

Designing Foster Care to 21: A Discussion Guide for State Leaders

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The passage of the landmark Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 gives the states the option to extend Title IV-E eligibility for young people up to the age of 21. States are able to receive federal reimbursement for qualifying young people under three IV-E programs:ⁱ

1. Foster Care Maintenance: for young people who remain in foster care placements;
2. Adoption Assistance: for young people adopted at age 16 or older through their 21st birthday; and
3. Guardianship Assistance: for youth that enter into relative guardianship at age 16 or older through their 21st birthday.ⁱⁱ

State leaders considering the opportunities to extend IV-E eligibility presented by Fostering Connections face a variety of design decisions regarding how best to structure supports and services for older youth in foster care. This brief is intended to support state leaders in that decision making process. The brief begins with general considerations for designing foster care and permanency services and supports beyond age 18, lays out a series of design questions to guide state conversations, and includes case studies from two states that have recently undertaken planning processes in consideration of extending IV-E eligibility.

General Design Considerations

State leaders considering extending IV-E eligibility beyond age 18 should design program and policy options taking into account:

- **The requirements of the federal law.** Fostering Connections creates educational and employment requirements for IV-E eligibility. While state leaders may want to extend eligibility for services beyond those requirements, state leaders should also be cognizant of what services for what young people are eligible for federal reimbursement, and what services would need to be covered solely with state funds.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **What supportive programs and policies are best calculated to achieve desired results for young people.** State leaders should clarify what results they are seeking to achieve for young people transitioning from foster care - and what supports and services are needed to accomplish those results. Placement and case management services are one (albeit critical) part of a comprehensive service package to support young people in transitioning from foster care.
- **How to build on supports and services already in place for young people currently in and aging out of care.** To efficiently and effectively ramp

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up services, state leaders should consider how best to take advantage of existing capacity for service delivery in the state, as well as how best to connect and coordinate with other agencies (such as workforce, education, housing and juvenile justice partners) providing supportive services.

- **How to structure supports and services that are appealing and appropriate for young adults.** Young adults age 18 to 21 are developmentally different than their teenage counterparts, with growing maturity and capacity for decision making and a stronger desire for more independence and autonomy. Supports - from case management approaches to housing placements - need to be structured to reflect the unique developmental stage of young adults.
- **How to ensure permanency remains at the forefront of case management.** Permanency is just as important for 18 to 21 year olds as it is for younger children and youth in foster care. However, extending eligibility for the foster care maintenance program, without extending eligibility for adoption assistance or guardianship assistance could create disincentives to permanency. State leaders should strongly consider extending eligibility across all three IV-E programs to ensure permanency remains a priority goal for all young people in their care.
- **How to structure judicial oversight in a way that best supports and engages youth adults.** Judges and legal advocates have a critical role to play in supporting older youth and young adults in foster care. State leaders should consider what judicial practices - including how hearings and reviews are structured and approaches for legal representation - best support young adults are the key decision maker in and driver of their case and transition plans. State leaders should also consider what training might be needed for judges and advocates in serving a new population.

Key Design Questions

With those general considerations in mind, state leaders need to make a variety of decisions related to the design of supports and services for older youth in foster care. These decisions include programmatic issues of eligibility, case management, and placement options as well as judicial considerations. Clarifying the design of supports and services for older youth in foster care helps state leaders create a common vision for policy and practice among key stakeholders. Developing detailed recommendations related to the design of supports and services for older youth is also an essential first step in developing cost projections of extending IV-E eligibility. (For more information on developing cost projections of the net fiscal impact of extending IV-E eligibility, see the Resource Center's companion issue brief.) Below is a set of design questions state leaders can use as a discussion guide to support conversations in their state. A list of resources is included at the end of the brief that can help supplement these conversations.

Eligibility

- **For which IV-E programs will you extend eligibility?** Extending eligibility for foster care maintenance, without extending eligibility for adoption and guardianship assistance programs can create disincentives to permanency.
- **How long must a youth be in care prior to age 18 to be eligible for services beyond age 18?** States have discretion in creating these standards.
- **Will youth be eligible to re-enter care after age 18 should they choose to return?** Under what parameters? Do they have to return within a specified time frame?
- **Are youth in the juvenile justice system eligible for services as they age out of the juvenile system?**
- **What supports and services, in addition to foster care services, such as post-custody services,^{iv} remain in place?** If the state already has supportive services in place for 18 to 21 year olds, how does IV-E eligibility relate to eligibility for other services?

