skills without mental health? What good is mental health without physical health?

Well, you must no longer look at what part of youth is being served, but how are we serving the entire youth? In that area, we talked a little bit about the involvement of a caring adult in a young person's life.

We can all look back on an old person's life and see that at some point in time, when you were at the weakest point, that there was a caring adult that you would be able to reach to, not only during a crisis situation because then, as one person at our table said, that if you only appear in a crisis, the young person does things or creates a crisis to ensure that the adults come over. Kind of a baby crying in a crib so Mommy can come over.

The last thing we looked at was the importance of funding. Programs can't work without funding. Funding is not the only form of resource, and we'd only blindfold them, I think, and we can't do anything without funding. Through community involvement, through community support, through other existing programs, we can work around the funding issue. There will never be enough money, let's face it. We're going to have to look at alternate forms of resources.

MS. NIXON: Hi. I'm representing the Blue Team. We had a number of suggestions like the Black Group. First, that every young person needs to have a stable, supportive adult in their life, and that that should be integrated into the system rather than be-

ing accidental serendipity.

That stability, services, and support need to be universally available by law to foster youth up to age 21, and that housing and health care should extend beyond that to at least 25.

That we need to strengthen the capacity of the education and child welfare systems to work together, and that same collaboration / cooperation theme to improve educational outcomes for youth.

That financial incentives should be made available to programs that demonstrate outcomes based services delivery. Or through a pilot program, financial incentives should be available to programs that are able to demonstrate outcomes-based service delivery.

That we need to support the legal standing and the advocacy position of foster parents in our system, that in court and in other areas where decisions are made about young people, that the foster parent voice needs to be strengthened.

And that we need to mandate and completely integrate developmental readiness and independent living awareness, evaluation, preparation, and participation of young people as they become developmentally ready in the case management and planning process as a complement to permanency planning.

MS. DUNKLE: Can you take one of those things—because most of those are statutory changes or would require great increases of funding—and outline the things that you think should happen first in one creative not-run-on paragraph?

(Laughter.)

MS. NIXON: Excuse me?

MS. DUNKLE: Can you pick one recommendation and say who would implement it, what it would look like and how much it would cost?

MS. NIXON: Sure. It would cost that $200 billion tax cut or whatever it was that was on the news. $792 billion? I think that would cover it.

(Laughter.)

I think it would have to be the coordination / collaboration around what happens with Jamil. That there should be an oppor-

tunity for tests for Jamil himself, for whoever the social worker might be that we never saw in reference to any of the kids in the film.

And a school person should have an opportunity to sit down on a regular basis—I'd say probably at least four times a year—with him as an equal partner in that process to talk about what's going on, what's going to happen over the next several months, and how to address specific issues like the literacy level and the substance abuse issues, and maintaining a healthy relationship with his mom, even though he probably can't live with her.

MS. DUNKLE: That's excellent. Thank you. And actually you're not talking about huge, new resources for this. It's reallocation of existing resources.

MS. NIXON: Actually, the capacity for this collaboration exists currently. That could be happening now.

MS. DUNKLE: Well, let's give all of our reporters a round of applause. They did a terrific job.

(Applause.)

PANELISTS—FINAL THOUGHTS

MS. DUNKLE: Now, we're going to have an opportunity for any of our original panelists to give one final sound byte, one final insight, one final point responding to the question: What specific policy, program, or funding stream would you change to help Jamil transition successfully out of the foster care system into adulthood?

MS. NIXON: I think the current pending legislation is really important. [See summaries in Appendix F.] I think it absolutely will not have a chance to have the impact that it could have unless it is fully funded. I think that we have to, both as practitioners at the field level and as policymakers at the federal level, ensure that every penny that is designated for preparation of youth for transition through the Independent Living program is spent on those specific services and in that area of work, and not anywhere else.

I think that would be supported by ensuring that every state appoints an Independent Living coordinator. That's done nominally now. It needs to be followed through and supported. And that the Transitional Living program for homeless youth, which is a very small, though excellent program, must be supported and strengthened so that it can accommodate the collaboration that we have mandated between it and the Independent Living program.

MS. DUNKLE: Terry?

MS. LEWIS: I am not going to follow instructions. Is that okay?

MS. DUNKLE: Yes.

MS. LEWIS: All right. I'm not going to follow instructions. There is something that I would like to talk about that doesn't fit in, so I'm going to do it anyway. And what I'd like to talk about is listening to young people and asking them to take a substantive role in what goes on.

We've had a lot of discussions here, and I've had lots of opportunities to listen to young people and hear what they have to say, and they are right on target all the time. More specifically, last September the National Resource Center for Youth Services had a meeting of foster care and former foster care young people, and

they identified a number of issues that they wanted to bring to the fore.

And the usual ones were there—affordable housing, medical care, education. But they mentioned a couple of things that I thought were really important that we've kind of touched on here but I just want to raise.

One is that just because you're 14 and 15 and 17 and 18 years old doesn't mean that you don't want to be adopted. We spend a lot of time talking about kids that don't want to be, but there are plenty that do. They want a place to go for Thanksgiving. They want to know who to call to find out how to make a Christmas turkey.

So I think we need to concentrate on that. That is a viable option. There are young people at those ages being adopted every day. Really, it's a good permanence plan for some of these children.

The other thing that they talked very specifically about, which I thought was absolutely fabulous, was what kind of training their foster care parents or the adult in their life should have. And they had some fabulous ideas. We need to listen.

They weren't asking for the world to be handed to them on a silver platter. They were basically asking for all of the things that we have and we take for granted.

The other thing they were asking for was the idea that there are a lot of pieces to this pie, and they need help putting the pieces together. And that's kind of what part of our role should be, but we can't do it without listening to what they have to say.

I really think that that's our challenge and not their challenge, because we're not good at listening. Even when we listen, sometimes we don't hear. And we need to be able to change our own attitudes so that we can provide whatever assistance we need to them, so that they can grow up and be independent adults—interdependent adults, excuse me.

Okay. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. DUNKLE: Thank you for not following instructions.

(Laughter.)

Other panelists who want to…Sue?

MS. BADEAU: I wanted to pick up on the things that Terry said, so that's why I wanted to go next. I'll follow instructions first and give my sound byte, because I started at the beginning saying that independent living is a myth. And if I have to put it into a sound byte, that's the one that I would continue to say, that nobody lives independently, and we can't expect that of foster kids any more than we expect it of the rest of us.

Having said that, the concept that Terry [Lewis] was talking about, listening to what youth say, I think is important—not only that some kids who say they want to be adopted, but even for those who say they don't, to really understand what that may mean.

For example, we don't give kids who are 16 or 14—16 maybe, but certainly not 14 or 15, the chance to drop out of school because they don't want to go school anymore. But if you ask a child who is having trouble in school and having a hard time, and you gave them the opportunity and said, "Do you want to continue going to school?" they might say, "No, I don't want to go to school anymore."

But if you ask them on a broader level and really got to know them, "Do you want an education?" they would probably say, "Yes, I want an education." And I think sometimes we ask kids, "Do you want to be adopted?" and they're thinking, "That means I've got to give up all of my relationships with everyone I already have relationships with. I've got to change my name. I've got to… No, I don't want to do this stuff."

But if you ask them, "Do you want a family that will be your family forever?," then chances are that they are going to think or say yes. And so I think we need to learn to listen not just to the words that are said but also to what may be behind those words and where we can go with those words.

