



*Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs*

**Evaluation of the Independent Living – Employment  
Services Program  
Kern County, California:  
Final Report**

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Maria Woolverton, Project Officer  
Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation  
Administration for Children and Families  
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**Authors:**  
Mark E. Courtney  
Andrew Zinn  
Robin Koralek  
Roseana J. Bess

**Contract Number:**  
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**Contributing Authors:**  
Matthew Stagner  
Michael Pergamit  
Heidi Johnson

**Project Coordinator:**  
Matthew Stagner

---

The Urban Institute  
2100 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago  
1313 East 60th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637

National Opinion Research Center  
The University of Chicago  
1155 East 60th Street  
Chicago, IL 60637

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# **Evaluation of the Independent Living – Employment Services Program Kern County, California**

## **Executive Summary**

### *Background*

Approximately 424,000 children lived in out-of-home care as of September 30, 2009, the most recent date for which national estimates are available (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] 2010). Of the estimated 276,000 children who left out-of-home care in the United States during fiscal year 2008, 86 percent went to live with family, were adopted, or were placed in the home of a legal guardian (DHHS 2010). Eleven percent (or about 29,000) remained in care until they were legally “emancipated” to “independent living,” usually due to reaching the age of majority or upon graduation from high school. Research findings suggest that the transition to adulthood for foster youth in the United States is difficult. Many former foster youth have poor early adult outcomes, including limited educational experiences, mental health problems, criminal behavior, unemployment, homelessness and housing instability.

These poor outcomes suggest the need for services to prepare foster youths for the transition to adulthood. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to create the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), giving states more funding and greater flexibility in providing support to youths making the transition to independent living. It also required evaluation of such services. In response to this requirement, The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) contracted with the Urban Institute and its partners – Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the National Opinion Research Center – to conduct the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs.

### *The Evaluation*

The goal of this Multi-Site Evaluation is to determine the effects of the programs funded under CFCIP in achieving key outcomes for youths. These include increased educational attainment, higher employment rates and stability, greater interpersonal and relationship skills, reduced non-marital pregnancy births, and reduced delinquency and crime rates. Four programs are being evaluated under this contract. The subject of this report is one of these programs: the Independent Living – Employment Services Program (IL-ES) in Kern County, California.

The IL-ES program is modeled on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work development assistance, and is based on an encouragement model. In the case of the IL-ES program, this encouragement takes the form of an introductory letter, as well as weekly newsletters to the youth. IL-ES offers individualized employment assistance to foster youths age 16 and older, and services are tailored specifically to the youths’ needs and goals. The primary goal of the IL-ES program is to improve employment outcomes by providing one-on-one job search counseling to foster youths. A secondary goal is to ensure youths will have the resources to avoid future use of public assistance. Another major component of the IL-ES program is helping youths to develop life skills. In addition to one-on-one job search counseling and

preparation through six types of services, staff tries to build rapport with youths and help them to gain confidence in the employment interview setting.

This report focuses on program operations during the evaluation period (i.e., 2003-2008). In June 2009, the IL-ES program was terminated due to budget cuts in California.

### *Sample Overview and Interview Process*

This evaluation explores the impacts of the employment services offered to youths in Kern County, California, aged 16 and older in the child welfare system. The main source of data for identifying program impacts is interviews with foster youths. To assess the impacts of the program, a rigorous, random assignment process was employed. A list of eligible youth names was received, and youth were assigned to either the IL-ES program (treatment) or control groups.

Eligible youths for IL-ES are those aged 16 years and older who are in foster care, probation, or subsidized guardianship, as well as youths who have aged out of foster care. Services are available to youths up to age 21, provided youths are engaged with the Independent Living Program (ILP) and eligible for independent living services in Kern County. The sample for this evaluation consists of 254 youths who turned 16 years old between September 2003 and July 2006 or who entered foster care during that period and were already at least 16 years old. The youths were in foster care placements under the guardianship of the Kern County Department of Human Services. To be in scope for the study, the youths had to be in out-of-home care, eligible for Chafee services, and in a placement in Kern County. Each respondent was asked to participate in an initial interview and two follow-up interviews. Each follow-up interview was to take place approximately one year after the previous interview with that respondent. The youth questionnaire, designed by the evaluation team and primarily based on questions from existing surveys, serves as the primary data collection tool used in the study. The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 90 minutes, with actual average times closer to 100 minutes. Employment outcomes two to four years after the last interview were analyzed using Unemployment Insurance wage data.

Baseline interviews were conducted with 136 youths in the treatment group and 118 youths in the control group, or nearly 97 percent of the in-scope sample. In both follow-up interviews (i.e., one-year and two-year follow-ups), 229 youths were interviewed for a retention rate of 90.2 percent. The small attrition experienced was largely due to an inability to locate youth, for reasons that included changing placements, reunifications, and runaways.

Comparisons of the baseline characteristics of IL-ES and control group youths showed no statistically significant differences. There were also very few significant differences at baseline in the proportions of IL-ES and control group youths reporting prior receipt of independent living services.

### *Impact Findings*

The IL-ES program is intended to provide youths with the resources and skills needed to gain employment. Outcomes of interest that were examined to evaluate the program's impact

included: perceived preparedness for various tasks associated with independent living, education and employment, and economic well-being. Data concerning a number of other domains, including physical and mental health, substance abuse, level of social support, and deviant behavior, were also collected during the course of the evaluation. Many of the outcomes assessed (e.g., economic hardship, high school graduation) were essentially undefined at the first follow-up for the youths still in substitute care (which was 68 percent of youth at the first follow-up interview). Therefore, the impact analyses were limited to outcomes observed at the second follow-up interview only.

Despite assignment of the treatment group to IL-ES, there were few statistically significant differences in the proportions of youths reporting receipt of independent living services *by the second follow-up*, and no statistically significant difference in the proportions of youths reporting receiving employment related services.

The impact evaluation found no significant differences in employment or other key outcomes measured at the second follow-up interview between the program and control groups. Nor were longer-term program impacts identified using unemployment insurance wage records.

### *Lessons for Independent Living Programs*

The Multi-Site Evaluation marks the first time that independent living services have been subjected to experimental evaluation. To date, evidence supporting the effectiveness of independent living services has been limited. The Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs was undertaken to assess the impact of *existing* programs on outcomes identified in the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and sheds light on the effectiveness of only a handful of currently-available approaches to assisting foster youths in transition. Interpretation of the findings of the evaluation of the IL-ES program benefits from a consideration of the current state of research on independent living services, the evolution of such services over time, and the fact that the evaluation was a field experiment and not a demonstration project.

Given the poor employment outcomes reported in prior studies of foster youths and former foster youths (Courtney and Dworsky, 2006; Dworsky, 2005; Goerge *et al.*, 2002; Macomber *et al.*, 2008), employment support would seem to be a reasonable service to provide foster youths to help prepare them for independent living. However, with respect to the IL-ES program, our impact evaluation did not find compelling evidence that the program had any beneficial impact on any of the employment outcomes we assessed. It is important to remember that the IL-ES operated in a community context where other services targeted youth employment, and not in an environment void of employment services.

Kern County has historically had a relatively poor labor market, making it particularly difficult to assist foster youths in obtaining employment. Foster youths in Kern County appear about as likely as other foster youths to be currently employed, though foster youths are less likely than other youths to be employed. It is unknown to what extent the overall labor market in Kern County may be hindering potential effects of the IL-ES program on youth employment. The results found in this evaluation show that foster youth in Kern County are not obtaining employment that provides them with economic security as they reach the age of majority and

leave foster care. Less than half (40.2 percent) of the sample were employed at the second follow-up interview, and their average earnings were less than one-quarter the federal poverty line for a single-person household. Pursuit of education was not influencing the overall employment rate, as the rate of current employment among youths not enrolled in school is no higher than among youths enrolled in school (at the time of the second follow-up interview).

Finally, the IL-ES program does not engage in aggressive outreach efforts, and this evaluation suggests that this “light-touch” approach may not be the most effective way to support foster youths in finding and maintaining employment. The only element of the IL-ES program experienced by nearly all youths randomly assigned to participate in the program was the newsletter that was regularly mailed to them, and a third of the IL-ES group received nothing more than the newsletter. This evaluation suggests that youth need to be actively engaged in activities associated with obtaining and maintaining employment beyond what the IL-ES program provided. If moving foster youths into employment requires active engagement of the youths in activities associated with obtaining and maintaining employment, then engagement efforts need to go beyond those provided by the IL-ES program.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

## Introduction

Approximately 424,000 children lived in out-of-home care as of September 30, 2009, the most recent date for which national estimates are available (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] 2010). Of the estimated 276,000 children who left out-of-home care in the United States during fiscal year 2008, 86 percent went to live with family, were adopted, or were placed in the home of a legal guardian (DHHS 2010). Eleven percent (or about 29,000) remained in care until they were legally “emancipated” to “independent living,” usually due to reaching the age of majority or upon graduation from high school. In practice, few states allow youths to remain in care much past their 18th birthday (Bussey *et al.* 2000). About 5 percent (18,300) of all children and youths living in out-of-home care were between 18 and 21 years old.

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

These poor outcomes suggest the need for services to better prepare foster youths for the transition to adulthood. Two decades ago, there were few such services. Numerous independent living services have been developed since then as federal funding for these services has increased. A review by Montgomery *et al.* in 2006 found that no rigorous evaluations of such services had been conducted at that time. Since then, two rigorous random-assignment evaluations of foster youth programs in Los Angeles County showed that the programs had no effect compared to existing services available upon the outcomes of interest (DHHS 2008). The programs differed in their approach and are not representative of all services for foster youths aging out of care. Further assessment of various independent living services is needed to inform efforts to improve their effectiveness.

This report presents findings from a rigorous evaluation of the Independent Living – Employment Services Program (IL-ES) in Kern County, California. IL-ES provides individualized, one-on-one employment assistance to foster youths age 16 and older. The program features activities such as workshops, shopping for interview clothes, and job search

assistance. Youths are eligible to participate in the program through age 21. The program is staffed by two workers employed by CalWORKS – California’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program – who also carry small CalWORKS caseloads. We examine the program’s implementation and its impact on the youths served with a rigorous, random-assignment method that features a two-year follow-up. This is one of four impact reports from a four-site study required by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, funded by the Children’s Bureau and directed by the Children’s Bureau and the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families.

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

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

## **Overview of Legislation and Evaluation Purpose**

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

living programs:

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

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

### **Program Site Selection**

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

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

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

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

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

- Identifying independent living programs in the United States;
- Developing information on critical aspects of these programs;
- Categorizing the programs;
- Selecting programs for further study;
- Visiting the selected programs;
- Applying the criteria for evaluability to selected programs; and
- Recommending programs for evaluation.

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

Four independent living programs were selected for inclusion in the evaluation. The selected programs encompass a set of critical independent living services and represent a range of program types. The programs include an employment services program in Kern County, California, modeled on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families work development assistance; an intensive case management and mentoring program in Massachusetts; a tutoring and mentoring program in Los Angeles County; and a classroom-based life skills training program, also serving youths in Los Angeles County. These four programs are not representative of all of the different types of independent living services available to youths in the United States; rather,

they represent a range of different interventions that independent living programs use. As a result, the findings from the Multi-Site Evaluation cannot be generalized to all independent living programs. Instead, it provides insights into the effectiveness of four diverse approaches to service provision for youths transitioning to adulthood. In addition, the study team attempted to identify a housing program to evaluate and investigated several different housing programs located throughout the country. However, low numbers of participants in these programs would have made random assignment difficult and would not have provided sufficient samples for the analyses.

The IL-ES program provides a service (employment-related assistance) commonly provided throughout the United States. Although IL-ES may provide a set of services that are typical of many IL programs, there are unusual aspects of the program that may provide useful information for other independent living programs. IL-ES, for instance, is staffed by two CalWORKS workers who have received special training in helping clients obtain employment. Similarly, the program's narrow focus on assisting foster youths to attain employment is relatively unique. Many IL programs incorporate employment into their preparation efforts, but few focus on it exclusively. Further, the program works with youths one-on-one, so that services are tailored specifically to the youths' needs and goals. Aside from programmatic aspects, the program was selected because it offers an oversubscribed service, having more referrals than program participants. This enabled random assignment to treatment and control groups while the program continued at the same level of service provision.

## **Research Questions**

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

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

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

## **Research Design and Methods**

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

### **Impact Study**

The main source of data for identifying program impacts comes from interviews with foster youths. For the IL-ES evaluation, we received names of eligible youths and randomly assigned each youth to either the IL-ES (treatment) or control groups. Our target was to interview a total of 250 youths across both the IL-ES and control groups at the baseline. Each respondent was asked to participate in an initial interview and two follow-up interviews, with expected first and second follow-up retention rates of 85 and 80 percent, respectively. Each follow-up interview was to take place approximately one year after the previous interview with that respondent.

Sample Overview. The IL-ES analysis sample consists of 254 youths who turned 16 years old between September 2003 and July 2006 or who entered care during that period and were already at least 16 years old. The youths were in foster care placements under the guardianship of the Kern County Department of Human Services. To be in scope for the study, the youths had to be in out-of-home care, eligible for Chafee services, and in a placement in Kern County.

Survey participation far exceeded our expected response rates. We completed baseline interviews with 136 youths in the treatment group and 118 youths in the control group, or nearly 97 percent of the in-scope sample. Youths were very cooperative and interested in participating as

evidenced by the very small number of refusals (5 youths). Three caregivers refused to allow their youth to be interviewed.<sup>1</sup> Response rates do not differ between IL-ES and control groups. Cases determined to be out of scope after sample intake constituted 11.5 percent of the total sample. The largest category involves youths who were found to have been reunited with a parent or living with a legal guardian during the field period (17 youths). Greater detail on response and retention rates and out-of-scope conditions for the IL-ES sample population is provided in appendix A.

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

The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 90 minutes, although actual average times were closer to 100 minutes. All baseline interviews were conducted in-person,<sup>2</sup> and most of the interview was conducted with the interviewer asking the questions and recording the youths' responses on a laptop computer. Some sections of the questionnaire were administered with audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) whereby the youths could either read the questions on the computer screen or listen to a recorded voice asking the questions. In this type of interview, the computer faces the respondent and the interviewer does not see the youth's responses. Sensitive sections of the interview were conducted with ACASI.<sup>3</sup> Where required, the questionnaire was adapted to specific program sites. For example, in Kern County, the interview asked youths about services specific to the location.

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction between youth refusals and caregiver refusals is murky. When caregivers told interviewers that the youth refused to do the interview, the interviewer tried to get the youth to indicate this to her directly, because caregivers may not always speak accurately for the youths. In cases where the caregiver would not allow us to speak with the youths, we coded the case as a gatekeeper refusal.

<sup>2</sup> Although all baseline interviews were conducted in-person, several follow-up interviews were conducted over the phone. For more information on interviewing, see Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> The sections administered through ACASI were Substance Abuse, Sexual Behavior, Victimization, and Delinquency and Externalizing Behaviors.

Unemployment Insurance Wage Data. We obtained records of quarterly earnings for youth in the study from the California Employment Development Department (EDD). For each fiscal quarter between quarter 2, 2002 and quarter 4, 2009 the EDD provided information about the number of youths in the control and IL-ES groups with earnings greater than \$0. Among the youths with wages, EDD calculated the mean and median earnings in each quarter and also provided annual summary statistics (proportion employed, mean, and median earnings) for all control and IL-ES group youth with earnings during the year.

We requested wage records for 251 (out of 254) of the youth who participated in the baseline interview, from whom we had social security numbers. EDD did not provide individual wage records but aggregate summary statistics for the control and IL-ES group youth. Spanning from 2002 – 2009 the data capture youth at different ages at a point-in-time. The summary statistics for 2009, for example, include wage records for youth who were between 19 – 22 years old at the time. In contrast, the survey questionnaire captures outcomes for youth at approximately the same age at different points-in-time. That is, they were each approximately 16 years old when first interviewed at baseline between 2003 and 2006.