Case Management

- **What will case management requirements be for young people over the age of 18?** While federal guidance is not yet out, most experts assume the same case management requirements (such as monthly visits and case planning) will apply to young adults.
- **What case management model makes sense?** A growing body of research and experience demonstrates that permanency teaming models is a highly effective practice model for older youth and young adults. Intentional efforts to surround a young person with a committed team can support a variety of improved educational, economic, and well-being outcomes, as well as ensure that the young person leaves care with permanent connections to caring adults.
- **Who will deliver case management services?** Will case management be delivered through additional staff of the child welfare agency or through contracts with private agencies? How can you effectively and efficiently expand capacity to deliver expanded and/or different services?
- **What is the caseload size for older youth over 18?** Will case managers have specialized caseloads and work exclusively with older youth or will caseloads be mixed? If caseloads are blended, how will those caseloads be handled? Consider the unique skills and knowledge a case worker might need to effectively provide case management services for young adults - such as a desire to work with an older population, ability to help older youth develop decision making skills and assume greater responsibility, and knowledge of supports and services offered by other public and private agencies.

Placement

- **What placement options will be available to young people over 18?** Options may include family foster homes, group homes, child care institutions, as well as supervised independent living arrangements. What placement settings currently exist for young adults in the state? Are there gaps in placement options?
- **What should supervised independent living settings look like?** A “supervised setting in which a young person is living independently” is a new

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category of placement created under Fostering Connections. While federal guidance on the definition of this placement setting is forthcoming, states have the opportunity to consider the range of potential placement settings that enhance good practice in serving youth adults. What level of supervision is required under this placement setting? What type of housing arrangement is included? How can you create a system of supportive placements that allow a young adult to move from a higher level of supervision to growing independence while supporting placement stability?

- **Are direct stipends to young people allowed?** Several states support young adults transitioning from foster care with direct stipends that the young person uses for costs of daily living as a way to continue to support young adults' expanding responsibility and independence. In the absence of federal guidance, states may want to consider if and how direct stipends to young adult fit into their practice approach.

Judicial Oversight

- **How should judicial oversight be structured for young adults?** In the absence of federal guidance on this issue, most experts agree that existing IV-E requirements for judicial review will extend to young people over the age of 18. These requirements include semi-annual reviews, including one annual permanency review. How will the state structure these reviews? Can or will the state use Foster Care Review Boards and/or administrative reviews as part of this process? How can the courts ensure legal processes and practices effectively engage youth people as the key decision maker in case and transition plans?
- **What legal representation is needed for youth and families of young people over the age of 18?** Depending on the structure of judicial review, will the state provide legal representation to a young person (through an attorney and/or guardian ad litem)? Will the state use Court Appointed Special Advocates for these cases? Will the birth family of young person over the age of 18 be provided legal support?
- **If the state provides for re-entry, through what process can a young person leave and return to care?** What judicial mechanism is required? In many states, the courts lack a mechanism to re-open a closed case after a young person reaches the age of 18. Title IV-E regulations will likely require an open case for the young person to be IV-E eligible. States can choose to allow a young person to voluntarily return to care after a case is closed with state funds. However, state leaders will likely want to create a system that is able to maximize the opportunity of increased IV-E funding for this population. A promising approach to structuring an option for re-entry is a trial-discharge period (which carries with it only light-touch case management) that could be adapted to enable a young person to exit care, and then re-enter at a later date.

Additional Considerations

- **What additional supports and services will be available to older youth?** Foster care services are a critical component of a service delivery model for older youth in care, but not the only type of support young people require to transition successfully to adulthood. Additional services might include:
 - Education Supports;

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- Employment Supports;
- Health and Mental Health Services; and
- Independent Living Skills.

In addition, state leaders may want to consider the specialized needs of subpopulations, include pregnant and parenting youth, Native American youth, and young adults with developmental disabilities.

- **What partnerships are required** with other public and private agencies to create a comprehensive system of support for older youth in foster care?