And then, the last thing, getting back to the instructions that we were given, on a realistic level, if I could just change one thing in terms of a policy or a program way, I would go back to the idea of, again, more and more cross-training, so that people in all of the different systems know more about what everyone else does and

what everyone else's role is.

And I think the type of model that is in the current court bill that's out there for that type of cross training is one example of how that can be done. So if I could just do one little thing on a policy level, that would be one thing I would try to do. But I would keep pushing these broader issues.

MS. DUNKLE: Thank you.

Let's see. Did we have someone? Yes, Joan?

MS. BERKES: In the field I'm in, which is student financial aid, obviously funding is of paramount importance. We can't offer aid without having that aid funded. Unfortunately, a great deal of that funding has over the last many years become loans, and loan scarcity, in general—especially scarcity for those with disadvantaged backgrounds where they do not see the possibility of paying off loans.

So if there was one thing that we would like to change, we would like to see what we've termed "the grant-loan balance" corrected, which is that there is appropriate funding, grant funding, for these types of students.

MS. DUNKLE: Good point. Thank you.

Frank, and then Judy.

MR. SHAVLIK: I'd like to say something that is probably taking a part of what everybody has said, but putting into a little different words, and that is maybe another seminar on this particular topic of, how we can ensure that kids get more stability if we can get better and more foster parents.

A lot of kids get moved because the foster parents are moving. A lot of kids don't have a place to go, or don't have an appropriate place to go, and get moved because the foster parents don't have enough training or can't stick with it.

And I think we have to look at what are the barriers in the present system that keeps us from finding enough foster parents who are willing to make these long-term commitments and who have the resources to be able to do them, even if they want to.

MS. DUNKLE: Good.

Judy?

MS. RHOADES: Presumably, with the passage of the new leg-

islation, we're going to get Medicaid for these kids until they're 21. But that's only until they're 21. And I want to point out two holes in Medicaid still.

One, which the Blue Group brought up, is that these kids are in school. They aren't going to get out until they're 23 or more. Our *private* health insurance would cover the kids as long as they were full-time students. And maybe that needs to be made comparable [in Medicaid].

The other hole, I go back to Jamil, or whether the kid is five or the kid is 18: to make Medicaid available to the parents, to the natural parents, and some period of time after the child is removed to see if there's any hope of getting them into rehab and getting them back together.

MS. DUNKLE: So, Medicaid for the parents and longer coverage. Good.

Kathi?

MS. WAY: I just want to point out that it may not be too late for Jamil. That film was done in 1997. The Adoption and Safe Families Act [of 1997] has a provision that requires states to go back and look at the entire population that was in foster care at the time that legislation was passed.

And so in terms of something specific, I'm hopeful that when his case comes up for review in the state of Washington, if he is still in foster care—and my guess would be that he is—that somebody has the courage to look at a permanent placement for him, so that he does make the transition.

MS. DUNKLE: Good.

Pamela?

MS. LITTLEWOOD: (Inaudible comment from an unmiked location.)

MS. DUNKLE: Good.

Other panelists? Lisa?

MS. PEASE: I would just like to say to each and every one of you, I am not a politician; I'm a clinician. But as a former foster child, I would just like to say thank you, because the hard work—I mean, I just see the dedication of everyone in this room to come up with these ideas. And, that's what matters. I just want to say

thanks.

MS. DUNKLE: And thank you.

Is there anyone else on the panel who wants to say anything, one final word?

MR. FERGUSON: I would like to reiterate what Bob [Reeg] raised earlier about the importance of discharge planning, and if one change in the system might make a big difference, it wouldn't affect Jamil at this point—but to make sure that kids who are aging out of the foster care system have a place to go, and that before they are released from some sort of caring system that somebody knows where they're going, rather than being discharged and hitting the streets.

MS. DUNKLE: Thank you. In just one second, I'm going to ask one final question, which is going to be, is there anyone who was formerly in foster care who wants to say a final word? Because I think that would bring the conversation full circle. Lisa certainly helped with that, and there may be other voices to add to that power.

You have been a wonderful, engaged audience. This has been a very long seminar. You have worked very hard. I personally want to thank you for your time, your thoughts, your insights, your energy, and probably most importantly what you're going to do with this information, starting this afternoon and Monday morning. Because that's the power of this kind of conversation, the way it can energize and provide direction in new areas…

I'd also just like to say thank you to the marvelous panel; the wonderful facilitation by Jolie; the incredibly succinct, candid, pithy reporting out…

(Laughter.)

…by the various reporters; the totally appropriate "disobedient" comments by our panelists at the end in terms of exactly what to comment about, because they knew what was important; and especially to the Policy Exchange staff sitting in the back of the room, who have done incredibly hard work to make this seminar a success. You have some idea of the number of logistical and technical issues we've dealt with this morning, but if you want to know them all, just call them this afternoon and they

will…

(Laughter.)

…bend your ear. Many, many special thanks to them.

(Applause.)

Please turn in your evaluation form. And as we close, is there anyone who was formerly in foster care who wants to make a closing comment?

Joy? Robyn?

MS. RAYSOR: (Inaudible comment from an unmiked location.)

MS. DUNKLE: Thank you.

Joy?

MS. WARREN: I was just going to say I already have a job, so this isn't a plea from me. But for people like Terry [Harrak]…

(Laughter.)

If you're working in foster care policy, someone like her, or this young woman over here, would be an excellent resource for you to have.

And luckily, I had a mentor at the youth foster center who brought me into foster care policy, and that's why I no longer do it, because too many foster youth—we don't have social workers in here. But I think too many foster youth want to go and be social workers and not enough know that they have the opportunity to go and actually work in policy.

MS. DUNKLE: Good point.

Terry?

MS. HARRAK: I just wanted to tell like a little tiny story. When I was about 10 years old, I went to the zoo, right? And I remember this panda bear, and they were like feeding it and everything, and I was like, ahhh, the poor panda away from its natural environment, and Mom and Dad, and everything. And there were thousands of people trying to work with it, and then they were going to release it out and just expect it to do well.

And then later I'm thinking, oh, my God, I'm not a panda, you know, like all I had—when I went into foster care—I had all of these people working with me, and then they just turned me out and expected me to do well, and then the care just stops.

So maybe that kind of story will help you guys, remember since you work with the foster kids. Remember that. That's what you guys are doing. You're giving them all this help, and then you're just taking it away. So the help has to continue after they leave foster care.

So just remember that story next time you're working with your kid, and realize that that's what you're doing with them.

(Applause.)

MS. DUNKLE: And thanks so much to all of you.

This is the end of our seminar. If you want copies of the seminar materials, or you want to download them for future use, they are on our Web site: www.policyexchange.iel.org. Thank you so much.

(Whereupon, at 12:06 p.m., the proceedings in the foregoing matter were adjourned.)