Notable limitations with unemployment insurance data are likely to produce an underestimation of employment among youths in the study. First, each state requires employers who pay unemployment insurance (UI) on an employee's behalf to provide quarterly wage records for that employee. UI data include information from employers within the state, so if youths were working outside of California we would not have their employment information. Second, not all employees are covered by unemployment insurance and therefore would not appear in the data. Youths in the military or who work for the federal government would not be covered. Third, informal work is not included, so only formal employment for which an employer pays taxes is reflected. To the extent that youth in the study worked outside of the state, held jobs not covered by unemployment insurance, or worked informally, we would not have their records. Fortunately, while the net effect would underestimate employment in the sample, we would expect these conditions to affect youth in the IL-ES and control groups equally. We therefore have no reason to expect a differential impact for IL-ES versus control group youths that would affect our impact estimates.

Outcome Measures. Sections of the questionnaire served to identify the services received, short- and long-term outcomes, and moderating factors that influence the efficacy of the services received. Unemployment insurance (UI) records of employment and quarterly earnings captured longer-term employment outcomes two to four years after the last interview. Table 1.1 displays categories of data collection topics (sections of the questionnaire) by their purpose for analysis. These topics were primarily addressed in the surveys, though UI wage records and qualitative data collected during the process study (described below) also shed light on some of these areas of interest.

- *Population Characteristics.* The questionnaire collected information on the characteristics of the youths, their demographics, and fixed factors such as prior experiences in care and prior victimization.

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

**Table 1.1. Conceptual Framework for Data Collection and Analytic Purposes of Questionnaire Sections**

<b>Population Characteristics</b>	<b>Intervention and Services</b>	<b>Moderating Factors</b>	<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>	<b>Longer-Term Outcomes</b>
Demographics	Independent living services of interest	Relationships	Employment and income	Employment and Income
Prior experiences in care	Other services	Social support	Education	Education
Prior victimization		Reading ability	Health behaviors	Physical health
		Living arrangements	Substance abuse	Fertility and family formation
		Substance abuse	Sexual behavior	Economic hardship or homelessness
		Pro-social and other activities	Delinquency	Mental health
		Mental health	Mental health	Victimization
		Attitudes and expectations		
		Sense of preparedness		

## Process Study

A key component of the evaluation was examining how the programs under evaluation were implemented, commonly referred to as a *process or implementation analysis*. The process study played a key role in documenting the nature of the programs, interpreting the findings of the impact analysis, and suggesting directions for refining the impact study’s design. Specifically, the process analysis describes and analyzes the programs under evaluation by addressing two broad areas: (1) the current and changing context and (2) the implementation of the services.

These two areas were addressed through collection of program data as well as site visits in each site. The program data document recruitment for and the receipt of services under the evaluation. The extent of the program data collected varies by program. However, it generally includes data on recruitment (e.g., successful and unsuccessful attempts), service participation (e.g., how much of the service the youths received, such as number of classes attended), and crossovers (i.e., control group youths who received the service under evaluation).

The site visits conducted for each program under evaluation provided an in-depth understanding of the programs and the broader independent living services available to youths in both the control and the experimental groups. During the visits, a number of semi-structured interviews were conducted with administrators from the public child welfare agency, private agencies or organizations providing services to youths in the control and experimental groups, and other key

stakeholders. Focus groups were conducted with youths who had and had not received the services. Interview and focus group protocols focused on the following areas (although not all topics were appropriate for all respondents): program planning; operational aspects; service delivery; and program assessment. In each site, members of the process study team also observed staff working with the programs under evaluation.

Site visits were conducted in Kern County in November 2003 and 2005. Table 1.2 lays out the types and numbers of respondents by qualitative method. For the first visit in November 2003, two members of the evaluation team spent one week in Kern County. During this visit, the team met with program administrators and staff affiliated with the IL-ES program as well as individuals in other organizations providing employment-related services to foster youths. The team met with staff at all levels within the Children's Services and Employment Services Divisions of the Kern County Department of Human Services (DHS) to understand the broader independent living context in the county. Two focus groups were held with youths participating in the IL-ES program, but who are not included in the evaluation (one focus group with youths ages 16-17 and the other with older youths).

For the second visit, conducted in November 2005, two members of the evaluation team spent a week in Kern County. While the purpose of the first visit was to understand the broad context of independent living services and the program under evaluation, the aim of the second visit was to understand more fully how the program operated, particularly given the turnover among IL and IL-ES staff.<sup>4</sup> Team members observed IL-ES staff and their interactions with youths. Focus groups were again held with foster youths who were not participants in the evaluation. In addition, the evaluation team met with staff from other programs serving youths aging out of foster care to gain additional information about the broader array of services available in Kern County. Specifically, the evaluation team met with staff from the Kern High School District Career Resources Department and the Kern County Probation Department.

The study team conducted follow-up phone calls with program staff in early 2009. The purpose of these phone calls was to understand whether the program had changed since the research team's visit in November 2005. Telephone interviews were conducted with the IL-ES workers and the IL-ES supervisor.

In preparation for the site visits, DHS program documents and policies relevant to independent living were collected and reviewed. This document review has continued throughout the duration of the study in Kern County.

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<sup>4</sup> Since program inception, there have been three teams of IL-Employment Services staff. The most recent transition resulted in a gap in services – although staff were assigned in July 2005, they did not begin providing services in earnest until October 2005.

**TABLE 1.2. IL-ES PROCESS STUDY RESPONDENTS IN KERN COUNTY BY QUALITATIVE METHOD**

Type of Respondent		First Site Visit (November 2003)	Second Site Visit (November 2005)	Follow-Up Interviews (February 2009)	Respondents by Type
<i>Individual interviews</i>	DHS – Children’s Services Division administrators/ managers	4	2	—	<b>6</b>
	DHS – Employment Services Division administrators/ managers	2	1	—	<b>3</b>
	ILP Social Workers	3	3	—	<b>6</b>
	ILP-Employment Services staff Supervisor	1	1	1	<b>3</b>
	Social Service Workers	2	2	2	<b>6</b>
	Other stakeholders	14	8	—	<b>22</b>
	<i>Focus group respondents</i>	DHS – Children’s Services Division staff Supervisors	4	—	—
Social Workers	7	—	—	<b>7</b>	
Youth	14	15	—	<b>29</b>	
<i>Observations</i>	ILP – Employment Services staff	—	4	—	<b>4</b>
<b>Respondents by site visit</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>90</b>

Note: DHS = Department of Human Services; IL-ES = Independent Living-Employment Services Program

As discussed earlier, program data were collected to document the recruitment for and receipt of services under the evaluation. The dates of service receipt for individual youths were collected and recorded for the following components of the IL-ES program: newsletters sent to youths; calls and home visits with youths; visits made by youths to the IL-ES program office; and employment assistance in the form of workshops, resume help, and accompaniment while shopping for clothing. These data were collected for all youths assigned to the evaluation—both IL-ES and control groups. Examining program data on youths in the control group has allowed the evaluation team to identify the extent to which violations of control group assignment occurred. These data are presented in chapter 3 of this report.

### Evaluation Challenges

The evaluation faced several challenges. First, the referral flow was low, resulting in a long timeframe for sample accumulation. Second, in any evaluation with an experimental design, there are inherent challenges in using administrative data to randomly assign participants. The information received by the study team did not always reflect a youth’s most current status and eligibility for the study; thus, some youths were later found to be out of scope for the evaluation. This further influenced the referral flow, reducing it to approximately half the number that had been expected. Finally, the evaluation faced significant challenges due to inherent characteristics of the foster care population. Similar in some respects to other disadvantaged populations, youths in the foster care system are highly mobile both when they are in care and once they have been

emancipated. These youths also have higher rates of mental health issues and behavioral issues. These challenges are discussed in greater detail in appendix A.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Independent Living - Employment Services Program: Context, Description, and Operations**

## **Introduction**

This chapter provides background information on the Independent Living-Employment Services program, which may aid in understanding the results of the impact study. It addresses the study research questions related to identifying the program's mission, service implementation, contextual variables contributing to outcomes, and program challenges. The chapter begins with an overview of the context within which the IL-ES program operated, including state and local demographics, and local policies and practices for youths aging out of foster care. The discussion then presents a logic model for the IL-ES program. The chapter also includes a detailed description of IL-ES, including staffing, referral, recruitment, and services provided. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the challenges to service provision.

This report focuses on program operations during the evaluation period (i.e., 2003-2008). In June 2009, the IL-ES program was terminated due to budget cuts in California. The program ended one year after data collection ended.

## **Context for Evaluated Program**

The IL-ES program operated within the larger context of Kern County, posing a number of challenges that might affect outcomes for youths in the study as well as program operations and implementation. Kern County is the third largest county in California in terms of land area and is largely rural, with a concentration of residents in the City of Bakersfield. However, Kern County has experienced substantial growth in recent years in part due to the low cost of housing relative to the rest of the state. The following section describes the demographic characteristics of the foster youth population in Kern County and discusses other contextual factors that may affect the outcomes of youths in this study. A more detailed summary of the state and local context and demographics is provided in appendix B.

### *State and Local Demographics*

California is the most populous state in the nation, with more than 36 million residents in 2006. Slightly more than a quarter (26 percent) of the population was under the age of 18, and 36 percent of the total population was Latino at the time of data collection in 2006. Just over 80 percent of the population age 25 and older was high school graduates, and 11 percent had less than a ninth-grade education. Eighteen percent of children under age 18 and 10 percent of families were living below the federal poverty level in 2006, when per capita income was a little less than \$27,000. Three percent of households were receiving public assistance (i.e., Cal-Works) in 2006.<sup>5</sup>

With a population of over 780,000 residents, Kern County made up only 2 percent of California's total population and makes up over 5 percent of its total land area. The population of the County is highly diverse with 45 percent of its residents having a Hispanic background and more than 5 percent having a non-Hispanic Black background. One-fifth of the County's

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<sup>5</sup> All demographic data in this section are from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2006 Data Profiles, accessed at <<http://factfinder.census.gov>>.

residents were foreign-born, and about 30 percent of its population was under the age of 18. Households in Kern County had a median income of \$43,106 and the median income of families was \$47,550. Nearly 21 percent of Kern County's population lived below the poverty line and 17 percent of its families did; almost 6 percent of households in Kern were receiving cash assistance.

The unemployment rate in Kern County, while continuously changing, is consistently higher than that of California as a whole. In 2006 Kern County's unemployment rate was 7.6 percent, ranging from a high of 9.0 percent in March to a low of 6.2 percent in September and October. In contrast, California's annual unemployment rate was 4.9 percent in 2006. The unemployment rate varies seasonally in Kern – in part due to the predominance of agriculture – with the lowest levels of unemployment in the late summer and early fall and the highest levels during the winter. During the years of the study, the annual unemployment rate dropped from 9.9 percent in 2004 (during which it peaked at 12.2 percent in March) to a low of 7.6 percent in 2006, gradually rising to an annual average of close to 10 percent again in 2008.<sup>6</sup>

### *Foster Youths in Kern County*

The IL-ES program served youths age 16 and older. Administrative data show that 322 youths age 16 and older were involved with the child welfare system on October 1, 2006 in Kern County. The most common placements of these youths were with kin, in a group home, or under guardianship.<sup>7</sup> The number of youths in care on October 1 between 2004 and 2008 ranges from a low of 295 in 2004 to a high of 322 in 2006.<sup>8</sup> An increasing number of youths ages 14 to 21 were offered Independent Living Program services from 2004 to 2008. Between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006 there were 774 youths who were offered services, including employment, housing, independent living skills, and educational goal-setting services. Of the youths offered services, 476 youths received some services.<sup>9</sup> More details on the services received by foster youths in Kern County can be found in appendix B.

### *Department of Human Services*

The Kern County Department of Human Services (DHS) is the child protection agency in Kern County. DHS, along with its community partners, provides a number of services to children and families in Kern County including child abuse prevention and treatment, family preservation, services for young parents, cash assistance, medical assistance, Food Stamps, and many other programs. DHS has ten offices located throughout the county and had an approved budget of \$144.6 million for fiscal year 2007.

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<sup>6</sup> Unemployment data in this section are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics, accessed at <<http://www.bls.gov/data/#unemployment>>. Unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted.

<sup>7</sup> Guardianship placements indicate that the caregiver (primarily kin) has legal guardianship and receives a guardianship payment.

<sup>8</sup> Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Ataie, Y., Atkinson, L., Blumberg, R., Dunn, A., & Cuccaro-Alamin, S. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research. URL: <[http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)>

<sup>9</sup> State of California Health and Human Services Agency: *Independent Living Program Annual Statistical Report, Federal Fiscal Year October 1, 2005 – September 30, 2006*.

### *Emancipation Preparation and Independent Living Services*

In Kern County, emancipation services are initiated when a youth in out-of-home care turns 15½ years old or a youth aged 15½ years or older comes into out-of-home care. At this point, a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) is developed. In addition, youths are referred to the Independent Living Program (ILP). ILP Social Workers meet with the youths to assess their appropriateness for services. If youths accept ILP services (note that participation is optional except for those youths who come into care at age 16), workers implement the services outlined in the TILP. Services available through ILP include: education planning; career planning; transitional housing for emancipated youths; transportation assistance; ILP scholarships; introduction to the California Youth Connection (CYC); incentives for ILP participation; mentoring; and assistance obtaining birth certificates, Social Security cards, California identification cards, and savings accounts. ILP staff members assess youths every six months and have a goal of updating the TILP every six months.

At age 17, all youths in foster care undergo an emancipation assessment with the ILP social worker. The emancipation assessment is used to determine what type of plan the youth has for his or her emancipation. If there is not a plan, the ILP unit calls an emancipation conference, or meeting, with the foster youth and his or her stakeholders. These individuals may include the youth's foster parent or guardian, the ILP Social Worker, the placement social worker, the Court Appointed Special Advocate, mental health providers, family, and friends. All participants sign a plan acknowledging that they will help the youth to complete his or her emancipation plan. Follow-up conferences are held every three to six months.

ILP can continue to provide services to youths until they turn 21. Upon emancipation, youths should be contacting the ILP emancipation worker who provides emancipation services to youths who have aged out of foster care. However, many youths continue to contact their initial ILP Social Worker. Services provided to emancipating youths include housing assistance, transportation assistance, a \$1000 stipend (over two years), and Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid Program). In addition, the ILP emancipation worker refers youths to food banks, educational institutions, and housing services.

In 2006, Kern County implemented a new California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP)—a project designed to promote permanency for older children and youths. Under the project, 18 foster youth group home residents between the ages of 15 and 16 and their siblings received specialized permanency planning services. This six-step initiative is designed to identify and locate relatives and other significant adults and facilitate the development of long-term and meaningful relationships between them and the youths. Staff members use an electronic database, as well as other tools including talking to individual youths, to identify family members with whom meaningful, long-term connections may be developed.<sup>10</sup>

There are three primary housing programs available for youths engaged in ILP services in Kern County. The first, *Building Blocks*, is operated in collaboration with the Housing Authority of

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<sup>10</sup> This project is similar to “family finding” efforts supported in new federal legislation, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (Public Law 110-351).