Tips for Structuring Design Conversations

The success of implementation of extended supports and services for older youth in foster care is dependent upon the collaborative efforts of many partners - including other public agencies, members of the judiciary, private providers, foster parents, guardians, other supportive adults, and youth themselves. Structuring an inclusive decision making process to consider the design of foster care services for young people beyond age 18 can yield far-reaching benefits. Convening a diverse planning group can help to ensure that decisions are supported by a broad range of stakeholders who have a role in the implementation of expanded services, and that final recommendations are informed by diverse views and perspectives. Below are tips for structuring and managing a conversation to design supports and services for older youth in foster care.

- **Create a taskforce.** Consider convening a formal taskforce to develop recommendations about designing foster care and supportive services for older youth and young adults. Identify the range of agencies and organizations that will have a critical role in implementing expanded services. Participants may include:
 - Leaders of other state agencies (such as education, workforce development, health and mental health, juvenile justice, and housing);
 - Judges and legal advocates;
 - Members of the legislature;
 - Representatives of independent living and youth development program providers;
 - Foster parents and guardians; and
 - Alumni and youth currently in foster care.
- **Engage young people and alumni.** Current and former consumers of foster care services are a critical voice in the design process, and can help ensure supports and services are well-calculated to address priority needs. In addition to having young people currently and formerly in foster care as full members of a taskforce, consider other opportunities to solicit input from the broader youth population. Take full advantage of youth leadership boards and alumni associations in your state. Focus groups and on-line surveys are other mechanisms to ensure the voice of young people is clearly heard throughout the design process.
- **Identify a facilitator.** Consider engaging a facilitator to support the taskforce. A skilled neutral facilitator can help to create an efficient and participatory planning

process, ensure diverse views are heard and effectively reconciled, and keep the conversation on track.

- **Take stock of supports and services already in place.** A useful first step in design conversations is to assess what supports and services are already in place, what data do you have to help you ascertain what's working well, what could be improved, and what gaps remain. This inventory can provide a helpful starting point for conversations. Consider involving young people in preparing this inventory.
- **Connect design conversations to cost projections.** Reaching agreement on critical design decisions is a key step in determining the net fiscal impact of extending IV-E eligibility. Consider the level of detail and specificity of decision making required to support the development of cost projections. (For more information on developing cost projections, see materials from the Fostering Connections Resource Center's recent webinar on this topic.)
- **Document your decisions.** To ensure the good thinking of the taskforce isn't lost, make sure to document decisions made throughout the process and produce a final report or statement for the group to adopt.

Conclusion

The Fostering Connections Act provides an unprecedented opportunity to expand formal supports and services for older youth in foster care. State leaders can use this opportunity not only to extend the foster care maintenance program, but also to reconsider the variety of types of supports young people need to successfully transition to adulthood. This issue brief can help state leaders in structuring those design conversations and in making a variety of design decisions aimed at improving outcomes for older youth and young adults in foster care.

Selected Resources to Support Design Conversations

The following resources and organizations can provide additional information on innovative approaches and promising practices related to key programmatic and judicial design issues.

General Design Resources

Casey Family Programs State Child Welfare Policy Database.

www.childwelfarepolicy.org/pages/map.cfm

ABA Commission on Youth At Risk. Resources from the Fostering Connections National Summit (April 2010). www.abanet.org/youthatrisk/fostering_connection_summit.shtml

National Foster Care Coalition. www.nationalfostercare.org

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. www.jimcaseyyouth.org

Case Management and Permanency

Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services (December 2008). From Inspiration to Action: A Summary of the 2008 National Convening on Youth Permanence.

www.youthpermanence.org/pdf/materials/mat_2008/summary_2008.pdf

Annie E. Casey Foundation (September 2008). Recommendations of Youth and Young Adults from the 2008 National Convening on Youth Permanence.

www.youthpermanence.org/pdf/materials/mat_2008/recommendations-of-youth.pdf

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections.

www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/

Placement Settings

Child Welfare League of America (2005). CWLA Standard for Transition, Independent Living, and Self-Sufficiency Services. Available for purchase at

www.cwla.org/programs/standards/cwsstandardsindependentliving.htm

National Resource Center for Youth Development. www.nrcyd.ou.edu/default.html

Judicial Oversight

Peters, C., Claussen Bell, K.S., Zinn, A., George, R.M., & Courtney, M.E. (2008). Continuing in Foster Care Beyond 18: How Courts Can Help. Chicago: Chapin Hall, University of Chicago.