APPENDIX A

SEMINAR AGENDA

THE FEDERAL ROLE IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE: THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM AND MORE
ROOM 708 OF THE HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, 8:00 A.M. - 12 NOON
JULY 23, 1999

8:00 a. m Continental Breakfast

8:30 a.m. Welcome and Introductions
Margaret Dunkle, Director, IEL Policy Exchange

8:50 a.m. Background and Context on Federal Foster Care Programs (with an Emphasis on the Transition to Becoming Independent Adults)
Karen Spar, Specialist in Social Legislation, Congressional Research Service

9:10 a.m. *Searching for Family* (Video about several boys / young men in foster care)

9:30 a.m. Panel Reactions to *Searching for Family* (with a focus on what would help Jamil, a 14-year-old boy in foster care in the video, become a successful adult)
(2 minutes for each panelist)
Facilitator: Jolie Bain Pillsbury, Sherbrooke Consulting

From the Customer, Client and Front-line: *As you watched the film, what were your most powerful reactions? What was similar to, or different from, the reality of foster care as you know it?*

Lisa Pease, a social worker in private practice who was, as an adolescent, in foster care

Pamela Littlewood, Child Welfare Services Juvenile Court Liaison, Child Welfare Division, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Betty Brown, President, Baltimore City Foster Parent Association [Ms. Brown was unable to attend the seminar due to illness.]

Frank Shavlik, Former Executive Director, People's Place (Delaware)

Sue Badeau, Kennedy Fellow, Office of Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, U.S. Senate (who, with her husband, has adopted 22 children and been a foster parent to more than 25 teenagers)

From Congressional Staff: *What are the one or two most important policy issues that the comments thus far have raised for you? Why?*

Susan K. Hattan (R), Deputy Staff Director, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate

Krisann Pearce (R), Professional Staff Member, Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives

Doug Steiger (D), Welfare Professional Staff, Committee on Finance, U.S. Senate

From Staff of the *Systems* That Affect Foster Children: *What could you or your system do to help 14-year-old Jamil successfully move through adolescence? What services, benefits or programs could you provide? Why? How? Who pays?*

Judy Rhoades, Health Insurance Specialist, Health Care Financing Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (and herself a former foster parent)

George Ferguson, Special Assistant, Interagency Council on the Homeless, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Robyn Raysor, Special Needs Assistance Programs Specialist, Office of Special Needs Programs, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Haskel Lowery, Chief, Division of Program Planning and Operations, Office of Youth Services, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor

Joan Berkes, Associate Director of Technical Assistance, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Robin Delany-Shabazz, Program Specialist, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

From the Federal and National Levels: *How effective are the current systems in providing Jamil what he needs to become a strong and independent adult? What works best? What is the biggest gap—or the most misguided policy?*

Kathi Way, Consultant, Engquist, Pelrine and Powell; formerly Director of the Division of Family Services in Delaware

Terry Lewis, Acting Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Robin Nixon, Director of Youth Development, Child Welfare League of America, who also has fifteen years of direct service with young people in transition

10:45 a.m. The Federal Role in Helping Young People Transition from Foster Care

Senator John D. Rockefeller IV (WV), Member of the Senate Finance Committee and co-sponsor of the Foster Care Independence Act

11:10 a.m. Small Group Discussions

What one thing would you change to make the systems work more effectively for Jamil and other children in foster care as they move from adolescence to adulthood?

11:30 a.m. Reporting Out from the Small Groups

11:45 a.m. Panelists—Final Thoughts

What specific policy, program or funding stream would you change to help Jamil transition successfully out of the foster care system into adulthood? Why?

12:00 noon Close of Seminar

APPENDIX B

SEMINAR SPEAKERS, PANELISTS AND PARTICIPANTS

Speakers and Panelists

Sue Badeau
Kennedy Fellow
Office of Senator John D. Rockefeller IV
U.S. Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4802
(202)224-7515
(202)224-7665 fax
sue_badeau@rockefeller.senate.gov

Joan Berkes
Associate Director of Technical Assistance
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
Suite 400
1129 20th Street
Washington, DC 20036
(202)785-0453
(202)785-1487 fax
berkesj@nasfaa.org

Robin Delany-Shabazz
Program Specialist
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice
810 7th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20531
(202)307-5940
(202)354-4063 fax
Delany@ojp.usdoj.gov

George Ferguson
Interagency Council on the Homeless
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Washington, DC
(202)708-1480 x4517
(202)708-3672 fax
george_a._ferguson@hud.gov

Susan K. Hattan
Deputy Staff Director
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
835 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202)224-6770
(202)224-6510 fax
Susan_Hattan@labor.senate.gov

Terry Lewis
Acting Associate Commissioner
Children's Bureau
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Room 2070
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20201
(202)205-8618
(202)260-9345 fax
tlewis@acf.dhhs.gov

Pamela Littlewood
Child Welfare Services Juvenile Court Liaison
Child Welfare Division
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Third Floor
1301 Piccard Drive
Rockville, MD 20850
(301)279-1310
(301)279-1344 fax
littlp@co.mo.md.us

Haskel Lowery
Chief, Division of Program Planning and Operations
Office of Youth Services
Employment and Training Administration
U.S. Department of Labor
North 4469
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210
(202)219-5305 x176
(202)219-7190 fax
hlowery@doleta.org

Robin Nixon
Director of Youth Development
Child Welfare League of America
Suite 310
440 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202)638-2952
(202)638-4004 fax
rnixon@cwla.org

Krisann Pearce
Professional Staff Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
230 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202)225-6558
(202)226-1010 fax
Krisann_Pearce@mail.house.gov

Lisa Pease
Salisbury, MD
(410)334-3559
lisapease@aol.com

Robyn Raysor
Special Needs Assistance Programs Specialist
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Room 7266
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410
(202)708-1234 x.4891
(202)401-0053 fax
robyn_raysor@hud.gov

Judy Rhoades
Health Insurance Specialist
Family and Children's Health Program Group
Center for Medicaid and State Operations
Health Care Financing Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
C4-25-02
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244
(410)786-4462
(410)786-5943 fax
jrhoades@hcfa.gov

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller
Senator
U.S. Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4802
(202)224-6472
(202)224-7665 fax
senator@rockefeller.senate.gov

Frank Shavlik
Former Executive Director
People's Place, Milford, Delaware
1444 Matthew's Circle
Estes Park, CO 80517
(970)577-9598
fdshavlik@aol.com

Karen Spar
Specialist in Social Legislation
Domestic Social Policy Division
Congressional Research Service
Library of Congress
James Madison Building, Room 320
101 Independence Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20540-7440
(202)707-7319
(202)707-7338 fax
kspar@crs.loc.gov

Douglas Steiger
Welfare Professional Staff
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
203 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6200
(202)224-5315
(202)228-3904 fax
doug_steiger@finance-min.senate.gov

Kathryn J. Way
Consultant
Engquist, Pelrine and Powell
Suite 325
1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
(202)628-1135
(202)628-1140 fax
kway@eppconsulting.com

Moderators/Facilitators

Margaret Dunkle
Director
Policy Exchange
Institute for Educational Leadership
Suite 310
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202)822-8405 x104
(202)872-4050 fax
dunklem@iel.org

Jolie Bain Pillsbury
President
Sherbrooke Consulting, Inc.
1500 22nd Street N.
Arlington, VA 22209
(703)812-8774
(703)812-8775 fax
jolie@sherbrookeconsulting.com

Participants

Ann Barbagallo
Customer Services Branch Chief
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Lauren Barbic
Public Policy Team
National Network for Youth

Nikki Bernstein
Reporter/Editor
Family Services Report
CD Publications

Kirsten Beronio
Legislative Assistant
Office of Senator Paul S. Sarbanes
U.S. Senate

Patrick Boyle
Editor
Youth Today

Judith Burns
Social Worker
Austin Division
The Casey Family Program

Cheryl Chambers
Congressional Fellow
Office of Senator Paul David Wellstone

Barbara Clark
Senior Legislative Analyst
Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Ronna Cook
Senior Study Director
Westat, Inc.