Kern County and is available for youths ages 18-21 that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. A maximum of 14 youths live in furnished apartments for up to 18 months and receive comprehensive services related to independent living, including development and monitoring of individualized case plans. In addition to participating in ILP services, residents are required to work or attend school. While participating in the *Transitional Housing Placement Plus Program: H.O.S.T. Families*, youths live with an approved HOST family for up to one year while receiving a monthly stipend. Similarly, youths residing in *Scattered-Site Housing* receive a monthly stipend for up to one year. There are ten slots for youths in both the HOST and Scattered Site housing. Two ILP social workers are assigned to develop and monitor case plans for Building Blocks residents and one is assigned to do the same for HOST homes/Scattered-Sites.<sup>11</sup> Youths may also receive mentoring services through Garden Pathways Inc.'s Family to Family Mentoring program.<sup>12</sup>

Other programs available to youths in Kern County include Project Success and Adolescent Career Transition (ACT), operated by the Kern High School District. ACT is designed to help emancipated youths achieve self-sufficiency. The program is designed for high school graduates or "near diploma" students. ACT participants get up to 500 hours of paid work experience and workshops focused on life skills. Project Success is program for in-school foster youths, ages 14 to 18. The program provides workshops three times a week in a local high school. Workshop topics include job seeking, resume writing, and job retention. After attending six weeks of workshops (i.e., 18 sessions), youths participate in 150 hours of paid work experience. Upon program completion, youths receive five credits toward high school graduation. At least some of the youths engaged in the IL-ES program received these services.

## **Program Description**

While the impact study provides evidence as to whether the IL-ES program had the intended impact on youths, the process study and specifically the program description provide important information about the nature of the program including implementation, staffing, services provided, and the referral processes.

### *Program Structure*

The Independent Living-Employment Services (IL-ES) program was created in 1999. The program was a collaboration between DHS' Children's Services Division, which offers child welfare services, and the Employment Services Division, which offers public assistance services. The two divisions jointly funded the program, with the Employment Services Division funding staff time through CalWORKs (California's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program)

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<sup>11</sup> As of January 2009, Kern County was in the process of contracting these services out to a private provider.

<sup>12</sup> In late summer-early fall 2008, the "Dream Center and Coffee House" opened through collaboration between the Kern County Network for Children, Foster Youth Services, and other local agencies. Case management services are provided and staff from Kern County Probation, the Kern High School District, ILP, Transitional Age Youth (Department of Mental Health); and Big Brothers Big Sisters are co-located on-site. Services, including mentoring; tutoring; life skills; education, training and employment support; and referral and advice, are designed to help former foster youth in their transition to independence. The Dream Center Coffee House also provides job training opportunities for foster youths. This service began after the end of the evaluation period.

and the Children's Services Division funding additional supports such as bus passes, clothing allowances, etc. The IL-ES program was viewed as a being distinct from the ILP, yet was housed within the child welfare offices. There was no formal arrangement between the two divisions.

The primary goal of the IL-ES program was to provide one-on-one job search counseling to foster youths. A secondary goal was to ensure youths would have the resources to avoid future use of public assistance. The program served youths in the City of Bakersfield, the county seat and the central location for most services in the County, as well as a few small surrounding communities. Eligible youths were those 16 years and older who were in foster care, probation, or subsidized guardianship, and youths who had aged out of foster care. Services were available to youths through age 21, provided youths are engaged with ILP and eligible for independent living services in Kern County. Youths who may have been ineligible for the program included those with severe learning disabilities or other issues (e.g., substance abuse) that would impede them from looking for and securing a job.

### *Program Operations Logic Model*

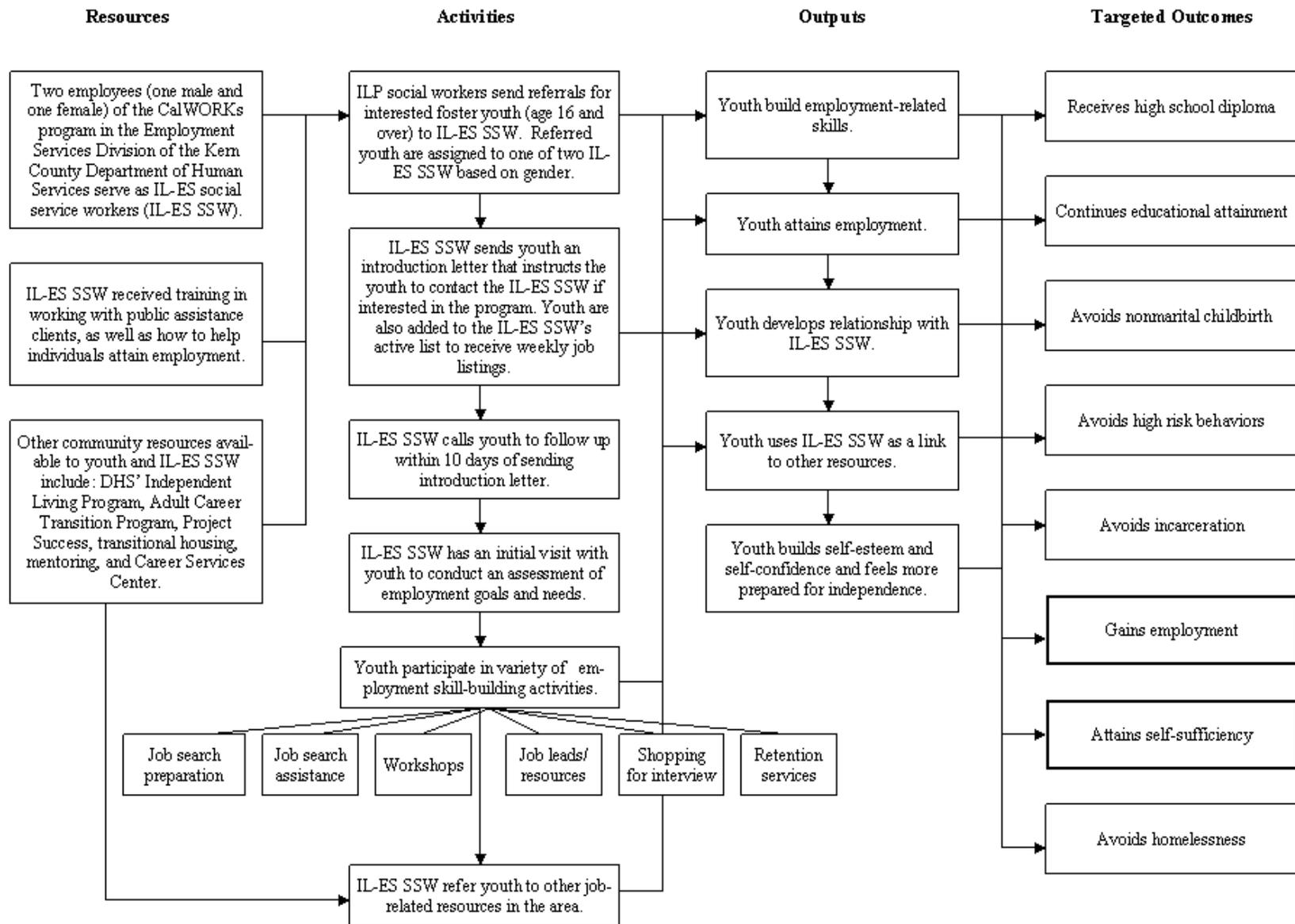
Figure 2.1 presents the logic model for the IL-ES program created by the evaluation team. The logic model is composed of four different categories: resources (inputs), activities, outputs, and targeted outcomes. In the logic model, direct links between items are denoted with a bold line, and gray lines denote possible links.

- *Resources.* There are three key resources or inputs that are supports for IL-ES program operations. The first resource(s) is the program's staffing. Two CalWORKs employees (one male and one female) serve as IL-ES social service workers. These workers are employed by DHS' Employment Services Division. The second resource for the program is the training that the two IL-ES social service workers received in working with public assistance clients, particularly around gaining employment. The final resource for the program is the variety of other community services available to youths, including DHS' Independent Living Program, the Adult Career Transition Program, Project Success, transitional housing (e.g., Building Blocks, Transitional Housing Placement Plus Program: H.O.S.T. Families, and Scattered-Site Housing), mentoring efforts, and the Career Services Center.
- *Activities.* The first two resources in the model (i.e., two IL-ES social service workers and their training in helping clients obtain employment) link directly with all of the activities listed in the logic model. Upon receiving a referral from an ILP social worker, the youth is assigned to one of the two IL-ES social service workers based on gender. Once a youth has been assigned, the IL-ES social service worker sends the youth an introduction letter that instructs him or her to contact the worker if interested in participating in the program. Youths are also added to the IL-ES weekly mailing list, which sends job leads and opportunities to youths. Within ten days of sending the introductory letter, the IL-ES social service worker calls the youth to follow-up. If the youth is interested in the program, the IL-ES social service worker holds an initial visit with the youth, either in the office or at the youth's home, to conduct an assessment of the youth's employment goals and needs. Following this assessment, youths can receive or participate in a host of services including: job search preparation and assistance, workshops to build employment-related skills, and shopping for

job interview clothes. As part of the program, the IL-ES social service workers also refer youths to other job-related or independent living services available in the community.

- *Outputs.* All of the outputs in the logic model stem from a few activities (i.e., the weekly job listings, assessment of the youths, participation in various job-related assistance, and referrals to other services). The outputs include building employment-related skills, attaining employment, developing relationships with the IL-ES social service worker, using the worker as a resource, and improved self-esteem and self-confidence.
- *Outcomes.* IL-ES outcomes are all linked to the various outputs in the model and are outcomes of interest cited in the Foster Care Independence Act. The outcomes encompass areas from education to self-sufficiency, including receiving a high school diploma; continuing education, avoiding nonmarital childbirth, avoiding high-risk behaviors, avoiding incarceration, gaining employment, attaining self-sufficiency, and avoiding homelessness. Some of these outcomes are clearly short-term goals (e.g., receiving a high school diploma), and others are long-term (e.g., attaining self-sufficiency). The majority of the outcomes, however, are both long- and short-term in that they are important in the years immediately following emancipation as well as later in life. Notably, the key outcomes for the IL-ES program are gaining employment and attaining self-sufficiency.

**FIGURE 2.1. IL-ES PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL**



### *Program Staffing*

Employment services are provided by two full-time IL-ES social service workers – one male to work with male youths and one female to work with female youths. Program staff members feel this encourages youths to connect with them as role models. Both are employed through the CalWORKs program in the Employment Services Division. As CalWORKs staff, both have been trained to work with public assistance clients, attending workshops and training dedicated to help people secure employment. The IL-ES social service workers' primary responsibilities are to teach youths how to complete job applications correctly; instruct youths on preparing a résumé when appropriate; prepare youths for job interviews; assist youths in choosing appropriate interview/work apparel; and teach youths about employment-related community resources—how to access these resources, and, if necessary, taking them to these resources and helping them apply for services. While employed and supervised by the Employment Services Division of DHS, the IL-ES social service workers are physically located within the Children's Services Division close to the ILP staff. The two workers continue to carry a small caseload of CalWORKs clients.

Staff Turnover. There was considerable turnover among the IL-ES social service workers during the evaluation period (i.e., 2003 to 2008). While many of the transitions were seamless, others were not. The most recent transition for the female worker resulted in a staff vacancy for approximately five months in 2007. During this time, the male worker carried both caseloads ensuring that services were provided to both male and female youths. An earlier transition, however, resulted in a slight gap in services. In 2005, two new IL-ES social service workers were assigned to the program in July of that year, but did not begin providing services in earnest until October due to staffing constraints within CalWORKs that resulted in their needing to maintain their full CalWORKs caseload.

### *Referral Process*

Most referrals to the IL-ES program are made by ILP Social Workers. If a youth expresses interest in employment services, the ILP Social Worker completes a referral form which is forwarded to the IL-ES social service worker. Each youth referred to the program is assigned to one of the two IL-ES social service workers based on gender. Other referrals may come from the wraparound and Kin-GAP (subsidized guardianship/non-needy relatives) programs, as well as the Probation Department. Participation in the program is strictly voluntary.

### *Services Provided*

The IL-ES program is intended to provide youths with one-on-one job search counseling and preparation through six types of services: 1) an initial visit and pre-assessment; 2) job search preparation; 3) job leads and resources; 4) job search assistance; 5) topical workshops; and 6) retention services. As we describe below, the actual services received vary considerably, ranging from receipt of a monthly newsletter to engagement in a variety of employment-related activities. Another component of the IL-ES program is helping youths to develop life skills. Staff members try to build rapport with youths and help them to gain confidence in the interview setting. This may include setting youths up with mock interviews and giving youths tips on how to practice

their interview skills on their own. More specific data on youths' participation in these different activities are included in chapter 3 of this report.

Initial Visit and Pre-Assessment. After receiving a referral from the ILP social worker, the IL-ES social service worker sends an introductory letter to the youth and is then supposed to contact the youth by telephone. Once a letter is sent, youths are considered to be "active" in the program. The IL-ES social service worker often makes three or four attempts to contact the youth by phone before deciding that the youth is not interested in the program. If the youth expresses interest in finding a job or in the IL-ES program, the worker attempts to arrange an initial visit. Even if the youth does not want a meeting, s/he is considered to be an active program participant and will continue to receive mailings (described below). Social service workers continue to contact youths by mail and telephone throughout the year.

The initial meeting between the IL-ES social service worker and youth takes place either in the youth's home or a location of his or her choosing, including the Employment Services office. During this meeting, the social service worker explains the differences between the three DHS workers engaged with the youth – ILP, permanent placement, and employment services) and assesses the youth's job readiness and job search needs. This initial assessment includes an introductory questionnaire with ten questions, such as "if you were looking for a job, what resources would you use?" The questionnaire helps the worker assess the youth's writing and spelling abilities. In some cases, the worker will have the youth complete the assessment verbally to test the youth's verbal abilities.

Job Search Preparation. Job search preparation, which typically takes place after the initial visit, focuses on more in-depth job search skills. The IL-ES social service worker helps the youth complete a "master application" which includes information on the youth's past work history, language skills, education, and references. Information from the master application is then used by the worker to create a resume for the youth. The youth provides input on the template and style for the resume, and the caseworker then prints out several copies of the final resume for the youth (although youths may not receive electronic versions of the resume to modify and keep on their personal computers). Other activities include conducting mock interviews, completing employment applications, networking, and discussing appropriate dress for interviews and work. Staff may also help youths buy appropriate clothes for job searching and employment. Youths are given an allotment of \$100 to buy interview clothes, typically through Wal-Mart gift cards.

Workshops. Periodic workshops (on average, two to four per year) have addressed topics such as networking and completing master applications. Others were more social in nature, including pizza parties, ice-skating, bowling, and other fun activities. IL-ES social workers also present information on the IL-ES program and work-related issues through the independent living classes offered at Bakersfield Community College.

Job Leads and Resources. Job leads are mailed to youths weekly. Staff members use CalJOBS, the state's automated job listing service, and other local resources to compile a list of appropriate openings. In addition, job openings are posted on a wall across from the employment counselors' offices. Staff have also introduced youths to the job-seeking resources available through the Career Services Center. IL-ES program staff members produce an "Employment Services

Weekly Newsletter” which is sent to all youths. Topics have included working styles, volunteerism, and how to behave during an interview. Following our second visit in November 2004, staff began referring youths to a job developer at the Career Services Center.

Job Search Assistance. After completing the resume and master application, IL-ES social service workers help youths with networking and job searching. They will take youths to turn in applications or interview with prospective employers. In addition, they provide bus passes that youths can use for their job searches. IL-ES social service workers may also refer youths to other programs offering employment assistance such as ACT and Project Success, described above.

The IL-ES social service workers are also responsible for maintaining regular contact with the youths. This contact varies by individual and ranges from telephone messages to in-person visits. They may discuss what is going on in youths’ lives, at school, or in the workplace and refer them to services such as housing assistance, food banks, mental health services, and pregnancy-related services. One worker develops calendars for youths to remind them of their appointments and other scheduled activities.