www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Beyond%2018%20Issue%20Brief%20re%20design%2002-04-09.pdf

The American Bar Association. The Bar-Youth Empowerment Project. Get summit cite here

www.abanet.org/child/empowerment/home.html

National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues.

www.abanet.org/child/rciji/home.html

Acknowledgments

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About the Fostering Connections Resource Center

The Fostering Connections Resource Center is a gathering place of information, training and tools related to furthering the implementation of the Fostering Connections law. Specifically, the Resource Center aims to connect implementers with the latest information and the best experts and advocates working on these issues. The Fostering Connections Resource Center is supported through the generous contributions of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Dave Thomas Foundation on Adoption, Duke Endowment, Eckerd Family Foundation, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Sierra Health Foundation, Stuart Foundation and Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Child Trends and The Finance Project have primary responsibility for managing the Resource Center. The information and materials disseminated by the Resource Center have been assembled from a variety of sources, including state and national experts, leading child welfare organizations and state agencies.

Case Study: Iowa's Design Recommendations for Extending IV-E Eligibility to 21

Overview of Process and Current Supports

In the summer of 2009, the Children's Justice State Council (chaired by the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court) developed a taskforce to consider costs of extending care to 21. Taskforce members included representatives from state and local offices of the Department of Human Services, Education Department, Medicaid, foster parents, juvenile court judges, attorneys, Foster Care Review Boards, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Aftercare Services Network, and alumni of foster care. State leaders engaged The Finance Project through the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative to support design conversations and develop a fiscal analysis of extending IV-E eligibility. The taskforce convened June 2009 with a kick-off meeting. A design subcommittee met through two in-person meetings to develop recommendations on which cost estimates could be made. The recommendations were reviewed and modified by the full Taskforce. The Taskforce reviewed a final report and presented its findings to the Children's Justice State Council in February 2010. Next steps include further refining and vetting the design with additional stakeholders in preparation for possible legislative action in 2011.

About 450 young people age out of Iowa's foster care system annually. Iowa's current investments in serving these young adults include statewide access to aftercare services, monthly financial assistance in the form of a means-tested stipend for those who meet other eligibility requirements similar to those in Fostering Connections, and college financial aid. In addition to its annual federal Chafee allocation of approximately \$2 million, Iowa appropriates more than \$3 million in state funds to support this population.

Case Management, Transition Planning, and Permanency

Critical design assumptions regarding the case management approach for young people 18 and older in Iowa included:

- Consistent case management practice and transition planning services should be **available to all young people 18 and older in foster care across the state.**^v Case management should focus on teaching self-advocacy, fostering supportive relationships, connecting young people to multiple community supports, and empowering young people as the leaders and key decision makers regarding their future.
- Young people will have **the choice to opt-in to foster care at age 18**. Young people who choose to remain in foster care past age 18 will have the choice to opt-out of continued custody anytime thereafter.
- If a young person chooses to opt-out of continued custody on their 18th birthday or anytime thereafter, **the young person will be allowed to re-enter care**.
- Iowa will **contract with private providers** to offer direct services and employ the same standards currently employed for aftercare case management (maximum caseload of 1:25 and minimum of two face-to-face meetings per month). Specialized contracted staff should be knowledgeable about youth development, effective at working with young people, and knowledgeable about how to coordinate with relevant adult systems.
- **The Dream Team model** (a youth-centered, team approach to planning) should be expanded as the primary transition-planning approach with young people 18 and older.

- Young people who choose to leave foster care will **continue to have access to Aftercare^{vi} supportive services at the same level they are currently provided**, but not be eligible for monthly maintenance payments.

Housing and Placement

The Taskforce recommended that Iowa should implement a continuum of placement settings that provide a graduated progression of structure and supervision to greater levels of freedom and independence and that placement decisions be made in partnership with the young person. Available placement settings will include:

- **Family-based foster care.**
- **Transitional placements**, which may include community-based apartments or cluster site arrangements in which foster care maintenance payments are paid to licensed providers. They are meant to help youth transition from group care or family-based foster care to settings where youth exercise a higher degree of independence. Transitional placements include a high level of supervision, independent living skills training, and supportive services. In some cases, youth with mental health needs or other challenges may remain in this placement setting more long-term.
- **Independent living placements**, which may include community-based apartments, college dormitories, and host homes in which foster care maintenance payments are paid directly to the youth. For a young person that moves from a transitional placement to an independent living placement, the transition should focus on who receives the payments and, in many cases, should not result in a physical move for the young person. Independent living placements will receive traditional case management, but fewer supportive services and no ongoing supervision.