Daniel Drolet
Senior Policy Analyst
Alliance for Children and Families

Heitzi Epstein
Director, Child Welfare Project
Child Welfare
National Association of Child Advocates

Renee Evans
NFCAP Program Assistant
Child Welfare League of America

Laura Feig Radel
Senior Social Science Analyst
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Carolyn Fowler
Program Manager
Fairfax County Department of Family Services

Maria Garin
Youth Development Training Coordinator
Child Welfare League of America

Robert Geen
Research Associate
The Urban Institute

Samuel Halperin
Senior Fellow
American Youth Policy Forum

Terry Harrak
Intern
The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Talmira Hill
Program Associate
The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Kate Hilles Macdonald
Family to Family Associate
The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Jamila Larson
Program Associate
Child Welfare Division
Children's Defense Fund

Diana Pietrowiak
Senior Evaluator
Education, Workforce and Income Security
General Accounting Office

Karabelle Pizzigati
Director of Public Policy
Child Welfare League of America

Scott Polen
Assistant
Learning First Alliance

Barbara Pryor
Legislative Assistant
Office of Senator John D. Rockefeller IV
U.S. Senate

Bob Reeg
Health Policy Analyst
National Coalition for the Homeless

Kathleen Reich
Director of Policy Development
Social Policy Action Network

Kate Sablosky
Assisting Legislative Assistant
Office of Senator Evan Bayh

Heidi Sachs
Research Assistant
Welfare Information Network

Christi Sadoti
Analyst
Budget Analysis Division
U.S. Congressional Budget Office

Carmen Schulze
Practioner-in-Residence
Executive Leadership Institute
American Public Human Services Association

Julia Graham Lear
Director, Making the Grade
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Elinor Light
School Social Worker
Department of Student Services
Arlington Public Schools

Heather MacLean
Legislative Correspondent
Office of Senator Rick Santorum
U.S. Senate

Elizabeth Meitner
Senior Policy Analyst
Public Policy Department
Child Welfare League of America

Melanie Nathanson
Legislative Assistant
Office of Senator Bob Graham

Julee Newberger
Assistant Managing Editor
KidsCampaign
The Benton Foundation

Darcy Olsen
Policy Analyst
The Cato Institute

Susan Orr
Director
Center for Social Policy
The Reason Public Policy Institute

Richard Otto
Walnut Creek Division
The Casey Family Program

Patrick Patrong
Director Youth Development
Maryland Department of Human Resources

William Pierce
President
National Council for Adoption

Ellen Soltow
Senior Evaluator
Health, Education, and Human Services Division
U.S. General Accounting Office

Matthew Stagner
Director
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Kathleen Strottman
Special Assistant
Office of Senator Mary L. Landrieu

Kennisha Sullivan
Summer Intern
Center for Youth Development & Policy Research
Academy for Educational Development

Jennifer Sykes
Management and Program Specialist
U.S. Department of Education

Michael Usdan
President
Institute for Educational Leadership

Donna Walker James
Senior Program Associate
American Youth Policy Forum

Sharon Walter
Project Director
Community-Based Systems Reform
Institute for Educational Leadership

Joy Warren
Domestic Policy Council Intern
Office of the First Lady

Rob Weaver
Health Insurance Specialist
Health Care Financing Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Mary Bruce Webb
Research Analyst
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Susan Weiss
Director of Advocacy
The Casey Family Program

Marian Worthington
Budget Analyst
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives

APPENDIX C

ISSUES RAISED BY SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

THE FEDERAL ROLE IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE: THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM AND MORE

Prior to each seminar, the Policy Exchange asks invitees to respond to one or two questions on their Response Form to help focus our discussion. We have included both a summary of responses and specific answers (but not who said what) below. Participants in our seminars include a variety of people, such as key Congressional staff, members of the Administration and advocates. Their verbatim responses below reflect this diversity.

SUMMARY

We asked participants: What one improvement would you make to policies and programs affecting young people as they transition from foster care into independent adulthood and why?

Do a better job, do an earlier job, and provide more funding to help these young people learn how to live independently. (29%)

Provide multiple or other supports, such as after-care services and emotional support. (29%)

Improve their opportunities for education and training. (21%)

Support efforts by mentors, communities and religious organizations. (21%)

Provide better health care and health insurance. (21%)

Provide funding and support for youth past age 18. (18%)

Focus on the needs of the "client"; give foster parents more of a voice. (14%)

Provide flexible federal funding. (11%)

Help them get better housing—and not be homeless. (7%)

Enact HR 1802, "The Foster Care Independence Act." (7%)

*Percentages are based on the total number of people who responded to this question (28). The total is more than 100 percent because some responses address more than one issue.

VERBATIM RESPONSES

We Asked:

What one improvement would you make to policies and programs affecting young people as they transition from foster care into independent adulthood and why?

Participants Answered:

Do a better job, do an earlier job, and provide more funding to help these young people learn how to live independently. (29%) 8 responses

Improve early planning for independence and flexible funding to support pre-independence services and post-independence supports.

Identify these youth at an early age (4 years before they age out) and mandate the court assign services to these youth to best prepare them for independent living.

Provide service to younger youth. My daughter is 16 years old, imagine if I began teaching independence and responsibility three months ago.

More training in independent living skills! They need these skills to become productive members of society.

The importance of incorporating a youth community development approach into the Independent Living Program like the FYSB (Family and Youth Services Bureau of HHS) has done with runaway and homeless youth programs.

Enact HR 1802 (or similar legislation being developed in the Senate) to increase federal Independent Living funding and make youth aging out of foster care eligible for Medicaid.

Life skills training because after a youth is out of one they may not have anyone who can show them how to live independently.

No automatic cut-off date for independent living services. Wean youth from the system depending on their maturity level.

Provide multiple or other supports, such as after-care services and emotional support. (29%) 8 responses

Improve early planning for independence and flexible funding to support pre-independence services and post-independence supports.

Ensure continued health care coverage and links to other supports because transition is a process, not an event, and these are key to helping it occur successfully.

Provide funding for after-care transition services such as those provided by the WAY (Work Appreciation for Youth) program at Children's Village (in Dobbs Ferry, NY).

Allow full benefits—subsidized housing, education, job-training, Medicaid, and a small cash grant—until age 21. Allow youth the option of remaining in a group home setting until age 21.

Emotional and financial support for youth 18-23 who have exited foster care, completed high school, and are "in transition" to true self-sufficiency. Recognition that no one has this "down" at age 18!

A wider range of program options. I also feel that foster care should not end at the age of twenty-one. If full financial care can not be provided until 21, at least some type of follow up care with limited financial support, however with full Medicaid care.

I would like to see programs which recognize that children raised in foster care are no different than those raised in families and therefore require a parental figure (mentor) who will still support / advise them once they're on their own physically.

I recommend information dissemination and peer-to-peer technical assistance among public and private (community-based and other non-profit) organizations to promote local / regional networks for improving workforce, education, housing, healthcare and related outcomes among young people. By strengthening existing networks, resources can be better targeted to meet the particular needs of these young people.