Retention Services. IL-ES social service workers ask youths to notify them once they have obtained a job, to be able to provide follow-up and support to youths in retaining their jobs. Since our visits, they have incorporated job retention into annual summer workshops.

## **Challenges to Service Provision**

The study has identified challenges the IL-ES program faces in serving this population of older foster youths. Understanding how well the IL-ES program adheres to its logic model as well as some of the challenges that IL-ES social service workers face in providing services to foster youths provide critical context for the impact study findings discussed in chapter 4. The following discussion highlights some of the challenges that IL-ES social service workers described and implications for other employment services programs.

Retention services are particularly challenging to deliver for the IL-ES program. Although workers ask youths to stay in touch and send updates on their work once employed, many youths do not follow up. While IL-ES workers find that they have greater success engaging youths when they have in-person contact, such as by being present at youths’ ILP meetings, their primary mode of contact with youths is through telephone calls. However, they have found that telephone calls are not a particularly effective means of engaging youths.

The voluntary nature of the program may also serve as a barrier to engaging youths. IL-ES social service workers spoke about the need to vary their service approach by the age or needs of individual youths. For some youths, gaining work skills and becoming employed is simply not a priority. Some may not be mature enough to want to take advantage of the services available through this program. Staff noted that engaging youths can be a “sales” job. They try to make themselves visible to youths by participating in ILP events, including their pictures in their monthly newsletter, etc. They try to build rapport with the youths by asking about school, siblings, boyfriends, etc. and try to connect to the youths through something in their own lives.

For example, one worker likes to talk to youths about her own first job. If all else fails, staff mention the \$100 stipend available to purchase new clothes.

In addition, youths face multiple barriers to employment. Local employers are not always receptive to hiring youths, particularly those under the age of 17. This severely limits the employment options for 16 year olds. For this reason, at least one former IL-ES worker promoted volunteerism as an alternative to employment for 16-year-old youths. An additional challenge stems from the need for transportation. Many foster parents will not transport the youths to interviews or jobs and public transportation is limited. Other challenges include frequent changes in placement that interfere with job stability and school and other extracurricular activities that limit the amount of time an individual has for work. Additionally, youths that are not doing well in school do not qualify for a work permit.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Evaluation Implementation**

## **Introduction**

This chapter builds on the previous two chapters by describing the implementation of the evaluation of the IL-ES program. To address the evaluation research question of understanding what types of youths are being served by the program, it also provides data on the youths in the study. This chapter begins by describing the development of the sample, sampling, and interview process. This discussion is followed by a comparison of the characteristics of assignment groups at baseline, including the baseline values for most evaluated outcomes. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of program participation rates, referred to as service take-up.

## **Sample Overview and Interview Process**

The IL-ES analysis sample consists of 254 youths who turned 16 years old between September 2003 and July 2006 or who entered care during that period and were already at least 16 years old. The youths were in foster care placements under the guardianship of the Kern County Department of Human Services. To be eligible for the study, the youths had to be in out-of-home care, eligible for Chafee services, and placed in Bakersfield or a nearby community. More information about eligibility for the study is included in appendix A.

Data collection exceeded its target to complete 250 interviews. A total of 296 randomly assigned youths were deemed eligible for the evaluation. Interviewing completion rates were quite high with nearly 97 percent of the in-scope sample interviewed at baseline. Of those youths interviewed at baseline, 92 percent were interviewed one year later at the first follow-up and 91 percent were interviewed at the second follow-up. Table 3.1 shows the development of the sample.

The second follow-up interview was intended to take place two years, or 730 days, after the baseline interview. For both the IL-ES group and the control group, the time between interviews was slightly longer, at a mean of 781 days and median of 751 days. The shortest amount of time in between the interviews was 669 days, and the longest was 1,470 days. Although youths in the IL-ES group were interviewed earlier than those in the control group on average (mean of 776 days compared to 786 days), the difference is not statistically significant. Thus, the outcomes assessed at the second follow-up interview are captured during essentially the same time period for both IL-ES and control group youths.

## **Post-Interview Employment**

Employment two to four years after the second follow-up interview was observed from wage records obtained from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) (see Chapter 1 for fuller description of the UI data). These data included group-level summary statistics (e.g., proportion employed, mean wages) for IL-ES and control group youth from all jobs covered by unemployment insurance between fiscal quarters 2, 2002 and fiscal quarter 4, 2009. Summary statistics for each fiscal quarter and for each year were provided for all youths in the IL-ES and control groups who worked during that quarter or year. At each point-in-time the youths who

were employed were different ages. Employment and wage records in 2004, for example, included youth who were ages 16-17. Employment and wage records in 2007 included youths who were ages 17-20 at the time.

### **Characteristics of the Evaluation Sample**

The baseline youth survey provided information about the characteristics and experiences of youths included in the evaluation, in both the IL-ES and control groups. The data presented are not necessarily representative of youths served by the IL-ES program before or after the study period, nor do they necessarily represent all foster youths in Kern County. The descriptive statistics for the characteristics of sampled youths at baseline are listed in table 3.2. These include demographic characteristics, substitute care history, measures of mental health and behavior, and several of indicators of self-sufficiency and preparedness that serve as measures of program impact in the analyses described in chapter 4. A listing of the items included in summative scales is provided in appendix C. Bivariate comparisons found no significant differences across experimental assignment groups with respect to baseline characteristics or outcomes (Table 3.2).<sup>13</sup> These data suggest that youths served by the IL-ES program may face significant barriers in their attempts to secure and maintain employment. Over half (50.8 percent) of all youths scored at or above the borderline level on one or more subscales of the Achenbach Youth Self-Report, a set of scales measuring youth mental health and behavioral problems. Significant proportions report having ever run away from care (30.3 percent) or committing at least one delinquent act (40.2 percent) during the previous 12 months, as well as having a learning disability (26.4 percent) or receiving special education service (36.6 percent).

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<sup>13</sup> Table 3.2 describes the sample of youth who were interviewed at baseline (N=254). The impact analysis that follows in chapter 4 was performed on the analytic sample of youth who were interviewed at baseline and at the second follow-up interview (N = 229).

**TABLE 3.2. BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES BY ASSIGNMENT GROUP**

Characteristic	Total (N=254)		Control Group (N=118)		IL-ES Group (N=136)		Std. Diff.	Sig. <sup>a</sup>
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)		
<b>Demographics</b>								
Male	109	42.9	57	48.3	52	38.2	0.20	0.103
Age, years (mean/s.d.)	16.00	0.58	16.02	0.60	15.99	0.56	-0.04	0.740
<b>Race<sup>b</sup></b>								
Black	57	22.4	28	23.7	29	21.3	-0.06	0.647
Other	20	7.9	10	8.5	10	7.4	-0.04	0.741
Unknown	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.7	-	0.351
White	190	74.8	89	75.4	101	74.3	-0.03	0.832
Hispanic	116	45.7	57	48.3	59	43.4	-0.10	0.432
<b>Mental health and behavior</b>								
<b>Achenbach Youth Self-Report</b>								
Internalizing								
Borderline	82	32.3	32	27.1	50	36.8	0.22	0.101
Clinical	46	18.1	17	14.4	29	21.3	0.20	0.153
Externalizing								
Borderline	71	28.0	30	25.4	41	30.1	0.11	0.403
Clinical	43	16.9	19	16.1	24	17.6	0.04	0.743
Total problem								
Borderline	83	32.7	32	27.1	51	37.5	0.23	0.079
Clinical	48	18.9	17	14.4	31	22.8	0.24	0.089
Any subscale								
Borderline	129	50.8	56	47.5	73	53.7	0.12	0.323
Clinical	72	28.3	28	23.7	44	32.4	0.20	0.128
<b>Delinquency in past 12 months</b>								
One or more delinquent acts	102	(40.2)	40	(33.9)	62	(45.6)	0.25	0.058
Delinquency scale (mean/s.d.)	0.99	(1.75)	1.01	(2.02)	0.98	(1.48)	-0.01	0.896
<b>Has children or is currently pregnant (female youths)<sup>c</sup></b>								
	11	7.6	6	9.8	5	6.0	-0.06	0.582
<b>Social support (mean/s.d.)</b>								
	7.91	5.85	8.17	6.41	7.68	5.34	-0.08	0.507
<b>Educational and learning status</b>								
Grade completed (mean/s.d.)	9.47	(0.78)	9.48	(0.82)	9.50	(9.46)	-0.02	0.841
High school diploma or G.E.D.	2	(0.8)	0	(0.0)	2	(1.5)	-	0.186
Ever attended college	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	-	1.000
Participated in special education program	93	36.6	45	38.1	48	35.3	-0.06	0.639
Learning disability	67	26.4	35	29.7	32	23.5	-0.13	0.269
<b>Employment, earnings, and net worth</b>								
Ever employed	40	(15.7)	18	(15.3)	22	(16.2)	0.03	0.841
Earnings in thousands (mean/s.d.)								
Reported by youth	0.09	(0.79)	0.14	(1.13)	0.04	(0.28)	-0.09	0.307
Net worth in thousands (mean/s.d.)	0.09	(0.45)	0.11	(0.57)	0.07	(0.31)	-0.07	0.513
<b>Preparedness (mean/s.d.)</b>								
Overall	3.35	(0.37)	3.36	(0.36)	3.35	(0.37)	-0.02	0.886
Job	3.53	(0.49)	3.54	(0.48)	3.52	(0.50)	-0.04	0.747
<b>Substitute care history</b>								
Prior group home/residential care	192	75.6	85	72.0	107	78.7	0.15	0.219
Prior runaway	77	30.3	32	27.1	45	33.1	0.13	0.302
Re-entered	73	28.7	36	30.5	37	27.2	-0.07	0.562

**TABLE 3.2. BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES BY ASSIGNMENT GROUP**

Characteristic	Total (N=254)		Control Group (N=118)		IL-ES Group (N=136)		Std. Diff.
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	
<b>Current placement type</b>							
Non-kin foster home	96	(37.8)	46	(39.0)	50	(36.8)	-0.05
Home of kin	96	(37.8)	49	(41.5)	47	(34.6)	-0.14
Group home/residential placement	56	(22.0)	22	(18.6)	34	(25.0)	0.16
Other	6	(2.4)	1	(0.8)	5	(3.7)	0.31
<b>Financial accounts</b>							
Checking	9	(3.5)	5	(4.2)	4	(2.9)	-0.06
Savings	20	(7.9)	13	(11.0)	7	(5.1)	-0.19
Any	36	(14.2)	17	(14.4)	19	(14.0)	-0.01
<b>Important documents</b>							
Social Security card	195	(76.8)	89	(75.4)	106	(77.9)	0.06
Copy of your birth certificate	205	(80.7)	96	(81.4)	109	(80.1)	-0.03
Driver's license	6	(2.4)	2	(1.7)	4	(2.9)	0.10
Driver's license or state issued photo ID	17	(6.7)	9	(7.6)	8	(5.9)	-0.07

Notes: Statistical significance is measured between IL-ES and control groups.

Std. Diff. - Standardized difference (IL-ES group mean - control group mean) ÷ control group standard deviation.

a - Control vs. IL-ES

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

c - Female youths (N=145; control n = 61, IL-ES n = 84)

## Service Take-Up

Table 3.3 shows the service take-up rates for the IL-ES program for youths in the IL-ES group and in the control group. Nearly all youths followed their assignment: overall, 97.8 percent of the youths in the IL-ES group took up the service, defined as being sent a newsletter (at a minimum), by the second follow-up interview.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to the research design, a few members of the control group also received IL-ES services; these youths are referred to as “crossovers.” Specifically, 11 (9.3 percent) of the 118 in-scope youths in the control group were crossovers.<sup>15</sup>

Although nearly all youths in the IL-ES group were sent a newsletter by the second follow-up interview, fewer received higher levels of service. Two-thirds of IL-ES group youths received any service beyond a newsletter, which could include receiving a phone call or home visit from an IL-ES social service worker, making an office visit, receiving job assistance, shopping for interview clothes, or attending a workshop. About one-fifth of IL-ES group youths received any of the most intensive services. Receiving a phone call was the most common service received beyond a newsletter, with 64.0 percent of IL-ES group youths receiving phone calls an average

<sup>14</sup> For youths who did not participate in the second follow-up interview, take-up is defined as receiving a newsletter before their eighteenth birthday (approximately the age at which other youths were interviewed at the second follow-up).

<sup>15</sup> One of the control youths who received IL-ES services did not receive a newsletter, but did receive other services. All other crossovers received at least a newsletter.

of 6 times. Service receipt was similar between the baseline sample (all youths who completed the baseline survey) and analytic sample (all youths who completed both the baseline survey and second follow-up survey).

**TABLE 3.3. SERVICE TAKE-UP IN KERN COUNTY BY SECOND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW, BASELINE SAMPLE**

	<b>Total (N=254)</b>	<b>IL-ES Group (N=136)</b>	<b>Control Group (N=118)</b>
<b>Any Service Total</b>	<b>56.7%</b>	<b>97.8%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>
<b>Least Intensive Services</b>			
Newsletter	56.3%	97.8%	8.5%
# of times received (mean)	54.2	56.1	29.3
<b>Any Service Beyond Newsletter</b>	<b>37.8%</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
# of times received (mean)	7.9	8.1	5.3
<b>More Intensive Services</b>			
Phone Call	36.6%	64.0%	5.1%
# of times received (mean)	5.5	5.6	2.8
Home Visit	11.4%	19.1%	2.5%
# of times received (mean)	3.1	3.2	2.0
Office Visit	16.1%	27.2%	3.4%
# of times received (mean)	2.6	2.7	1.5
<i>More Intensive Services Total</i>	37.8%	66.2%	5.1%
# of times received (mean)	7.3	7.5	4.8
<b>Most Intensive Services</b>			
Job Assistance	5.9%	10.3%	0.8%
# of times received (mean)	1.5	1.5	1.0
Shopping (for interview)	6.7%	11.0%	1.7%
# of times received (mean)	1.0	1.0	1.0
Workshop	4.7%	8.8%	0.0%
# of times received (mean)	1.2	1.2	0.0
<i>Most Intensive Services Total</i>	10.6%	18.4%	1.7%
# of times received (mean)	2.0	2.0	1.5

Service provision was not stable, however, over the course of the evaluation period. We examined take-up by the second follow-up interview among IL-ES group youths from different periods of the evaluation, dividing them into three groups based on the date of their baseline interview (and entrance into the IL-ES program). These analyses, shown in table 3.4, revealed a decline in service provision over the course of the evaluation. Although virtually all youths were sent newsletters, receiving services beyond a newsletter was much more common among youths at the beginning of the evaluation period. For example, while 87 percent of these youths received higher levels of service from the IL-ES program, this drops to 60 percent of youths in the middle group and just over half (52 percent) of youths who were interviewed the latest. This pattern is

similar for each specific type of service; although, the differences with respect to some service types are not statistically significant.<sup>16</sup>

**TABLE 3.4. SERVICE TAKE-UP IN KERN COUNTY BY SECOND FOLLOW-UP AMONG IL-ES GROUP YOUTHS BY BASELINE INTERVIEW DATE**

	Early interviews (N=45)	Middle interviews (N=45)	Late interviews (N=46)
<b>Any Service Total</b>	<b>97.8%</b>	<b>95.6%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Least Intensive Services</b>			
Newsletter	97.8%	95.6%	100.0%
<b>Any Service Beyond Newsletter</b>	86.7%	60.0%	52.2%
<b>More Intensive Services</b>			
Phone call	86.7%	55.6%	50.0%
Home visit	28.9%	13.3%	15.2%
Office visit	35.6%	26.7%	19.6%
<i>More Intensive Services Total</i>	86.7%	60.0%	52.2%
<b>Most Intensive Services</b>			
Job Assistance	13.3%	6.7%	10.9%
Shopping (for interview)	13.3%	13.3%	6.5%
Workshop	15.6%	4.4%	6.5%
<i>Most Intensive Services Total</i>	26.7%	15.6%	13.0%

As the IL-ES program continued to serve youths beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday through age 21, but the evaluation assessed impacts of the IL-ES program on youths up to age 18, we also examined the timing of service receipt relative to youths' ages. Among youths for whom program data were available though age 21 (N=54), very few first took up IL-ES services after age 18. Although there were slight increases in the portion of these youths who first received a home or office visit, shopped for interview clothes, or attended a workshop after age 18, most youths participating in these services after age 18 had already received them prior to the second follow-up interview. Further, few youths continued to receive IL-ES services after age 18 – 28 percent received any services beyond a newsletter, which were primarily phone calls (24 percent of youths). Less than 4 percent of youths received any of the most intensive services between the ages of 18 and 21.