Judicial Oversight

The Taskforce recommended that judicial hearings should be held in an informal, youth-friendly environment, with the young person having a clear self-advocacy role. The primary focus of judicial oversight should be ensuring that young people are getting the needed supports and services to help them move toward independence, based on their transition plan. Key elements of judicial oversight will include:

- **A court review every six months**, presuming that the judge or young person could request more frequent contact if needed.
- **Maintain legal representation** for all young people 18 and older who opt to remain in care.

Supportive Services

The Taskforce agreed that a continuum of supportive services that meet the educational, employment, and physical/mental health needs of young people should be available to enable young people to succeed as young adults. Critical supportive services include:

- **Educational and vocational supports** will be provided by two Educational and Vocational Planners, which will be funded as part of the contract with the private case management provider. The Educational and Vocational Planner(s) will focus on working with child welfare agencies, local education agencies, and vocational programs statewide.

- **Financial literacy supports** will be provided by expanding the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative Opportunity Passport.TM
- **Mental health needs** will primarily be met through the increased services and supervision available in the transitional placement setting. Case management contractors will coordinate closely with the adult mental health system to make sure that youth have access to high quality mental health care.
- **Leadership and self-advocacy training** will be provided through the expansion of elevate^{vii} – a youth advocacy voice – statewide.

For more information contact Carol Behrer, CEO, Youth Policy Institute of Iowa, cbehrer@ypii.org or Doug Wolfe, Program Planner, Iowa Department of Human Services, dwolfe@dhs.state.ia.us.

Case Study: Tennessee's Design Recommendations for Extending IV-E Eligibility to 21

Overview of Process

Tennessee had been participating in the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (the Initiative) since 2003. In early 2009, state legislation created the Independent Living Oversight Committee (ILOC), which is charged with reviewing and making recommendations about independent living services for older youth currently in and transitioning from foster care. The Department of Children's Services, ILOC, and leaders of the Initiative convened a taskforce in the summer of 2009 to examine opportunities to extending foster care services to 21. The Finance Project, through the Initiative, provided support for creating design recommendations and completing a fiscal analysis of extending IV-E eligibility. A final report was presented in January 2010. Legislation to extend IV-E eligibility was proposed in February 2010.

Eligibility

Any young person who is in care on **the day before their 18th birthday and meets the Fostering Connections federal requirements** is eligible to remain in foster care until their 21st birthday, including youth in the juvenile justice system. The Fostering Connections requirements include:

- Completing secondary education or in a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- Enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education;
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers, to employment;
- Employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- Having a medical condition that renders the young person incapable of engaging in any of these activities.

After age 18, young people involved in the juvenile justice system will no longer be placed in juvenile detention facilities (which are not IV-E reimbursable). As such, these young people's Title IV-E eligibility should be re-determined and many will likely meet the requirements for Title IV-E reimbursement.

- **Young people will have the choice to opt-in to foster care at age 18.** Young people who choose to remain in foster care past age 18 will have the choice to opt-out of continued custody anytime thereafter.
- If a young person chooses to opt-out of continued custody on their 18th birthday or anytime thereafter, the young person will enter a **trial discharge status**, which is similar to Tennessee's current "trial home visit." During the trial discharge, the state will retain formal custody of the young person and will provide basic case management services, but will no longer provide foster care maintenance (room and board). At the end of the trial discharge period, the young people will have the option either to return to full custody status or to opt-out of foster care. Young people that opt to remain in custody will remain eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement.
- Young people ages 21-24 will have access to short-term, post-custody services through the Transitional Living Program (a state-funded program).

Case Management

- **Permanency** will continue to be a focus of case management services after young people turn 18. When appropriate, case managers will continue to encourage reunification, guardianship, and adoption through a young person's 21st birthday. Permanency options, including the development of lifelong connections, will continue to be discussed in case planning.
- Case management requirements will **reflect the requirements of federal mandates**, including monthly visitation, the development of bi-annual case plans, and the development of the 90-day transition plan.