Improve their opportunities for education and training. (21%) 6 responses

Provide more consistency across schools for foster care students.

Do everything possible to have youth complete high school prior to being discharged. This includes bringing youth back into foster care who want to get their [high school] degree, not discharging because youth turns 18, and developing programs (tutoring, etc.) to help them get their degree.

Educate them for college so that they can get scholarships. Current program treats them as if they don't know how to brush their teeth much less get a college education.

I recommend information dissemination and peer-to-peer technical assistance among public and private (community-based and other non-profit) organizations to promote local/regional networks for improving workforce, education, housing, healthcare and related outcomes among young people. By strengthening existing networks, resources can be better targeted to meet the particular needs of these young people.

More federal financial support for college tuition/stipends. These youth are particularly vulnerable when accruing debt, as most have no family support to fall back on.

Allow full benefits—subsidized housing, education, job-training, Medicaid, and a small cash grant—until age 21. Allow youth the option of remaining in a group home setting until age 21.

Support efforts by mentors, communities and religious organizations. (21%) 6 responses

Make sure to anchor them in their own Church/Temple with good connections and support.

Linking them to an adult or family who can provide continuity for them as they make their way (advice, support, companionship, care, fun).

Flexible funding to allow development of least-restrictive community-based services.

I recommend information dissemination and peer-to-peer technical assistance among public and private (community-based and other non-profit) organizations to promote local/regional networks for improving workforce, education, housing, healthcare and related outcomes among young people. By strengthening existing networks, resources can be better targeted to meet the particular needs of these young people.

The importance of incorporating a youth community development approach into the Independent Living Program like the FYSB has done with runaway and homeless youth programs.

More flexibility in funding to be used for what's needed in their unique circumstances and community.

Provide better health care and health insurance. (21%) 6 responses

Ensure continued health care coverage and links to other supports because transition is a process, not an event, and these are key to helping it occur successfully.

Enact HR 1802 (or similar legislation being developed in the Senate) to increase federal Independent Living funding and make youth aging out of foster care eligible for Medicaid.

Allow full benefits—subsidized housing, education, job-training, Medicaid, and a small cash grant—until age 21. Allow youth the option of remaining in a group home setting until age 21.

More decisionmakers who solicit input from the foster youth in formulating policy and practice. I would like to see increased availability of mental health services for emancipating youth.

A wider range of program options. I also feel that foster care should not end at the age of twenty-one. If full financial care can not be provided until 21, at least some type of follow up care with limited financial support, however with full Medicaid care.

I recommend information dissemination and peer-to-peer technical assistance among public and private (community-based and other non-profit) organizations to promote local/regional networks for improving workforce, education, housing, healthcare and related outcomes among young people. By strengthening existing networks, resources can be better targeted to meet the particular needs of these young people.

Provide funding and support for youth past age 18. (18%) 5 responses

No automatic cut-off date for independent living services. Wean youth from the system depending on their maturity level.

Improve early planning for independence and flexible funding to support pre-independence services and post-independence supports.

A wider range of program options. I also feel that foster care should not end at the age of twenty-one. If full financial care can not be provided until 21, at least some type of follow up care with limited financial support, however with full Medicaid care.

Allow full benefits—subsidized housing, education, job-training, Medicaid, and a small cash grant—until age 21. Allow youth the option of remaining in a group home setting until age 21.

Emotional and financial support for youth 18-23 who have exited foster care, completed high school, and are "in transition" to true self-sufficiency. Recognition that no one has this "down" at age 18!

Focus on the needs of the "client"; give foster parents more of a voice. (14%) 4 responses

"Same client" philosophy among involved service agencies.

More decisionmakers who solicit input from the foster youth in formulating policy and practice. I would like to see increased availability of mental health services for emancipating youth.

"Standing" for foster parents would give young people's caregivers a voice in their future.

I would like to see programs which recognize that children raised in foster care are no different than those raised in families and therefore require a parental figure (mentor) who will still support / advise them once they're on their own physically.

Provide flexible federal funding. (11%) 3 responses

More flexibility in funding to be used for what's needed in their unique circumstances and community.

Improve early planning for independence and flexible funding to support pre-independence services and post-independence supports.

Flexible funding to allow development of least-restrictive community-based services.

Help them get better housing—and not be homeless. (7%) 2 responses

Assure access to housing services to assure that these young people transition to residential stability, not homelessness.

I recommend information dissemination and peer-to-peer technical assistance among public and private (community-based and other non-profit) organizations to promote local / regional networks for improving workforce, education, housing, healthcare and related outcomes among young people. By strengthening existing networks, resources can be better targeted to meet the particular needs of these young people.

Enact HR 1802, "The Foster Care Independence Act." (7%) 2 responses

Enact HR 1802 (or similar legislation being developed in the Senate) to increase federal Independent Living funding and make youth aging out of foster care eligible for Medicaid.

Enact HR 1802.

APPENDIX D

June 1999

FOSTER CARE IN PERSPECTIVE

How many children are in foster care?
Over 500,000 nationwide.

No single data system provides reliable information on children in foster care in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. An estimated 520,000 children lived in foster care in March of 1998, according to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis System (AFCARS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A 1996 Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) survey found more than 530,000 children and youth in the foster care system, 90 percent *more* than in 1986. Of children aged 0-18, an estimated 6.9 of every 1,000 were in foster care in 1996, up from 5.9 per 1,000 in 1990, according to the 1998 *Green Book*.

Who are the children in foster care?
An estimated 45 percent are African-American; 35 percent are white; and 13 percent are Hispanic. Of the remaining six percent, one percent are Native American, one percent are Asian, and four percent are of unknown ethnicity.

Children of color are over-represented in the foster care system. For example, the percentage of African-Americans in the foster care system in 1996 was almost four times (3.67 times, to be exact) that of African-Americans in the general population. (Muskie / AFCARS, 1996 data)

Forty percent of the children in foster care are older than age ten and 33 percent are younger than age six. Forty-nine percent are female and 51 percent are male.

Percent of children in foster care by age group

Younger than 1	4%
1 to 5	27%
6 to 10	28%
11 to 15	27%
16 to 18	13%
19 or older	1%

How many foster families are there?
Approximately 142,000 foster families in 1996—3 percent *less* than in 1986. (Petit & Curtis, 1996 data) According to CWLA, there is both an overall shortage of foster families, as well as a shortage of foster families of color and of families who will accept sibling groups, "emotionally disturbed" teens, "medically fragile / complex" infants, or children with other special needs. CWLA reports that, in 1995, 35 percent of licensed foster families had no children in their care and 40 percent left fostering within one year of being licensed.

How long do children stay in foster care?
In general, children and youth stay in foster care either for a short time (less than one year) or for three years or more. As of March 1998, 12 percent of foster children had been in care for two to three years (24 to 35 months), and 34 percent had been in care for more than three years. Overall, children are in foster care for a median of 21 months. African-American children spend the most time in care.

Where do children in foster care live?
Fifty percent of children in foster care live with people not related to them ("non-relative home placements"). Nearly a third (29 percent) live with relatives ("kinship care"). Fifteen percent are in group homes or institutional placements. Just one percent are in "independent living *placements*", although many other youth use independent living *services* designed to help them become self-sufficient. The remaining five percent are in pre-adoptive placements (in the home of a family which intends to adopt the child), in trial home visits (reunification for a limited and specified period of time), or classified as runaways.