<sup>16</sup> P-values associated with the difference in take-up between youth interviewed during the early and late stages of the evaluation period are as follows: any service (p=0.3118), any service beyond a newsletter (p=0.0004), more intensive services (p=0.0004), most intensive services (p=0.1009)

## **Chapter 4**

### **Impact Study Findings**

## Introduction

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

This chapter addresses the evaluation research question related to program impacts on youth outcomes by presenting the results of the impact study for the IL-ES program. The analyses presented here feature a subset of the entire sample, namely, those youths who had both a baseline interview and second follow-up interview (N=229 with 107 youths in the control group and 122 youths in the IL-ES group). The first part of the chapter contains an in-depth discussion of our analytic approach, including the specific nature of the analyses conducted and type of outcomes evaluated. Next, we describe our findings concerning differences in the levels of independent living service receipt (from both the program and other sources) across assignment and take-up groups. Finally, we present our findings concerning the impact of program on a number of different outcomes.

## Analytic Strategy

For the evaluation, youths were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, with the expectation that (a) youths assigned to the treatment group, referred to as “program group,” would receive services consistent with the design of the program and (b) youths in the control group would *not* receive any services from the program being evaluated, although they might have received similar services from other sources. It is important to note that, by design, the IL-ES program is what is referred to as an *encouragement model*. In the case of the IL-ES program, this encouragement takes the form of an introductory letter and assessment, as well as weekly newsletters. As described in chapter 3, although almost all of the IL-ES youths received one or more of the above forms of encouragement (most frequently the newsletter), only about a third received more explicit types of employment assistance (e.g., shopping for interview clothing or job assistance).

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

Bivariate ITT analyses and ITT regressions are conducted. Bivariate analyses are based on simple comparisons of means or proportions across assignment groups. For interval-level variables, OLS regressions were estimated, and for dichotomous variables, logistic regression models were estimated. The covariates included in the regression models are listed in Table 4.1. Descriptive characteristics from the baseline survey are provided in chapter 3.

<b>TABLE 4.1. COVARIATE (VALUES)</b>	
Youth demographics	
	Gender (female or male)
	Age
	Race (African American, other, white)
	Hispanic/Latino
Mental health/behavior	
	Achenbach Youth Self-Report
	Externalizing t score
	Internalizing t score
	Delinquent/antisocial behavior scale <sup>a</sup>
	Social support <sup>a</sup>
Care history	
	Currently or previously placed in a group home
	Previously ran away from a substitute care placement
	Placement type (home of non-kin, home of kin, group home or residential placement, other)
<sup>a</sup> Standardized.	

## Evaluated Outcomes

IL-ES is intended to provide youths with the resources and skills needed to gain employment. As shown in chapter 2 on page 21, the program’s logic model suggests that the program’s activities are linked to more general outcomes related to self-sufficiency and well-being in addition to employment-specific outcomes. Therefore, we evaluated the impact of the program on a wide range of outcomes, including those concerning perceived preparedness for various tasks associated with independent living, education and employment, and economic well-being. Data concerning a number of other domains, including physical and mental health, substance abuse, level of social support, and deviant behavior, were also collected during the course of the evaluation. Although these were included as covariates in our analyses of outcomes, they were seen as being outside the immediate purview of program—that is, as distal, versus proximate, outcomes. The following outcomes were examined:

- **Preparedness and job preparedness:** Youths were asked how prepared they felt in 18 areas of adult living (see appendix C). The response categories were very prepared (4), somewhat prepared (3), not very well prepared (2), and not at all prepared (1).<sup>17</sup> Efforts to identify underlying dimensions of preparedness based on these items led to the development of two scales, an overall scale of the average of all 18 items and a job preparedness scale, the

<sup>17</sup> In the original survey, preparedness items were negatively coded (i.e., lower values corresponded to feelings of greater preparedness). The valence of these items has been reversed for the sake of clarity.

average of three employment-related items.<sup>18</sup> These scales are not independent since the job preparedness items are included in the overall scale.

- Education and employment: Youth were asked about their school enrollment status, completion of a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED), matriculation at a 2- or 4-year college, and employment status. Later employment outcomes spanning two to four years after youths' last interview are based on aggregate-level wage data obtained from the California Employment Development Department (EDD). These data provide group-level summary statistics (e.g., proportion employed, mean wages) from all jobs covered by unemployment insurance between fiscal quarters 2, 2002 and fiscal quarter 4, 2009 (see Chapter 1 for fuller description of EDD data).
- Economic well-being: Reported earnings and current net worth, economic hardship, and receipt of formal and informal financial assistance.
  - *Reported earnings*: Total of earnings from formal and informal employment. Specifically, youths were asked to list their employers over the past 12 months and then to estimate how much they had earned from each. To this subtotal were added estimates of the total amount earned from all “informal jobs.”
  - *Quarterly EDD wage data*: Aggregate-level wage earnings by fiscal quarter.
  - *Net worth*: Sum of estimated bank balances<sup>19</sup> and selling prices of all vehicles, less outstanding credit card balances.<sup>20</sup>
  - *Economic hardship*: Individual items and summative scale comprising the following four questions: In the past 12 months, have you (a) panhandled or begged for money, (b) made money by recycling cans, bottles, or other items, (c) sold your blood or plasma, and (d) sold or pawned any personal possessions?<sup>21</sup>
  - *Formal financial assistance*: Youths were asked if, in the past 12 months, they had received any (a) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, commonly known as welfare, (b) Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, (c) Food Stamp benefits, (d) Supplemental Security Income benefits, (e) general relief payments, or (f) other welfare payments.
  - *Informal financial assistance*: Youths were asked if, in the past 12 months, they had received any financial help from (a) Department of Human Services (DHS) or your caseworker, mentor, or Independent Living Program, (b) a relative or friend, or (c) a community group, like a church, a community organization, or a family resource center.
- Housing: Residential stability and homelessness.
  - *Residential Stability*: Sum of self-reported number of changes in residence during the two 12-month periods preceding the first and second follow-up interviews.
  - *Homelessness*: Youths reported being homeless or having lived in any of the following during the two 12-month periods preceding the first and second follow-up interviews:

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<sup>18</sup> Means of items were used to deal with the small amount of missing data. Cases were dropped if more than 20 percent of the items were missing on any scale. Chronbach's alpha for overall and job-related preparedness were, respectively, 0.82 and 0.72 at baseline and 0.83 and 0.77 at the second follow-up interview.

<sup>19</sup> Checking, savings, and “other types of accounts where you have money available to you.”

<sup>20</sup> As of date of survey administration.

<sup>21</sup> Chronbach's alpha for the 3-item hardship scale at second follow-up was relatively low (0.45).

- (a) Motel, hotel, or SRO (single room occupancy);
  - (b) Car, truck, or some other type of vehicle;
  - (c) Abandoned building, on the street or outside somewhere;
  - (d) Shelter for battered women; or
  - (e) Shelter for the homeless.
- Delinquency: Youths were asked if they had engaged in the following behaviors between the baseline and second follow-up interviews. Comparisons were based on a summated scale and a dichotomous variable indicating any delinquent behavior.<sup>22</sup>
    - (a) Been loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place so that people complained about it or you got in trouble?
    - (b) Been drunk in a public place?
    - (c) Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus or subway rides, food, or clothing?
    - (d) Been involved in a gang fight?
    - (e) Carried a handgun?
    - (f) Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?
    - (g) Purposely set fire to a house, building, car, or other property or tried to do so?
    - (h) Stolen something from a store or something that did not belong to you worth less than \$50?
    - (i) Stolen something from a store, person, or house, or something that did not belong to you worth \$50 or more, including stealing a car?
    - (j) Committed other property crimes such as fencing, receiving, possessing, or selling stolen property, or cheated someone by selling them something that was worthless or worth much less than what you said it was?
    - (k) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them or have a situation end up in a serious fight or assault of some kind?
    - (l) Sold or helped sell marijuana (pot, grass), hashish (hash), or other hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or LSD?
    - (m) Been paid cash for having sexual relations with someone?
    - (n) Did you receive anything in trade for having sexual relations, such as food or drugs?
    - (o) Had or tried to have sexual relations with someone against their will?
  - Pregnancy: Female youths were asked if they had been pregnant at any point during between the baseline and second follow-up interviews
  - Documentation and accounts: Personal documentation (possession of Social Security card, birth certificate, driver's license or state ID card); and financial accounts (possession of checking or savings account).

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<sup>22</sup> Chronbach's alpha for the delinquency scale was 0.77 at baseline and 0.76 at the second follow-up interview.

## Service Receipt Among Sample Youths<sup>23</sup>

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

Many youths reported receiving various forms of help with the acquisition of independent living skills prior to the beginning of the evaluation (table 4.2). In other words, they had received many kinds of help from other sources before ever having enrolled in the IL-ES program, and particularly with the types of employment assistance offered by the IL-ES program. For example, some group homes provide life skills classes and other types of independent living assistance to the youths they serve. Some foster parents or kin caregivers may proactively work with the youths to prepare them for emancipation. In addition, youths may be receiving help from their Independent Living Social Worker, as discussed in chapter 2. Some youths in the evaluation also enrolled in ACT and Project Success, other employment programs available to foster youths in Kern County.

As expected, given the random assignment of youths to the two groups, there were very few statistically significant differences in the proportions of youths reporting prior receipt of independent living services *at baseline* across assignment groups (table 4.2). Surprisingly, there were also few statistically significant differences in the proportions of youths reporting receipt of independent living services *by the second follow-up*.

In brief, a larger proportion of control group youths report receiving assistance finding an apartment, or training related to health and hygiene, than do program group youths. Conversely, a larger proportion of program group youths report receiving help using a budget than do control group youths. Of particular note is the finding of no statistically significant difference in the proportions of youths receiving employment-related services. Interestingly, although the levels of reported receipt for most types of assistance were statistically equivalent across groups, a significantly smaller proportion of program youths (program: 22.1 percent, control: 35.5 percent) report that they had wanted to receive some type of independent living assistance but failed to receive it.

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<sup>23</sup> Findings regarding differences in the characteristics of assignment and take-up groups are presented in chapter 3.

**TABLE 4.2. SERVICE RECEIPT BY ASSIGNMENT AT BASELINE AND SECOND FOLLOW-UP**

Service	Baseline					Second Follow-Up						
	Control Group (N=107)		IL-ES Group (N=122)		p	Sig.	Control Group (N=107)		IL-ES Group (N=122)		p	Sig.
	n	(%)	n	(%)			n	(%)	n	(%)		
<b>In the last 12 months have you...</b>												
Attended any classes or group sessions that were intended to help you get ready for being on your own	35	(32.7)	32	(26.2)	0.282		58	(54.2)	60	(49.2)	0.448	
<b>Education (Have you received the following...)</b>												
General Educational Development test preparation	0	(0.0)	5	(4.1)	0.034	*	8	(7.5)	3	(2.5)	0.076	
ACT/SAT preparation	13	(12.1)	16	(13.1)	0.827		21	(19.6)	15	(12.3)	0.128	
Assistance with college applications	26	(24.3)	22	(18.0)	0.245		49	(45.8)	62	(50.8)	0.448	
Any of the above types of assistance	33	(30.8)	32	(26.2)	0.440		62	(57.9)	71	(58.2)	0.969	
Proportion of the above types of assistance	0.12	(0.12)	0.20	(0.23)	0.887		0.24	(0.25)	0.22	(0.20)	0.416	
<b>Employment (Have ever received the following...)</b>												
Vocational/career counseling	7	(6.5)	16	(13.1)	0.099		42	(39.3)	62	(50.8)	0.079	
Help with resume writing	45	(42.1)	41	(33.6)	0.188		66	(61.7)	88	(72.1)	0.093	
Assistance with identifying potential employers	36	(33.6)	43	(35.2)	0.799		49	(45.8)	67	(54.9)	0.168	
Assistance with completing job applications	63	(58.9)	69	(56.6)	0.723		82	(76.6)	99	(81.1)	0.403	
Help with job interviewing skills	62	(57.9)	70	(57.4)	0.931		85	(79.4)	91	(74.6)	0.385	
Job referral/placement	21	(19.6)	20	(16.4)	0.524		24	(22.4)	30	(24.6)	0.701	
Help securing work permits/Social Security cards	40	(37.4)	40	(32.8)	0.467		43	(40.2)	37	(30.3)	0.118	
Any of the above types of assistance	80	(74.8)	99	(81.1)	0.244		97	(90.7)	117	(95.9)	0.109	
Proportion of the above types of assistance	0.37	(0.35)	0.30	(0.28)	0.683		0.52	(0.28)	0.56	(0.26)	0.362	
<b>Money mgmt. (Have you received the following...)</b>												
Help with money management	52	(48.6)	73	(59.8)	0.088		79	(73.8)	100	(82.0)	0.137	
Help on use of a budget	51	(47.7)	68	(55.7)	0.222		76	(71.0)	100	(82.0)	0.050	*
Help on opening a checking and savings account	40	(37.4)	44	(36.1)	0.836		72	(67.3)	82	(67.2)	0.990	
Help on balancing a checkbook	33	(30.8)	44	(36.1)	0.404		65	(60.7)	80	(65.6)	0.450	
Any of the above types of assistance	68	(63.6)	91	(74.6)	0.070		95	(88.8)	111	(91.0)	0.581	
Proportion of the above types of assistance	0.41	(0.47)	0.38	(0.36)	0.242		0.68	(0.35)	0.74	(0.33)	0.188	
<b>Housing (Have you received the following...)</b>												
Assistance with finding an apartment	1	(0.9)	1	(0.8)	1.000		20	(18.7)	19	(15.6)	0.531	
Help with completing an apartment application	0	(0.0)	1	(0.8)	0.248		18	(16.8)	10	(8.2)	0.047	*
Help with making a down payment or security deposit on an apartment	0	(0.0)	1	(0.8)	0.248		10	(9.3)	10	(8.2)	0.759	
Any of the above types of assistance	1	(0.9)	2	(1.6)	0.640		24	(22.4)	20	(16.4)	0.247	
Proportion of the above types of assistance	0.17	(0.50)	0.24	(0.24)	0.293		0.15	(0.31)	0.11	(0.27)	0.258	

<b>Health and hygiene (Have you received the following...)</b>											
Training on meal planning and preparation	85	(79.4)	108	(88.5)	0.059	79	(73.8)	100	(82.0)	0.137	
Training on personal hygiene	101	(94.4)	113	(92.6)	0.589	71	(66.4)	65	(53.3)	0.044	*
Training on nutritional needs	101	(94.4)	111	(91.0)	0.326	66	(61.7)	60	(49.2)	0.058	
Information on how to obtain your personal health records	71	(66.4)	86	(70.5)	0.501	54	(50.5)	45	(36.9)	0.038	*
Any of the above types of assistance	104	(97.2)	118	(96.7)	0.835	92	(86.0)	105	(86.1)	0.985	
Proportion of the above types of assistance	0.84	(0.86)	0.24	(0.24)	0.523	0.63	(0.37)	0.55	(0.37)	0.117	
<b>Is there any help, training, or assistance that you were not given that you wish your agency had given you to help you learn to live on your own?</b>											
	19	(17.8)	24	(19.7)	0.711	38	(35.5)	27	(22.1)	0.025	*

\* -  $p < .05$

Note: Sample is restricted to youths who completed the second follow-up interview (N=229)

## Impact Findings

No significant differences in outcomes measured at the second follow-up interview were found between the IL-ES and control groups.<sup>24, 25</sup> For each evaluated outcome, estimated bivariate ITT analyses and ITT regressions are described below and listed in table 4.3.