Placement Settings

- Placement decisions should be made **in partnership with the young person** and the placement should represent the least restrictive option based on the level of maturity and functioning of the young person.
- Placement settings that will be available to youth ages 18-21 include traditional and therapeutic foster care, group care, and child care institutions. The state will also support the creation of a network of **supervised independent living settings** (including college dormitories and supervised apartment settings) based current models available in the state.
- When appropriate, young people **should have the option to pursue reunification with their family**. As such, the "trial home visit" option should remain open to youth ages 18-21 in foster care.

Judicial Oversight

- **Foster Care Review Boards (FCRB)** will be implemented statewide, and will review the cases of young people over age 18 every six months. The state will explore implementing specialized FCRBs to review the cases of older youth in care and consider organizing those specialized FCRBs around judicial districts rather than by county. Finally, recent alumni of foster care will be recruited to participate on specialized FCRBs.
- **Annual permanency hearings** by the courts will focus on reviewing and certifying the recommendations of the Foster Care Review Boards. Young people and case managers will not be required to attend annual court hearings.
- Young people **will not be provided with GALs or other legal representation**, as they will not be required to appear in court.

For more information contact: Debbie Miller, Director, Child and Family Policy Center, Vanderbilt University at debbie.miller@Vanderbilt.Edu or Lane Simpson, Director, Interdependent Living, Department of Children's Services, at Lane.Simpson@tn.gov.

Endnotes

ⁱ Title IV-E eligible foster youth age 18 and older must be either completing high school or an equivalent program; enrolled in post secondary or vocational school; participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment; employed for at least 80 hours per month; or incapable of doing any of these activities due to a medical condition.

ⁱⁱ The Fostering Connections Act created a new category of eligibility placement – the Guardianship Assistance Program. States have the option of claiming reimbursement for qualifying children and youth placed with a relative guardian. States can choose to also extend eligibility for these placements to older youth as well.

ⁱⁱⁱ Title IV-E eligible foster youth age 18 and older must be either completing high school or an equivalent program; enrolled in post secondary or vocational school; participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment; employed for at least 80 hours per month; or incapable of doing any of these activities due to a medical condition.

^{iv} Post-custody services often include a variety of supports and services, including parenting education, advocacy services, respite, counseling, and support groups for parents and children. States may need to tailor post-custody services to the unique needs of parents and guardians of young adults, such as how to apply for financial aid and support young people in college. It is also critical for states to consider the unique needs of young adults who are adopted versus those who enter guardianship arrangements.

^v In the summer of 2009, the Children’s Justice State Council (chaired by the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court) developed a taskforce to consider costs of extending care to 21. Taskforce members included representatives from state and local offices of the Department of Human Services, Education Department, Medicaid, foster parents, juvenile court judges, attorneys, Foster Care Review Boards, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Aftercare Services Network, and alumni of foster care. (add other participants) State leaders engaged The Finance Project through the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative to support design conversations and develop a fiscal analysis of extending IV-E eligibility. The taskforce convened June 2009 with a kick-off meeting. A design subcommittee met through two in-person meetings to develop recommendations on which cost estimates could be made. The recommendations were reviewed and modified by the full Taskforce. The Taskforce reviewed a final report and presented its findings to the Children’s Justice State Council in February 2010. Next steps include further refining and vetting the design with additional stakeholders in preparation for possible legislative action in 2011.

^{vi} Aftercare Services are designed to provide support and professional advocacy for former foster youth as they transition to adulthood. Aftercare Services assist eligible foster care alumni to find housing, locate medical care professionals, get job training, reach educational goals, find a job, and can assist with emergency or unexpected bills to assist youth become independent adults.

^{vii} **elevate** is the result of a unique collaboration between CFI, the Iowa Department of Human Services, and the Iowa Legislature. Originally formed in 2005 with Iowa Department of Human Services adoption incentive monies, **elevate** was developed as a vehicle for youth advocacy and to enhance recruitment of more foster homes for teens. As the group grew and more teens became involved, it was apparent that there was a need for an active voice for foster/adoptive children. **elevate** became this voice, and it has since become a force of change and education in Iowa’s Child Welfare system. For more information visit www.cf Iowa.org/OurPrograms/elevate/tabid/164/Default.aspx.