What "risk factors" are especially common among children in foster care?
Children in foster care are more likely than other children to have low educational attainment. The most recent and comprehensive study of educational outcomes for youth in foster care is based on data from the "High School and Beyond" survey administered by the U.S. Department of Education from 1980 through 1986. The study compared youth in foster care to other youth and found:

> Youth in foster care were more likely to drop out of high school than those who were not in foster

care (37 percent vs. 16 percent), although both groups agreed that dropping out was not a good idea.

Youth in foster care who dropped out of high school were less likely to have received a high school diploma or a GED certificate (77 percent vs. 93 percent).

Youth in foster care were less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes (15 percent vs. 32 percent).

Youth in foster care were more likely to report having been disciplined in school, suspended, or in "serious trouble with the law."

Many, but certainly not all, youth in foster care also face other significant challenges to becoming economically self-sufficient. These include:

Homelessness;

Significant developmental barriers, including mental health problems, developmental delays, and physical health problems;

Drug and alcohol problems; and

Involvement with the juvenile justice system.

These barriers to self-sufficiency occur more frequently among youth in foster care than in the general population.

What can help children in foster care overcome barriers to becoming successful adults?

The following protective factors can increase a child's ability to succeed by improving individual skills, as well as the social systems that affect foster children, according to the National Juvenile Justice Action Plan, *Combatting Violence and Delinquency*:

A strong *social support network*—maintaining and encouraging contact with siblings, birth parents,

mentors and foster care providers who provide love, especially as expressed through involvement in the youth's activities and through monitoring and supervision—is important. Other family-oriented protective factors include family stability and adequate financial resources.

Positive *personal attributes*—such as intelligence, a steady disposition, and social skills (including the ability to solve problems without resorting to violence).

Schools that positively shape the behavior of youth through strict policies on violence and drugs, and caring teachers who demonstrate concern for their students' social and academic growth.

Communities that provide opportunities, structure, and social controls with neighbors working together to meet common objectives.

Youth participation in and acceptance by prosocial peer groups, especially during adolescence.

Adult supervision of and involvement in youth group activities.

Other protective factors not cited by the plan include youth participation in the planning of their cases and in planning for the transition out of foster care as well as opportunities for youth to contribute to the community through employment, community service, volunteerism, and youth leadership.

What happens to young people when they transition from foster care to independent adulthood?

A recent study of Wisconsin youth transitioning out of foster care found that 12 to 18 months after leaving care at age 18:

Few (9 percent) had entered college and more than a third (37 percent) had not completed high school.

An eighth (12 percent) lived on the streets or in shelters at some point.

Nearly two fifths (39 percent) were not employed.

Nearly half (44 percent) had problems getting needed medical care most or all of the time. Nearly a quarter (22 percent) said they did not have insurance coverage for the health care they needed.

A third (33 percent) were receiving some form of public assistance.

Nearly a fifth (18 percent) had spent at least some time in jail: 27 percent of males and 10 percent of females.

Fewer than half (46 percent) reported having at least $250 of their own money. (Courtney & Piliavin, 1996 & 1997 data)

Sources

Courtney, Mark E., Piliavin, Irving, *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care*, July 1998 (Revised August 1998). School of Social Work and Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Improving Economic Opportunities for Young People Served by the Foster Care System: Background Paper, December 1997. To obtain a copy of the report, contact the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, Institute for Child and Family Policy, 400 Congress Street, Portland, Maine, 04101; telephone: (207) 780-4430. The report uses 1995 Child Welfare League of America data and 1996 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis System (AFCARS) data.

Petit, M.R., P.A. Curtis, K. Woodruff, L. Arnold, L. Feagans, and J. Ang. *Child Abuse and Neglect—A look at the States: The CWLA Stat Book.* Washington, DC: CWLA Press. (1999).

1998 Green Book: Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, 1998.

APPENDIX E

June 1999

AN OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL CHILD WELFARE PROGRAMS

Child welfare programs aim to improve conditions for children and their families through a variety of services including: protection for abused or neglected children, services to preserve and support families, care for homeless children and families, and foster care for children who cannot live safely at home. Many private, nonprofit and government entities provide child welfare services for families in need. State governments have primary responsibility for child welfare services, and each state has its own legal and administrative structures and programs to address children's needs.

The federal government has been involved in efforts to improve children's welfare since the early 1900s. Today almost 40 federal programs provide support for such services. According to the 1998 *Green Book*,[1] four different Executive Branch agencies and five committees in the House of Representatives have responsibility for child welfare. The Social Security Act—especially Title IV-E and Title IV-B—is the primary source of federal funds for child welfare, foster care and adoption activities. Many states also use their Title XX Social Services Block Grant funds to provide child protection, foster care and adoption services. Other laws governing child welfare programs include: the Adoption Opportunities Act,[2] the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act,[3] the Indian Child Welfare Act,[4] and the Multiethnic Placement Act[5] as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions of P.L. 104-188.

The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997,[6] signed into law on November 19, 1997, changes and clarifies a wide range of child welfare programs including the Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Programs of the Social Security Act. The law aims to enhance child safety,[7] move children more rapidly to permanent homes, strengthen families and increase accountability.[8]

Following are brief descriptions of five major federal child welfare programs.

Foster Care, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act[9]

Funding Formula

The federal Foster Care Program[10] provides federal matching funds to states for maintenance payments[11] for the care of certain low-income children, up to age 18, who have been placed in foster care homes, private nonprofit child care institutions, or public child care institutions that house no more than 25 persons. (Since July 1, 1997, children placed in for-profit child care institutions are also eligible.)

The matching rate for a state is that state's Medicaid matching rate.[12] The FY 1997 federal matching rate range from 50 percent to 77.22 percent. For certain administrative costs of the program and expenses related to child placement, the federal government offers 50 percent matching funds. States receive 75 percent federal matching for certain training expenses. States also received 50 percent matching for certain costs related to automation of their data collection systems during FY 1994 to FY 1997. Federal expenditures for the program in FY 1996 were $3.1 billion.

Eligibility Requirements

A child must meet AFDC eligibility[13] rules, and removal from the home must be the result of a judicial determination that continuation in the home would be contrary to the child's welfare, or a voluntary placement agreement between the child welfare agency and the child's parents. Effective July 1, 1997, the eligibility requirements were revised to conform with welfare reform legislation (P.L. 104-193) that repealed AFDC. Under new rules, to be eligible for foster care subsidies, children must meet AFDC eligibility rules as they were in effect in their state on July 16, 1996.[14]

Benefit Levels

States determine payments to foster parents and institutions, and children are automatically eligible for Medicaid. Maintenance payments varied widely among states, ranging in FY 1995 from $205 monthly for a 2 year-old child in Alabama to $637 for a 16 year-old in Connecticut. Nationwide average maintenance payments were $344 for a two year-old child, $362 for a nine year-old, and $416 for a 16 year-old. In FY 1996, administrative costs represented an estimated 51 percent

of total federal spending for foster care: this includes the cost of training caseworkers, developing case plans, recruiting and licensing foster families, and the day-to-day services caseworkers provide to address the often complex needs of children in foster care.