- Sense of Preparedness. At the second follow-up interview, the IL-ES and control groups do not differ significantly on either the measures of overall preparedness or job preparedness.<sup>26</sup>
- Education and Employment. By the second follow-up, approximately 31 percent of the sample had graduated from high school or obtained their GED. About 1 in 6 report being enrolled in school at the time of the second follow-up interview. Over half had been employed sometime during the previous 12 months, and about 4 in 10 report being employed at the time of the second interview. The level of reported employment appears to be similar across school enrollment status. Participation in IL-ES did not, however, appear to increase the likelihood of employment or educational achievement.
- Economic Well-Being. Youths were asked a series of questions about their earnings, net worth, experiences with economic hardship, and receipt of financial assistance. None of these domains showed any significant differences across assignment.
  - *Earnings and Net Worth*. The mean reported earnings for both the control and IL-ES groups was very low, with the average for each group (control: \$1,950; IL-ES: \$1,490) well below the poverty level for single-person households (\$9,800 in 2006) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). Average net worth, which included the value of any automobiles the youths owned, was also low. No differences based on assignment were found in youths' reported income or net worth, however. In order to explore whether IL-ES participation had an impact on youths' income two to four years

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<sup>24</sup> At the first follow-up interview approximately 68 percent of the sample was still in substitute care. Given that many of the outcomes assessed here (e.g., economic hardship, high school graduation) were essentially undefined for these youths, impact analyses were limited to outcomes observed at the second follow-up interview.

<sup>25</sup> Our ability (i.e., power) to detect differences between program and control groups in the outcomes of interest is determined by several factors, including the number of subjects in each group and the expected size of the differences in the outcomes of interest. Further, depending on how differences in groups are to be measured (e.g., means, proportions) the general prevalence of an outcome, or its level of variability, can also affect whether or not differences are detected.

With respect to the comparison of the means of outcomes measured as continuous variables (e.g., preparedness), the actual number of subjects interviewed at the year-2 follow-up affords us very high power (i.e., 0.96) to detect large effect sizes. Setting statistical power at 0.80, the smallest effect size we could expect to detect is 0.37.

With respect to the comparison of proportions of outcomes (e.g., youths graduating from high school) across groups, our ability to detect differences will depend on the prevalence of the outcome itself. Given statistical power of 0.80, we could expect to detect absolute differences of about 15 percent for outcomes that are either relatively rare (0.10) or very common (0.90). For outcomes experienced by about half of the sample, however, an absolute difference in proportions of about 19 percent would be necessary.

<sup>26</sup> Total scale scores were calculated by taking the mean of all included items. Thus, possible values for both the overall and job-related scales range from 1 to 4.

after the second follow-up interview, we compared aggregated, quarterly wage records using EDD data. No evidence was found to support this hypothesis (see Appendix D).

- *Economic Hardship and Financial Assistance*. About a quarter (26.2 percent) of control group youths and a third (36.1 percent) of IL-ES youths report having experienced one or more of several classes of hardship. Slightly higher proportions (control: 42.1 percent, IL-ES: 46.7 percent) of each group report receiving some type of formal or informal financial assistance.<sup>27</sup> No significant differences were found across groups with respect to economic hardships or financial receipt, however.
- Housing. Two housing outcomes were evaluated here - residential instability, which was defined as the number of changes in residence, and homelessness, which was defined as having been homeless or having lived on the street, in a vehicle, in a shelter, or some other temporary residence.<sup>28</sup> No significant differences were found with respect to either outcome.
- Delinquency. Slightly less than half of youths (control: 44.9 percent, IL-ES: 46.7 percent) reported having engaged in one or more delinquent behaviors. The average number of reported behaviors was 2.06 and 1.59, respectively, for control and IL-ES group youths. No significant differences between groups were found, however.
- Pregnancy. One in five (19.3 percent) control group female youths and about a quarter (27.6 percent) of IL-ES group female youths reported having become pregnant at some point between the baseline interview and second follow-up. About a quarter (26.0 percent) of control group males, and a fifth (19.6 percent) of IL-ES group males, reported either having gotten someone pregnant, or being told that they had. None of these differences are statistically significant, however.
- Financial Accounts and Personal Documentation. Lastly, we considered two outcomes that are included among the stated goals of many general independent living programs, including helping youths acquire personal documents (e.g., Social Security card, driver's license) and open (and properly manage) bank accounts.

Approximately 60 percent (control: 61.7 percent; IL-ES: 59.0 percent) reported having no banking (or other financial) accounts at the second follow-up. Conversely, most youths in the sample reported having a Social Security card, birth certificate, and some form of state-issued ID card. Only one in five youths (control: 21.5 percent; IL-ES: 18.9 percent) reported having a driver's license. No significant differences were found between IL-ES and control group youths with respect to personal documents and the possession of bank accounts.

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<sup>27</sup> Formal assistance included receipt of benefits or assistance from TANF, WIC, Food Stamps, general relief, or other welfare payments. Informal assistance included financial help from a youth's (a) caseworker, mentor, or Independent Living Program, (b) relative or friend, or (c) community group, such as a church, a community organization, or a family resource center.

<sup>28</sup> (a) Motel, hotel, or SRO (Single Room Occupancy), (b) car, truck, or some other type of vehicle, (c) abandoned building, on the street or outside somewhere, (d) shelter for battered women; or (e) shelter for the homeless.

**TABLE 4.3. RESULTS OF BIVARIATE AND REGRESSION ITT ANALYSES FOR EVALUATED OUTCOMES**

Measure	Assignment Groups						Estimated Effects			Regressions	
	Total (N=229)		Control Group (N=107)		IL-ES Group (N=122)		Diff.	p-value	Effect Size <sup>b</sup>	B	p-value
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)					
<b>Preparedness (mean/s.d.)</b>											
Overall preparedness	3.60	(0.32)	3.60	(0.30)	3.59	(0.34)	-0.02	0.706	-0.05	-0.024	0.574
Job-related preparedness	3.79	(0.39)	3.81	(0.34)	3.78	(0.44)	-0.03	0.590	-0.08	-0.020	0.713
<b>Education and employment<sup>d</sup></b>											
<i>Educational status</i>											
Currently enrolled in school	140	(61.1)	63	(58.9)	77	(63.1)	4.24	0.512	0.09	0.223	0.449
Grade completed	11.19	(0.71)	11.18	(0.69)	11.19	(0.74)	0.01	0.908	0.02	0.028	0.761
High school diploma or G.E.D.	72	(31.4)	34	(31.8)	38	(31.1)	-0.63	0.919	-0.01	-0.062	0.856
Attended college	33	(14.4)	13	(12.1)	20	(16.4)	4.24	0.362	0.13	0.698	0.116
<i>Employment</i>											
Employed any time during prior 12 months	133	(58.1)	64	(59.8)	69	(56.6)	-3.26	0.618	-0.07	-0.072	0.800
Currently employed	92	(40.2)	42	(39.3)	50	(41.0)	1.73	0.790	0.04	-0.073	0.796
<i>Employment by school enrollment</i>											
Not enrolled in school											
Employed any time during prior 12 months	51	(57.3)	26	(59.1)	25	(55.6)	-3.54	0.736	-0.07	-0.384	0.446
Currently employed	35	(39.3)	18	(40.9)	17	(37.8)	-3.13	0.762	-0.06	-0.421	0.434
Enrolled in school											
Employed any time during prior 12 months	82	(58.6)	38	(60.3)	44	(57.1)	-3.17	0.790	-0.06	-0.242	0.524
Currently employed	57	(40.7)	24	(38.1)	33	(42.9)	4.76	0.704	0.10	0.269	0.498
<b>Prior earnings and net worth, in thousands (mean/s.d.)</b>											
<i>Earnings</i>											
Reported by youth in prior 12 months	1.71	(3.47)	1.95	(3.99)	1.49	(3.01)	-0.46	0.324	-0.12	-0.306	0.513
<i>Net worth</i>	1.84	(4.91)	1.60	(3.87)	2.05	(5.81)	0.45	0.494	0.12	0.399	0.541
<b>Economic hardship and financial assistance since baseline<sup>b</sup></b>											
<i>Hardship</i>											
Begged, sold plasma, pawned, sold recyclables for money	46	(20.1)	18	(16.8)	28	(23.0)	6.13	0.185	0.14	0.492	0.206
Borrowed money for food, went to food pantry/soup kitchen for money; went hungry	31	(13.5)	14	(13.1)	17	(13.9)	0.85	0.806	0.02	0.041	0.932
Did not pay rent/evicted, did not pay utility/phone bill	25	(10.9)	10	(9.3)	15	(12.3)	2.95	0.432	0.08	0.524	0.306
One or more hardships (from above)	72	(31.4)	28	(26.2)	44	(36.1)	9.90	0.097	0.20	0.491	0.207
3-Item scale of hardship (mean/s.d.)	0.64	(0.83)	0.55	(0.84)	0.73	(0.82)	0.19	0.158	0.22	0.151	0.221
<i>Assistance</i>											

**TABLE 4.3. RESULTS OF BIVARIATE AND REGRESSION ITT ANALYSES FOR EVALUATED OUTCOMES**

Measure	Assignment Groups						Estimated Effects			Regressions	
	Total (N=229)		Control Group (N=107)		IL-ES Group (N=122)		Diff.	p-value	Effect Size <sup>b</sup>	B	p-value
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)					
Received public (i.e., formal) assistance <sup>c</sup>	33	(14.4)	12	(11.2)	21	(17.2)	6.00	0.157	0.15	0.531	0.319
Females only <sup>d</sup>	29	(21.8)	11	(19.3)	18	(23.7)	4.39	0.428	0.09	0.264	0.665
Received informal financial assistance <sup>e</sup>	90	(39.3)	40	(37.4)	50	(41.0)	3.60	0.392	0.08	0.332	0.400
Received any financial assistance	102	(44.5)	45	(42.1)	57	(46.7)	4.67	0.237	0.06	0.473	0.286
<b>Housing since baseline</b>											
Number of residential moves (mean/s.d.)	0.90	(1.74)	1.02	(1.90)	0.79	(1.59)	-0.23	0.317	-0.12	-0.346	0.115
Homelessness	17	(7.4)	10	(9.3)	7	(5.7)	-3.61	0.301	-0.10	-0.804	0.194
<b>Delinquency since baseline</b>											
1 or more delinquent behaviors	105	(45.9)	48	(44.9)	57	(46.7)	1.86	0.765	0.04	0.062	0.846
Number of delinquent behaviors (mean/s.d.)	1.81	(3.04)	2.06	(3.71)	1.59	(2.45)	-0.47	0.270	-0.13	-0.344	0.347
<b>Pregnancy since baseline</b>											
Became pregnant (female youths) <sup>d</sup>	32	(24.1)	11	(19.3)	21	(27.6)	8.33	0.266	0.21	0.401	0.388
Got someone pregnant (male youths) <sup>f</sup>	22	(22.9)	13	(26.0)	9	(19.6)	-6.43	0.454	-0.15	-0.258	0.662
<b>Financial accounts</b>											
Checking	62	(27.1)	32	(29.9)	30	(24.6)	-5.32	0.387	-0.12	-0.302	0.347
Savings	70	(30.6)	32	(29.9)	38	(31.1)	1.24	0.839	0.03	0.130	0.670
Any	91	(39.7)	41	(38.3)	50	(41.0)	2.67	0.681	0.05	0.130	0.654
<b>Important documents<sup>d</sup></b>											
Social Security card	207	(90.4)	97	(90.7)	110	(90.2)	-0.49	0.900	-0.02	-0.387	0.429
Birth certificate	208	(90.8)	95	(88.8)	113	(92.6)	3.84	0.420	0.13	0.491	0.344
Driver's license	46	(20.1)	23	(21.5)	23	(18.9)	-2.64	0.618	-0.06	-0.165	0.650
Driver's license   state I.D. card	124	(54.1)	60	(56.1)	64	(52.5)	-3.62	0.328	-0.08	-0.506	0.154

a - Effect sizes for interval-level variables were based on the difference in means divided by the standard deviation for the control group youths. Effect sizes for nominal variables were based on the difference in proportions divided by an estimate of the within-group standard deviation.

b - Asked only of those youths over 18 and out of care.

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

d - Female youths (N=133; control group n = 57, IL-ES group n = 76)

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

f - Male youths (N=96; control group n = 50, IL-ES group n = 46)

## **Chapter 5**

### **Lessons for Independent Living Programs from the Evaluation of the Independent Living – Employment Services Program**

In the 1980s, concern about the poor outcomes experienced by youth aging out of foster care led to federal funding for independent living services. The accountability and program evaluation provisions of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 called for new focus on the effectiveness of these services. Now the child welfare field is not simply asking whether foster youth receive services that are intended to help them make a successful transition to adulthood; policymakers and program managers want to know which services have an impact on foster youth transition outcomes. The Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs was undertaken to assess the impact of existing programs on outcomes identified in the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. One of the programs selected for evaluation was the IL-ES program operated by the Kern County, California, Department of Human Services. Interpretation of the findings of the evaluation of the IL-ES program benefits from a consideration of the current state of research on independent living services, the evolution of such services over time, and the fact that the evaluation was a field experiment and not a demonstration project.

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

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

Third, the Multi-Site Evaluation was intended to evaluate existing programs of potential national significance as they currently operate (i.e., it is a field experiment), not to develop and evaluate such programs *de novo*. In other words, the programs being evaluated were not designed by the evaluators or under the kind of evaluator control that would typically be the case in an experimental demonstration project. Focusing on existing programs means that the evaluation is not able to manipulate elements of the intervention in order to address particular concerns of the field, meaning that specific questions that might be answered by a demonstration project tailored to answering such questions go unanswered. Thus, in interpreting the findings of the Multi-Site Evaluation, it is important to keep in mind that the programs being evaluated do not necessarily represent the most common or ideal version of a particular service.

Given the poor employment outcomes reported in prior studies of foster youths and former foster youths (Courtney and Dworsky, 2006; Dworsky, 2005; Goerge *et al.*, 2002; Macomber *et al.*, 2008), and the positive association between employment of foster youths between the ages of 16 and 18 and later employment (Macomber *et al.*, 2008), employment support would seem to be a reasonable service to provide foster youths to help prepare them for independent living. However, with respect to the IL-ES program, our impact evaluation did not find compelling evidence that the program had any beneficial impact on any of the employment outcomes we assessed. In considering the absence of program impacts, it is important to remember that the IL-ES operated in a community context where other services targeted youth employment. Our evaluation compared IL-ES to the usual employment support services available in Kern County, not an absence of employment services altogether. It is also important to keep in mind that the IL-ES program is only one of many employment programs serving foster youths around the country. To the extent that other programs differ in significant ways from the IL-ES program, outcomes experienced by youths participating in those programs may differ from those experienced by the youths in the Kern County program.

In addition, the economic context in which the Kern program operates may limit the applicability of the evaluation findings to other areas of the country. During the evaluability assessment leading up to the inclusion the IL-ES program in the Multi-Site Evaluation, program staff pointed out that Kern County has historically had a relatively poor labor market, making it particularly difficult to assist foster youth in obtaining employment. Indeed, while data on youth employment rates by county in California are not available, the unemployment rate in Kern County was 14.4 percent in July 2009, when the statewide unemployment rate was 12.1 percent.<sup>29</sup> The rate of current employment of foster youth participating in the evaluation of the IL-ES program was comparable to some other studies of foster youth. For example, only 40 percent of 19 years olds participating in the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (Courtney and Dworsky, 2006) and 47.7 percent of 19 year olds in the evaluation of the Life Skills Training (LST) program in Los Angeles County (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2008) were currently employed, despite being a year older than youth participating in the evaluation of the IL-ES program. However, as with other studies of foster youth, their rate of current employment was lower than national averages, such as 58.2 percent of 19 year olds in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Courtney and Dworsky, 2006). In other words, foster youths in Kern County appear about as likely as other foster youths to be currently employed, though foster youths are less likely than other youths to be employed. It is unknown the extent to which the overall labor market in Kern County may be hindering potential effects of the IL-ES program on youth employment.

With these important caveats in mind, what lessons can the evaluation of the IL-ES program provide for policymakers and practitioners interested in enhancing employment outcomes for foster youths as they approach the transition to adulthood? First, the overall economic well-being of the young people at follow-up, when they were nearly all 18 years old, clearly indicates that they are not obtaining employment that provides them with economic security as they reach the age of majority and leave foster care. Less than half (40.2 percent) were employed at the second

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<sup>29</sup> California Employment Development Department (2009). Monthly Labor Force Data for Counties, July 2009 – Preliminary. Retrieved on September 14, 2009 from: <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/countyur-400c.pdf>

follow-up interview, and their average earnings were less than one-quarter of the federal poverty line for a single-person household. Moreover, over 30 percent of the young people had experienced at least one of the economic hardships asked about in the youth survey during the past 12 months (e.g., list some examples). The fact that the rate of current employment among youths not enrolled in school is no higher than among youths enrolled in school at the time of the second follow-up interview implies that pursuit of education was not influencing the overall employment rate. Efforts should be redoubled to develop and rigorously evaluate various approaches to improving employment outcomes for foster youths as part of broader efforts to improve their economic well-being.

Second, if the situation in Kern County regarding youth employment is reasonably typical of other areas in the United States, the IL-ES evaluation results suggest that a “light touch” approach to supporting foster youths in finding and maintaining employment may not be sufficient. While IL-ES staff reported being readily available to motivated program participants, they did not report engaging in aggressive outreach efforts. This passive approach to youth engagement may be reflected in the nature of youths’ program participation; the only element of the IL-ES program experienced by nearly all youths randomly assigned to participate in the program was the newsletter that was regularly mailed to them. According to program records, while 94 percent of the experimental group received the newsletter, one-third received nothing more, at least through age 18. Moreover, in terms of in-person contact, only one-quarter had a home visit with a program staff member and only one-third met with a staff person at the program office by age 18. If moving foster youths into employment requires active engagement of the youths in activities associated with obtaining and maintaining employment, then engagement efforts need to go beyond those provided by the IL-ES program. Future evaluation efforts should target programs that employ more aggressive strategies for engaging foster youth in employment services.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Evaluation Methodology and Challenges**

## **Introduction**

The main source of data for identifying program impacts is interviews with foster youths. To create the evaluation sample, we obtained names of eligible youths and randomly assigned each youth to either IL-ES or control. Our target was to interview 250 youths at the baseline. Each respondent was asked to participate in an initial interview as well as two follow-up interviews, with expected first and second follow-up retention rates of 85 percent and 80 percent, respectively. Each follow-up interview was to take place approximately one year after the previous interview with that respondent. Cases were made eligible for interviewing in the next follow-up 11 months after their initial or first follow-up interview.

A small number of respondents completed the initial interview but did not complete the first follow-up interview. These respondents were promoted to the second follow-up despite not having completed their first follow-up interview. In order to keep these respondents on a schedule similar to their peers, they were promoted to the second follow-up if they had received the first follow-up interview within 23 months after their initial interview. Youths who completed baseline and second follow-up interviews but missed the first follow-up interview are referred to as “wave skippers.”

Below we provide detail about creating the sample, including the source of the sample, the random assignment process, the ways the evaluation affected DHS procedures, response and retention rates, and explanations of out-of-scope determination. This is followed by a description the fielding of the survey. Finally, this discussion concludes with a review of the challenges faced fielding the survey as part of the evaluation of the IL-ES program.

## **IL-ES Sample**

Sample Overview. The IL-ES analysis sample consists of 254 youths who (a) turned 16 years old between September 2003 and July 2006, (b) had recently turned 16 at the beginning of the evaluation but had not yet been referred to IL-ES, or (c) entered care during the study period and were already at least 16 years old. To be in scope for the study, the youths had to be in out-of-home care under the guardianship of the Kern County Department of Human Services, eligible for Chafee services, and placed in Bakersfield or a nearby community.

Each month from September 2003 through July 2006, DHS staff supplied the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) names of eligible youths. NORC staff culled the lists for additional ineligible youths. Each remaining youth received a 0.5 probability of being assigned either to IL-ES or control. The assignment was returned to DHS and the IL-ES youths were referred to the program for service. Frequently, siblings were referred for random assignment. Siblings are likely more homogenous than randomly selected youths; thus, their inclusion would not provide full power. To avoid this diminution of power, only one sibling was allowed to be in the study. In most cases, one youth was already in the sample when a younger sibling turned 16 and the latter was deemed ineligible. In cases where two siblings were referred at the same time (twins or older youths coming into care after age 16), one sibling was randomly selected to be in the study

and be assigned to either IL-ES or control. All siblings were treated the same in terms of being offered IL-ES or not, but only one would be interviewed and included in the evaluation.

The vast majority of the selected youths entered the sample during the month in which they had their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. As evidenced in table A.1, 83.2 percent of youths were age 16, or turning age 16 later in the month when interviewed. However, allowing youths who came into care after age 16 led to approximately one-eighth of the sample (12.9 percent) to be age 17 at baseline and another 3.8 percent age 18.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
15	38	14.4
16	181	68.8
17	34	12.9
18	10	3.8

We allowed DHS to follow its normal activities in referring youths to the program and did not exclude any youths (except siblings as described above). However, a youth’s status can change rapidly and frequently, especially placements, so that the original information would no longer be valid. As a result, we had to rely on the interviewers to ascertain if any out-of-scope conditions had been met. All situations identified by interviewers were confirmed with DHS before removing the sampled youths from the study. IL-ES and control group youths were treated the same when determining sample eligibility, and there is no evidence of differential treatment. The out-of-scope conditions were:

- re-united with parent;
- caregiver is legal guardian;
- placement is part of the KinGap program;<sup>30</sup>
- living outside the Bakersfield catchment area;
- on runaway status at least 3 consecutive months; or
- mentally incapable of completing an interview.

### **Response and Out-of-Scope Rates**

We originally anticipated a 90 percent response rate and planned to receive 278 referrals in order to complete 250 interviews. Since IL-ES referrals came on a monthly basis, we could monitor production and out-of-scope rates and stop receiving referrals when we achieved our targets; in

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<sup>30</sup> Youth in KinGap are eligible for IL services; however the guardian must give consent for the youth to be interviewed. DHS sent letters to KinGap caregivers asking for consent, but this proved ineffective.

the end, we received 295<sup>31</sup> eligible referrals that were randomly assigned. Data collection far exceeded our expected response rates. We completed 254 baseline interviews with nearly 97 percent of the in-scope sample. Youths were very cooperative and interested in participating as evidenced by the very small number of refusals (5). Three gatekeepers (i.e., those individuals who provided access to the youths generally caregivers) refused to allow their youth to be interviewed.<sup>32</sup> Response rates do not differ much between IL-ES and control groups. Cases determined to be out of scope after sample intake constituted 11.2 percent of the total sample. The largest category involves youths who were found to have been reunited with a parent or living with a legal guardian during the field period (17).

<b>TABLE A.2. IL-ES SAMPLE</b>			
	<b>IL-ES</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Completed cases</b>	136	118	254
<b>Non-interviews</b>			
Youth refusal	2	3	5
Gatekeeper refusal	2	1	3
Total in-scope	140	122	262
Response rate	97.1%	96.7%	96.9%
<b>Out-of-Scope (OOS)</b>			
Runaway status	1	6	7
Out of area	4	2	6
Reunited/legal guardian	7	10	17
Mentally incapable	1	1	2
Prison/juvenile justice	0	1	1
Total out-of-scope	13	20	33
<b>Total sample</b>	153	142	295
<b>Out-of-scope rate</b>	8.5%	14.1%	11.2%

### *Retention in Follow-up Interviews*

Since most of the IL-ES sample was 16 years old, we expected most youths to still be in care at follow-up interviews. Still, we faced a number of challenges in following the IL-ES sample, including changing placements, reunifications, and runaways, which will be described later in this appendix. In both follow-ups we exceeded our original target retention rates, interviewing 229 youths at each follow-up for a retention rate of 90.2 percent.

<sup>31</sup> These numbers do not include 9 referrals and interviews that were later deleted as we discovered that the youth had been served before random assignment had occurred.

<sup>32</sup> The distinction between youth refusals and caregiver refusals is murky. When caregivers told interviewers that the youth refused to do the interview, the interviewer tried to get the youth to indicate this to her directly, because caregivers frequently did not speak accurately for the youths. In cases where the caregiver would not allow us to speak with the youths, we coded the case as a gatekeeper refusal.

**TABLE A.3. IL-ES SAMPLE RETENTION**

	<b>IL-ES</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Interviewed at baseline</b>	136	118	254
<b>Interviewed at first follow-up</b>	120	109	229
Percent of Interviewed at baseline	89.7	92.4	90.2
<b>Interviewed at second follow-up</b>	122	107	229
Percent of Interviewed at baseline	89.7	90.7	90.2
<b>Second follow-up non-interviews</b>			
Youth refusal	1	0	1
Gatekeeper refusal	1	1	2
Runaway status and other non-locatable	7	8	15
Too ill	1	0	1
Out of area	1	0	1
Other	3	2	5

## Fielding the Youth Survey

### *Recruiting and Training Interviewers*

Initially two interviewers worked the IL-ES sample. The two interviewers were trained along with the interviewers conducting interviews in Los Angeles in September 2003 and given their initial cases to work immediately. Very early in the study we discovered that referrals would be only half our original expectation and we reduced the staff to a single interviewer. During months when a larger than average number of referrals arrived, or during follow-up rounds when multiple rounds were in the field at the same time, the Los Angeles-based field manager would travel to Bakersfield to help locate respondents and complete interviews. Both the interviewer and the field manager are bilingual, which proved important for dealing with many caregivers who spoke only Spanish. The field manager also served as the local liaison for the evaluation team, working with staff at DHS, and making other relevant contacts such as with the juvenile justice system.

### *Advance Letters*

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

- introduction to the study and its purpose;
- description of the involvement of NORC, the Urban Institute, and Chapin Hall;
- explanation of how respondents were selected;
- emphasis on the importance of their participation;
- summary of the study's confidentiality procedures;
- description of the respondent fee; and
- contact information for arranging an interview or obtaining more information.

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

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

### *Interviewing Priority*

For IL-ES youths, the goal was to interview them before employment services began, which would likely have an impact on baseline measures. Interviewers received new IL-ES cases on a monthly basis. IL-ES group youths were given interview-by dates two weeks after the case was given to the interviewer. Control youths were given interview-by dates that were four weeks after the assignment date.

### *Field Period*

Baseline interviewing took place from September 2003 through July 2006. The plan was for first follow-up cases to be released to be worked 11 months after the case was completed in the baseline. However, a delay in the field work in Los Angeles, coupled with the desire to train the Bakersfield interviewer at the same time as the Los Angeles interviewers, delayed the start of the first follow-up until November 2004. To maintain a consistent 11-13 month time between interviews, the second follow-up training and field period began in November 2005. The final interview took place in June 2008.

### *Respondent Payments*

Youths were offered monetary incentives to participate in the survey. Youths were paid \$30 for the baseline interview and \$40 for the first follow-up. They were paid \$50 for the second follow-up. Deviations from these amounts were not allowed, although some nonmonetary gifts such as \$5 Starbucks gift cards were provided when a youth was particularly inconvenienced. If a telephone interview was conducted with the youths on a cell phone, we reimbursed the youths for the cell phone charges.

### *Telephone Interviews*

No telephone interviews were allowed for the baseline interview. After the initial interview, some respondents moved out of the immediate area. In cases where a respondent no longer lived within reasonable driving distance of Bakersfield, usually about two hours' driving, telephone interviews were considered for the follow-up interviews. Telephone interviews were authorized by the field manager and project staff only after careful consideration of the respondent's

distance from existing field staff and other considerations, including whether or not the respondent might be returning to or visiting Bakersfield. Very few IL-ES interviews were conducted by phone (table A.4).

**TABLE A.4. TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS IN FOLLOW-UP ROUNDS**

Follow-up Round	IL-ES	Control	Total	% of All Interviews
First	4	1	5	2.2
Second	11	7	18	7.9

### *Incarcerated Respondents*

Incarcerated youths present a difficult challenge to maintaining high response rates for follow-up interviews. Youths in prison are particularly difficult to make contact with, and because their communications are both tightly restricted and often monitored, special procedures were devised to approach these respondents in a way that prioritized their right to confidentiality while maximizing their likelihood of participation. Because all youths were in foster care at the baseline interview, this procedure was necessary only for the follow-up interviews. Fortunately, only two youths were ever found to be incarcerated at the second follow-up. One was interviewed, the other was not. It is possible, even likely, that some of the youths who were not located were in jail or prison.

### **Evaluation Challenges**

Compared with our Los Angeles sites, the IL-ES evaluation faced only minor challenges in fielding the youth survey.

#### *Low Number of Monthly Referrals*

Originally, we planned to include in the study only youths in care in the month they turned 16. Based on existing data and conversations with DHS staff, we expected to receive an average of fifteen referrals each month. At this pace, we anticipated being in the field for roughly 18 months. As it turned out, many of the youths were not eligible for the evaluation for a variety of reasons. The referral flow was approximately half the original projections. To deal with the longer than anticipated time horizon, DHS staff suggested including youths who came into care after turning 16, a suggestion we accepted. They also suggested including youths who had recently turned 16, but had not yet been referred to Independent Living Services, and thus not to IL-ES. We set up procedures for DHS staff to review each case to be certain the youth had not been referred for service and that there was no systematic reason for the lack of referral.<sup>33</sup>

DHS staff also noted that the program only served youths in Bakersfield and they would be willing to extend the program to cities surrounding Bakersfield that were within a reasonable distance. This added the cities of Shafter, Wasco, Delano, and McFarland to the population

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<sup>33</sup> DHS staff members believe that some caseworkers do not understand when a youth should be referred to the Independent Living Program.

served (though most youths lived in Bakersfield). As noted earlier, KinGap youths were initially excluded due to the need to obtain informed consent from guardians, though these youths are eligible for employment services. DHS staff sent letters to KinGap caregivers to inform them of the youth's eligibility for services and to solicit their consent for the youth to participate in the evaluation. Unfortunately, this did not have much of an effect on recruitment.

Due to the slower than anticipated referral rate, sample accumulation took nearly double the amount of time originally planned. Although this put the evaluation at risk of programmatic changes, none occurred. It also meant that youths would enter the labor market at potentially different times in the business cycle; however, no major shifts in labor demand occurred during the evaluation period. On the other hand, the youths who entered the sample in the later part of the intake period would have had lower opportunity to acquire skills and job tenure when the economy began to slow in 2008.