Independent Living Program, Title IV-E

The Title IV-E Independent Living Program (ILP) provides states with resources to create and implement independent living services for youth in foster care from age 16 to 21. The goal of the program is to help youth make a successful transition from foster care to independence and self-sufficiency when they become ineligible for foster care maintenance payments (often at age 18). These services include: training in daily living skills, such as money management, hygiene, housekeeping and nutrition; education and employment initiatives; and group and individual counseling.

All 16 to 18 year-old youth for whom federal foster care payments are being made are eligible for ILP services. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 expanded ILP services to young people who are ineligible for foster care assistance because their assets exceed $1000, provided these assets are not higher than $5,000. Also, states may choose to provide independent living services to youth not receiving federal assistance and to youth no longer in foster care (but who were in foster care after age 16). States may also opt to provide independent living services to eligible youth up to age 21, rather than stop services at age 18.

Federal funding for the Independent Living Program is currently capped at $70 million. The majority of federal funds ($45 million) are distributed as an entitlement to states based on each state's share of children receiving IV-E foster care payments in fiscal year 1984. States that provide matching funds are eligible to receive an additional share of the remaining $25 million.

Adoption Assistance Program, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act

The Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program[15] provides three kinds of assistance: maintenance payments for qualified children who are adopted, administrative payments for expenses

associated with placing children in adoption, and training of professional staff and parents involved in adoption. Federal matching funds are provided to states that provide adoption assistance payments to parents who adopt AFDC- or SSI-eligible children with special needs. The statute defines special needs child as "a child [with] a specific condition or situation, such as age, membership in a minority or sibling group, or a mental, emotional, or physical handicap, which prevents placement without special assistance." Adoption assistance payments end when the child reaches age 18, or at the option of the state, age 21, if the child has a disability.

This program was amended by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 to promote timely adoption and other permanency options when a child's case plan no longer includes reunification with his or her family as an option. The Act requires that permanency planning hearings (which determine whether a child will be returned home, placed for adoption, referred for legal guardianship or otherwise placed) be held within 12, rather than 18, months of a child's initial placement. Through fiscal year 2003, $20 million a year in adoption incentive payments are authorized to states that increase their adoptions. Eligible states received bonus payments if they exceeded the average number of adoptions completed in that state from 1995 to 1997; or in 1999 and subsequent years states will receive bonus payments if adoptions of foster children are higher than in any previous fiscal year after 1996. The bonus payments, which are higher for children with special needs, must be used to provide child and family services under the federal Title IV-B and Title IV-E programs.

Child Welfare Services Program, Title IV-B, Subpart 1 of the Social Security Act

The intent of the Child Welfare Services Program[16] is to provide supportive services that could prevent the need for out-of-home placement. For example, program services address problems that may result in abuse, neglect, exploitation or delinquency of children. Services aim to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families and to reunite families whenever possible. The statute permanently authorizes that the federal government will pay 75 percent, and states will pay 25 percent, of the cost for services to protect the welfare of children. Appropriations for Title IV-B Child Welfare

Services amounted to $292 million in fiscal year 1999. There are no federal income eligibility requirements for this program.

Promoting Safe and Stable Families, Title IV-B, Subpart 2 of the Social Security Act

Beginning in 1994, the Family Preservation and Support Services Program[17] authorized grants to states for family preservation and family support services as a capped entitlement ($275 million in fiscal year 1999). With the enactment of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, this program was renamed Promoting Safe and Stable Families.

Family preservation services are intended for children and families, including extended and adoptive families, that are at risk or in crisis. For example, services help reunite foster children with their families, if appropriate, or place them for adoption; provide respite care as temporary relief for parents and other caregivers; and provide training to improve parenting skills.

Family support services are community-based activities intended to reach families who are not yet in crisis and to prevent occurrences of child abuse or neglect. Examples include parenting skills training, structured activities to strengthen relationships between parents and children, drop-in centers for families, information and referral services, and early developmental screening for children.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 requires states to use part of their grants for time-limited reunification services such as counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, assistance for domestic violence, temporary child care and crisis nurseries, and transportation to and from these services. It also authorizes the use of funds for pre- and post-adoptive services designed to expedite adoption of children from foster care and to support adoptive families.

ENDNOTES TO APPENDIX E

1. The *Green Book* is an annual publication of the U.S. House of Representative's Committee on Ways and Means. It contains background information on programs under the jurisdiction of the Committee and data relevant to those programs.

2. 42 U.S.C. §§ 5111-5115

3. 42 U.S.C. §§ 5106-5116

4. 25 U.S.C. §§ 1931-1934

5. P.L. 103-382

6. P.L. 105-89

7. While states must continue to make *reasonable efforts* to preserve or reunify families, state courts can determine that *reasonable efforts* are not required on behalf of certain parents, including those who have murdered or committed a felony assault against another child, or who pose a serious risk to a child.

8. For example, the Secretary of HHS must set outcome measures to track state performance in protecting children.

9. The section on Title IV-E, Foster Care comes from the CRS Report for Congress, *Cash and Noncash Benefits for Persons With Limited Income: Eligibility Rules, Recipient and Expenditure Data, FY1994-FY1996*, by Vee Burke, Education and Public Welfare Division, Congressional Research Service, December 28, 1997, (report no. 98-226 EPW).

10. 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 670-679. Regulations for this program are found in 45 C.F.R. Parts 1355, 1356, and 1357 (1996). This program is No. 93.658 in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. This program was established on October 1, 1980, under a new part (Part IV-E) of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) title of the Social Security Act, by the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272). Previously, foster care was a separate component of the regular AFDC program.

11. Maintenance payments are expenditures for food, housing, clothing, daily supervision, school supplies, general incidentals, liability insurance for the child, and reasonable travel to the child's home for visits (1996 *Green Book*, p. 706).

12. The federal share of a state's Medicaid payments is called the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP). The law establishes a minimum FMAP of 50 percent and a maximum of 83 percent (though the highest rate in FY 1997 was 77.22 percent for Mississippi). The formula is inversely related to a state's per capita income and is adjusted annually. In FY 1996 the nationwide average FMAP was about 57 percent.

13. To be eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a child had

to be deprived of parental support or care because a parent was absent from home continuously, incapacitated, unemployed, or deceased. States defined "need" through countable income limits and countable resource limits (within an outer federal ceiling of $1,000 in equity value per family). Federal law imposed a gross income eligibility limit of 185 percent of the state's standard of need.

14. P.L. 104-193 originally established this date as June 1, 1995. However, the date was subsequently changed by provisions in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-33), which made technical corrections to the welfare reform law.

15. 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 673-676, 679

16. 42 U.S.C. §§ 620-628

17. 42 U.S.C. §§ 630-635

Sources:

1998 Green Book: Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC: 1998. For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office, Washington, DC 20402.

Children '98, America's Promise: 1998 Children's Legislative Agenda, Budget Updates and Issue Briefs, Child Welfare League of America Press: Washington, DC.

Foster Care: Challenges in Helping Youths Live Independently, Statement of Cynthia Fagnoni, Director of Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues, of the Health, Education, and Human Services Division of the U.S. General Accounting Office before the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means of the U.S. House of Representatives, GAO/T-HEHS-99-121, May 1999.

Summary of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (H.R. 867), Children's Defense Fund, November 20, 1997.