### *Imposing on Established Procedures at DHS*

A second challenge was in making the random assignment work within the framework of established DHS procedures. Our goal was to interfere with their procedures as little as possible in order to evaluate the program as it routinely operates and to minimize the burden of participating in the evaluation. For the IL-ES program, the only significant change was that they received only half of their usual referrals and had to monitor to make sure they did not serve a youth assigned to the control group. Because IL-ES workers were shared with the TANF program, the smaller number of referrals did not cause problems with insufficient caseloads.

### *Adherence to the Random Assignment*

Controlling the random assignment for IL-ES was facilitated by good monitoring at DHS. In addition, DHS supplied program data to The Urban Institute where staff reviewed whether or not any control youths had received service or whether any IL-ES youths had received service before the evaluation began.

Early in the process, a review of youths receiving service indicated that a few controls had inadvertently been referred to service; spotting this error and reviewing DHS procedures kept these crossovers to a minimum.

As baseline accumulation was nearly complete, review of program data indicated nine youths who had received service previous to the beginning of the evaluation and these youths were removed from the evaluation sample, reducing the sample size from 263 to 254.

### *The Foster Care Population*

Foster care is characterized by frequent and rapid placement changes. This presented several challenges to conducting the evaluation:

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

- Invalid addresses made getting advance information about the study to the youths problematic.
- After gaining cooperation from a caregiver in one round, the process might have to be repeated with a new caregiver in subsequent rounds, including biological parents if the youth was reunited.
- Many youths had to be located at follow-up interviews. These youths were highly mobile while in care as well as after exiting care. At the time of a follow-up interview, they had left their placement and the caregiver likely did not know the youth's whereabouts. This was especially true when the youths left the child welfare system.
- Placement changes could be upsetting to foster youths. Also, new placements involve a settling-in period. If a change was recent, we sometimes found it difficult to engage a youth to conduct an interview as the youth might be working through various emotions. These situations could be exacerbated by mental and behavioral problems, which tend to be more prevalent in foster youths than adolescents as a whole.
- Certain situations for foster youths had to be watched for and addressed in ways not typical in conducting surveys. Surveys typically have protocols for dealing with situations where a respondent may be at risk of harming him- or herself or others, or of being abused by others. However, these protocols are rarely implemented. In the IL-ES evaluation, we encountered "at-risk" incidents three times over the three rounds of interviewing. Interviewers were trained to ask a set of follow-up questions to determine if a youth was currently at risk. They would immediately call the field manager, who would take responsibility for notifying the child welfare agency and/or any other appropriate authorities. In most cases, the interviewer would notify and discuss the situation with the foster parent or staff worker in a group facility.

### *The Interviewing Process*

Timing of Baseline Interview. One challenge was to get interviews completed before service began so that it could not influence baseline responses. For IL-ES, the goal was to interview the youths before the employment service began.<sup>34</sup> The lag between random assignment and the beginning of service was generally long enough that this was not too difficult to achieve.

Gaining Consent to be Interviewed. Youths were generally quite cooperative; however, we usually had to gain access to the youths through their caregivers. During the baseline when all youths were in care, foster parents and relatives could not legally prevent us from connecting with the youths; however, many felt that they had that right. This was particularly true with grandparents. In trying to work through these "gatekeepers," we enlisted the aid of DHS. The IL workers proved very helpful in gaining caregiver cooperation.

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<sup>34</sup> Each youth, whether IL-ES group or control group, was expected to be interviewed within one month after random assignment.

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

## **Appendix B**

### **Kern County Context**

**TABLE B.1. INDEPENDENT LIVING POLICIES IN CALIFORNIA**

<b>Eligibility</b>	Youths are eligible for independent living services until their 21st birthday provided one of the following is met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Were/are in foster care at any time from their 16th to their 19th birthday</li><li>- Were/are 16 years of age up to 18 years of age and in receipt of the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment</li><li>- Eligible youths younger than 16 years of age may participate in an independent living program for younger youths if the county of jurisdiction has a county plan that includes such a program.</li></ul>
<b>Planning for emancipation</b>	State laws do not indicate when planning begins. State laws only state that prior to the youth's emancipation, the social worker shall ensure that independent living services are provided as identified in the TILP.
<b>Responsibility for planning</b>	Social workers and the independent living coordinators are jointly responsible for preparing youths in the independent living program for emancipation.
<b>Referral process</b>	Varies by county
<b>Basic services provided</b>	Independent living services vary by county; however, the state does provide stipends to fund some of the following activities and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Bus passes</li><li>- Rental and utility deposits and fees</li><li>- Work-related equipment and supplies</li><li>- Training-related equipment and supplies</li><li>- Education-related equipment and supplies.</li></ul>

*Sources: CA CWS 2003; Public Counsel Law Center 2002.*

**TABLE B.2. KERN COUNTY AND CALIFORNIA DEMOGRAPHICS**

	<b>Kern County</b>	<b>California</b>
<b><i>Population Characteristics</i></b>		
Population	780,117	36,457,549
Percent under 18	29.7%	26.1%
Percent Hispanic	45.2%	35.9%
Percent Non-Hispanic Black	5.3%	6.0%
Percent Noncitizen Immigrant	14.8%	15.5%
Growth: 2000-2006	17.9%	7.6%
<b><i>Fertility</i></b>		
Births per 1,000 Women Ages 15-50	85	55
Per 1,000 Women Ages 15-19	30	24
<b><i>Educational Attainment (of Population Age 25 and Older)</i></b>		
0-8 years of school	14.5%	10.6%
High School Graduates or Higher	71.9%	80.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	14.4%	29.0%
<b><i>Income and Poverty</i></b>		
Per Capita Income	\$19,132	\$26,974
Median Household Income	\$43,106	\$56,645
Median Family Income	\$47,550	\$64,563
Percent of Individuals below Poverty	20.6%	13.1%
Percent Children below Poverty	29.3%	18.1%
Percent Families below Poverty	17.1%	9.7%
Percent Families with Female Head of Household Below Poverty	41.0%	24.0%
Households Receiving Public Assistance	5.6%	3.2%
<b><i>Labor and Employment</i></b>		
Total Civilian Labor Force	349,494	17,926,638
Employed Civilians 16+	317,172	16,740,938
Management and Professional Occupations	24.3%	34.7%
Service Occupations	17.3%	16.7%
Sales and Office Occupations	23.0%	26.0%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	9.1%	1.3%
Construction and Maintenance	13.7%	9.6%
Production and Transportation	12.6%	11.7%
Self-Employed	22,581	1,498,456

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006 Data Profiles (<http://factfinder.census.gov>)

**TABLE B.3. KERN COUNTY INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOUTHS 15 AND A HALF TO 21 YEARS OLD**

	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
<b><i>Youth Served and Client Characteristics</i></b>					
Youths offered ILP services	740	745	774	941	997
Youths who received ILP services	635	463	476	557	595
a. Youths who were single	634	460	463	541	578
b. Youths who were married	1	3	13	16	17
Youths who received ILP services & are parents	53	107	58	75	95
a. Youths who are fathers	8	18	7	10	20
b. Youths who are mothers	45	89	51	65	75
Youths who received ILP services & have special needs	35	11	78	32	59
Youths who received ILP services & are no longer in foster care	120	155	185	289	387
Youths who received ILP services during the 6 mo. period following foster care	100	60	52	62	81
Youths in probation department who received ILP services	149	108	308	195	205
Youths in County Welfare Department who received ILP services	740	345	168	362	390
<b><i>Program Outcome/Client Progress</i></b>					
Youths who completed ILP services or a component of services	720	348	401	557	595
Youths who are continuing to receive ILP services	700	348	366	495	289
Youths who completed high school/GED or adult education	80	71	67	87	50
Youths continuing and/or currently enrolled in HS/GED or adult ed.	680	348	251	470	492
Youths who have completed vocational or on-the-job training	10	40	111	116	42
Youths continuing &/or currently enrolled in voc. or on-the-job training	74	86	43	79	76
Youths enrolled in college	24	69	66	83	82
a. Youths in community college	18	49	52	64	74
b. Youths in four-year university	6	20	14	19	8
Youths who obtained employment	62	101	126	151	138
a. Youths who obtained full-time employment	12	8	15	20	18
b. Youths who obtained part-time employment	50	93	111	131	120
Youths enlisted in military, Job Corps, or California Conservation Corps	7	2	3	2	1
Youths actively seeking employment	133	147	197	220	187
Youths determined unemployable, SSI eligible, or other special category	3	4	25	19	47
Youths who are living independently of an agency maintenance program	210	86	134	98	80
Youths who obtained subsidized housing	17	42	31	72	87
Youths who transitioned into other government housing placement services	9	9	14	9	20

**TABLE B.3. KERN COUNTY INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOUTHS 15 AND A HALF TO 21 YEARS OLD**

	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
Youths who were placed in a transitional housing placement program	16	22	11	52	60
Youths who did not emancipate into safe and affordable housing	20	10	12	5	5
Youths for whom no information could be obtained	91	39	44	84	77

*Source:* State of California Health and Human Services Agency: Independent Living Program Annual Statistical Report.

**TABLE B.4. KERN COUNTY FOSTER YOUTH PLACEMENT SETTINGS**

<i>Youths Age 16 and Older</i>	<b>1-Oct-04</b>	<b>1-Oct-05</b>	<b>1-Oct-06</b>	<b>1-Oct-07</b>	<b>1-Oct-08</b>
Pre-Adopt	1	0	0	1	1
Kin	86	77	78	87	67
Foster Care	30	24	25	23	14
Family Foster Agency	41	33	38	37	60
Court Specified Home	1	1	0	0	0
Group Home	37	56	63	55	47
Shelter Care	2	3	2	1	2
Non-Foster Care	10	14	11	9	12
Transitional Housing	0	0	1	0	0
Guardian	57	67	69	71	73
Runaway	20	24	28	23	16
Trial Home Visit	1	0	0	0	0
Other Placement	9	5	7	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>296</b>

*Source:* Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Ataie, Y., Atkinson, L., Blumberg, R., Dunn, A., & Cuccaro-Alamin, S. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research. URL: <[http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)>

## **Appendix C**

### **Impact Study Scale Items**

**TABLE C.1. SUMMATIVE SCALE ITEMS**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Items</b>
Delinquency	<p>Summative scale comprised of the following 15 items. In the past 12 months, have you:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Been loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place so that people complained about it or you got in trouble?</li><li>2) Been drunk in a public place?</li><li>3) Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus, or subway rides, food, or clothing?</li><li>4) Been involved in a gang fight?</li><li>5) Carried a hand gun?</li><li>6) Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?</li><li>7) Purposely set fire to a house, building, car, or other property or tried to do so?</li><li>8) Stolen something from a store or something that did not belong to you worth less than 50 dollars?</li><li>9) Stolen something from a store, person or house, or something that did not belong to you worth 50 dollars or more including stealing a car?</li><li>10) Committed other property crimes such as fencing, receiving, possessing or selling stolen property, or cheated someone by selling them something that was worthless or worth much less than what you said it was?</li><li>11) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them or have a situation end up in a serious fight or assault of some kind?</li><li>12) Sold or helped sell marijuana (pot, grass), hashish (hash) or other hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine or LSD?</li><li>13) Been paid cash for having sexual relations with someone?</li><li>14) Received anything in trade for having sexual relations, such as food or drugs?</li><li>15) Had or tried to have sexual relations with someone against their will?</li></ol>
Social and Instrumental Support	<p>Summative scale of the standardized responses to the following seven questions. How many different people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Can you count on to invite you to go out and do things?</li><li>2) Can you talk to about money matters like budgeting or money problems?</li><li>3) Give you useful advice about important things in life?</li><li>4) Give you help when you need transportation?</li><li>5) Can you go to when you need someone to listen to your problems when you're feeling low?</li><li>6) Can you go to when you need help with small favors?</li><li>7) Would lend you money in an emergency?</li></ol>

**TABLE C.1. SUMMATIVE SCALE ITEMS**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Items</b>
Preparedness	<p>Overall preparedness was specified as a summative scale comprising the 18 items listed below. Youths were asked to judge how prepared they felt to accomplish each task. Possible response options included “very prepared” (4), “somewhat prepared” (3), “not very well prepared” (2), and “not at all prepared” (1). Job preparedness, which was specified as a summative scale, comprised items 2, 11, and 12.</p> <p>How prepared do you feel</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) To live on your own?</li><li>2) You are to get a job?</li><li>3) You are to manage your money?</li><li>4) You are to prepare a meal?</li><li>5) To maintain your personal appearance?</li><li>6) To obtain health information?</li><li>7) To do housekeeping?</li><li>8) To obtain housing?</li><li>9) To get to places you have to go?</li><li>10) In educational planning?</li><li>11) To look for a job?</li><li>12) To keep a job?</li><li>13) To handle an emergency?</li><li>14) To obtain community resources?</li><li>15) In interpersonal skills?</li><li>16) In dealing with legal problems?</li><li>17) In problem solving?</li><li>18) In parenting skills?</li></ol>

## **Appendix D**

### **Unemployment Insurance Wage Data**

Table D.1 presents aggregate quarterly employment and earnings data from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) for youth in the study. The table shows the proportion of youths in the IL-ES and control groups who were employed in jobs covered by unemployment insurance, and their mean earnings, between quarter 1, 2007 and quarter 4, 2009. The calculations were estimated and provided by the EDD. Findings and interpretations are described in the note to reader below.

<b>TABLE D.1. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE WAGE DATA</b>											
<b>Year</b>	<b>Qtr.</b>	<b>Proportion Employed</b>						<b>Mean Earnings</b>			
		<b>Control (118)</b>		<b>IL-ES (136)</b>		<b>Diff.</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Control (118)</b>		<b>IL-ES (136)</b>	
		<b>#</b>	<b>prop.</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>prop.</b>			<b>mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>1</b>	37	0.314	40	0.294	-0.019	0.698	914	1,868	665	1,447
	<b>2</b>	44	0.373	44	0.324	-0.049	0.377	1,087	2,239	810	1,586
	<b>3</b>	53	0.449	46	0.338	-0.111	0.061	1,308	2,619	941	1,706
	<b>4</b>	52	0.441	52	0.382	-0.058	0.312	1,468	2,793	961	1,740
<b>2008</b>	<b>1</b>	43	0.364	54	0.397	0.033	0.635	1,280	2,372	970	1,788
	<b>2</b>	46	0.39	49	0.36	-0.030	0.584	1,437	2,733	907	1,724
	<b>3</b>	44	0.373	47	0.346	-0.027	0.609	1,549	2,934	1,003	1,706
	<b>4</b>	45	0.381	43	0.316	-0.065	0.251	1,680	3,393	875	1,858
<b>2009</b>	<b>1</b>	38	0.322	36	0.265	-0.057	0.291	1,252	2,881	824	1,763
	<b>2</b>	36	0.305	38	0.279	-0.026	0.617	1,502	3,152	865	1,706
	<b>3</b>	39	0.331	43	0.316	-0.014	0.766	1,493	3,118	963	1,731
	<b>4</b>	34	0.288	38	0.279	-0.0087	0.839	1629	3660	939	1811

**Note to reader:**

*Proportion Employed.* Employment rates for both groups were low, never rising above 45 percent. No significant differences appear between the IL-ES group and the control group. *Mean Earnings.* Although mean earnings appear different between the IL-ES groups, achieving statistical significance in several quarters, these numbers should be interpreted with caution. It is important to emphasize that the data are taken from aggregated summaries supplied by the California EDD. Given the small sample sizes and the low, unstable employment rates, the findings could be highly influenced by one or more outliers (i.e., individuals with very high or low earnings compared to the other youth in the study). Median earnings, which are not susceptible to outliers, are zero for both groups in all quarters, since less than 50 percent of the youth are employed in each quarter. High variability over time in median earnings for workers (not shown) reinforces the concern that outliers are affecting the means. Without individual-level data we are unable to identify or adjust for outliers.