CRS Report for Congress, *Cash and Noncash Benefits for Persons With Limited Income: Eligibility Rules, Recipient and Expenditure Data, FY1994-FY1996*, by Vee Burke, Education and Public Welfare Division, Congressional Research Service, December 28, (report no. 1997 98-226 EPW).

APPENDIX F

Summaries of the FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1999, H.R. 3443 Signed into law on December 14, 1999

Following are two different summaries of this law. The first is from the Office of Senator Rockefeller (D-WV), who serves on the Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction for this act. The second is from the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means, which has jurisdiction for this act.

Summary Provided by the Office of Senator Rockefeller

Present Law

Current law* provides for payments to states to establish and carry out programs designed to assist children who have attained the age of 16 in making the transition from foster care to independent living. Funding based upon the average number of children receiving Title IV-E foster care maintenance programs in FY-1984. While certain types of activities for these programs are suggested, including training in daily living skills, vocational training, counseling, and others, *funds under this section may not be used to provide room and board.*

Thus, under current law, *a child's eligibility for financial support for their day-to-day living needs ends upon reaching their 18th birthday (or up to age 19 if still in high school). In most cases, therefore, a child's access to health care (through Medicaid) also ends upon reaching their 18th birthday.*

The Foster Care Independence Act

- Doubles funding to states to assist youths to make the transition from foster care to independent living—from $70 million to $140 million a year. Funds can be used to help youths by offering them the education, vocational and employment training in daily living skills, substance abuse prevention, and connections to dedicated adults.

*Before enactment of the Foster Care Independence Act.

- Provides access to 24,000 teens aging out of foster care, for health and mental health services until age 21 by giving states the option of extending Medicaid for this population.

- Recognizes the need for special help for youths ages 18 to 21 who have left foster care. States must use some portion of their funds for 18-21 year olds who left foster care—including using up to 30 percent of their Independent Living Program funds for room and board for these youth.

- Recognizes that young people in foster care, including older teens, continue to need and deserve opportunities for permanent, adoptive families and therefore, provides that independent living services can be provided concurrent with adoption services for older teens in foster care.

- Increases the asset limit to allow youths to have $10,000 in savings and still be eligible for foster care payments. This allows youth to save for college, an apartment or other needs that are critical to successful independence.

- Establishes accountability for states in implementing the independent living programs by requiring data collection and evaluation of programs. $2.1 million is set aside for a national evaluation and for technical assistance to states in assisting young people transitioning from foster care.

Summary Provided by the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means

Improved Independent Living Program. Provides states with a block grant of about $140 million per year to help children in foster care negotiate the transition from foster care to independent living as an adult. The major focus of the new program is on preparing these adolescents to work or to continue their education.

Medicaid Amendments. Permits states the option of providing Medicaid coverage to those 18, 19, and 20 year olds who have left foster care.

Adoption Incentive Payments. Authorizes additional funds to pay adoption incentive payments to states that increased their level of adoptions in FY 1998.

Supplemental Security Income Fraud Prevention. A series of SSI fraud provisions is included. One of these provides new authority for the Commissioner to discover hidden assets in financial institutions as well as authority to use new debt collection methods such as state and federal intercepts. Also included in this title is a provision that makes certain World War II veterans of the U.S. armed forces eligible for continued SSI benefits if they move outside the U.S.

Narrowing the Hold-Harmless Provisions in Child Support. Limits the hold-harmless requirement of current law by stipulating that states would only be entitled to hold harmless funds if the state's share of child support collections are less than they were in FY 1995 and the state has distributed and disregarded to Title IV-A families at least 80% of child support collected on their behalf in the preceding fiscal year or the state has distributed to former Title-A recipients the state share of child support payment collected via the federal income tax offset program. If these conditions are met, the state's share of child support collections would be increased by 50% of the difference between what the state would have received in FY 1995 and their share of child support collections in the fiscal year in question.

Technical Corrections. A series of technical corrections to the 1996 welfare reform is included.

This bill saves money by reducing fraud in the Supplemental Security Income program and more equitably sharing with states the financing of child support enforcement, and uses the money to help children who age out of foster care. The bill is revenue neutral over one year and five years.

PUBLICATIONS BY THE IEL POLICY EXCHANGE

Special Reports

Solving the Maze of Federal Programs for Children & Families: Perspectives from Key Congressional Staff, Special Report #1, 1993, $10

Linking Schools with Health & Social Services: Perspectives from Thomas Payzant on San Diego's New Beginnings, Special Report #2, 1994, $10

Who Controls Major Federal Programs for Children & Families: Rube Goldberg Revisited, Special Report #3, 1995, $20 (includes two color posters)

A Primer on Program Rules for Five Major Federal Programs—AFDC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Section 8 Housing and Public Housing, Special Report #4, 1995, $15

Workbook of Application Packets for San Diego Assistance Programs, Special Report #5, 1995, $40

The ABC's of the Federal Budget Debate, Special Report #6, 1996, $5

The New Oregon Trail: Accountability for Results, Special Report #7, 1996, $5

Steer, Row or Abandon Ship? Rethinking the Federal Role for Children, Youth & Families, Special Report #8, 1997, $5

Partnerships for Stronger Families: Building Intergovernmental Partnerships to Improve Results for Children and Families, Special Report #9, 1997, $5 (first ten copies at no cost)

Mixed Results: Lessons Learned from a Case Study of Interagency Collaboration, Special Report #10, 1998, $5

The Measure of Success: What Are the Policy Implications of the New National Indicators of Child Well-Being?, Special Report #11, 1998, $5

Strategies to Achieve a Common Purpose: Turning Good Ideas into Good Policies, Special Report #12, 1999, $5

The Federal Role in Helping Young People Transition from Foster Care: The Independent Living Program and More (Transcript of a July 23, 1999, IEL Policy Exchange seminar), Special Report #13, 1999, $3

Foster Care: A Guide to Who Controls Federal Programs, Policies & Purse Strings, Special Report #14, 2000, $2

Other Publications

Understanding Flexibility in Federal Education Programs (developed with the Center on Education Policy), 2000, $5

Standards Count: How Can the National Assessment of Educational Progress Make a Difference in the Next Ten Years? (Papers prepared for the Tenth Anniversary Conference of the National Assessment Governing Board, produced cooperatively with the National Assessment Governing Board), 1998, no cost

Flexibility in Federal Education Programs: A Guide Book for Community Innovation (developed with the Center on Education Policy), 1997, $4

Simulation Hearing on Obtaining Federal and State Assistance (Transcript of a March 27, 1995, Congressional Hearing), 1995, $5

Dollars and Sense: Diverse Perspectives on Block Grants and the Personal Responsibility Act (produced cooperatively by the IEL Policy Exchange, the American Youth Policy Forum, and the Finance Project), 1995, $5

Comprehensive Strategies for Children and Families: Report on an October 4, 1994 Seminar (co-sponsored by the Domestic Policy Council of the White House and the IEL Policy Exchange), 1994, $10

Institute for Educational Leadership

The Institute for Educational Leadership helps institutions and individuals work together across boundaries to make better decisions and to take actions that improve the educational, social and personal development of children and youth.

The IEL Policy Exchange improves policies and programs for children, families and communities by connecting policies and policymakers across systems, levels of government and ideologies.

Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 822-8405. Fax: (202)872-4050. E-mail: iel@iel.org
IEL Web site: www.iel.org
Policy Exchange Web site: www.policyexchange.iel.org