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FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM AND ADOLESCENT SUCCESS

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FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

AND ADOLESCENT SUCCESS

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

————————————

by

Sherisee Jurvon Bossett

June 2016

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ABSTRACT

The research topic discussed will explore Independent Living Program (ILP) services within the parameters of the foster care system. The research conducted followed guidelines within the positivist paradigm along with quantitative data collecting to gather information regarding experiences of youth while in the program and independence after the program through the utilization of surveys from those who have emancipated from the foster care system. Participants were eighteen years or older. The study included 28 participants who ranged in age and gender. Surveys were collected and analyzed using Qualtrics and SPSS software. The data collected and analyzed in this research revealed that youth who participate in the ILP services provided by their county have a better success rate of achieving overall success in independence in housing, education, financial support, and emotional/social support. It appears that the participants living situation was stable with majority not living alone. This begs the question that they still depend on others for support with housing needs.

Keywords: independent living program, foster youth

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CHAPTER ONE

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The project presented sought to find a possible correlation between participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP) while in foster care and overall success after emancipation from the foster care system.

The research topic discussed in this chapter will explore the ILP within the parameters of the foster care system. The research conducted followed guidelines within the positivist paradigm along with quantitative data collecting to gather information regarding experiences while in the program and independence after the program through the utilization of surveys from those who have emancipated from the foster care system or were eighteen years or older and still remain in the foster care system. Furthermore, the research topic, paradigm used for the study, the literature review, theoretical orientation, and the potential contribution the study may provide to the micro and/or macro study of social work will be discussed.

Briefly, the literature regarding this study revealed that ILP is a substantial asset to those who participate fully in the curriculum and take advantage of the services that are provided within the program. The services help prepare participants for independence and/or college life.

Research Focus

The purpose of the research was to provide insight as to the correlation between the independent variable being ILP services and the dependent variable being success after participation in services. The study looked at the effectiveness of the ILP program for youth in the foster care system. For the purpose of this study the meaning of success is that the participant was able to sustain a life without being homeless whether attending college, obtaining employment, or simply having a stable lifestyle after emancipation.

The study focused on participants who were in the foster care system. The research hypothesis for this study is that the participants who engaged in ILP services had better outcomes after emancipation than those who did not participate or engage in ILP services. The overall goal of this research was to determine the effectiveness ILP services has on those who reach the age of majority and are left in society on their own. The research gathered will add knowledge to the micro level of social work by giving insight as to whether or not the program is functioning effectively with these targeted individuals and in fact creating better outcomes for those individuals who emancipate from foster care.

Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

This study was conducted using a positivist perspective. The research study was seeking to understand if there was a correlation between receiving /participating fully in ILP services and being successful with independence

after emancipating from the foster care system. Full participation in ILP can be described as completing the various life skill modules and working with the ILP social worker to have a plan once emancipation occurs. Participants who are eighteen years or older and were in the foster care system were provided with a survey that covered five categories; living situation, education, financial support, emotional/social support, and experience with the program to determine factors that contributed to their success after foster care or their non-success after foster care as it relates to ILP.

According to Dr. Morris (2014), a positivist approach assumes an objective reality governed by laws and mechanisms and that the researcher can stand outside that reality. Therefore, the positivist approach was chosen for this study as the researcher is not involved in the participants' reality allowing unaffected results. Furthermore, the design allowed for a greater number of youth to be surveyed.

Lastly, this research was simply looking for a correlation between success and participation in ILP as it pertained to emancipated foster youth.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

A review of the literature regarding foster youth in relation to ILP services was researched. Youth, approximately at the age of 17-18, emancipate from the foster care system and are the most vulnerable group in society. This is usually due to the fact that they are left with nowhere to go or any support from family members, the community, or the foster care system.

<div align="center">3</div>

Most are high school drop outs or have mental health issues thus leading them to a life of crime, substance abuse issues, homelessness, or for females, ending up pregnant and perpetuating the cycle of children being left to be cared for in the foster care system. Throughout the years, studies show that even though numerous families are reunited or the children are adopted; there is still an abundance of children who remain in the foster care system until they reach the age of majority (Christenson, 2002). According to Christenson (2002), it is estimated that 20,000 young adults exit the foster care system and are not prepared for independence. Jones (2014) stated the following:

> Research findings have developed a troubling narrative of youth leaving foster care. Congress attempted to address the post-discharge difficulties of foster youth by passing the Independent Living Initiative in 1986, which mandated that the states develop services that would prepare youth for life after foster care. However, it is unclear what effect these programs have on post-foster care trajectories. (p. 99)

Many studies and records show that former foster youth who are in adulthood are at a lost in the following areas: education, employment, housing, and health. It is hoped that through Independent Living Programs (ILPs), foster youth will be better equipped to handle the struggles of independence (Hatton & Brooks, 2009).

Let it be noted, "the most comprehensive research following up on youths formerly in foster care was conducted Westat, Inc. over a decade ago",

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(Loman & Siegel, 2000, p. 3). The study involved 1,644 youths across the nation who were no longer in foster care. The study took a span of two to four years to examine the youths' transition out of care. The literature review will examine characteristics of emancipating foster youth and address services that are needed in ILP with hopes of preparing these youth with better outcomes for independence.

Independent Living Program Services Overview

Legislation has been responsive to the growing needs of children in foster care and there have been several acts pertaining to the targeted youth who are set to emancipate from the system. Legislation pertaining to this targeted group was first passed in 1986 with the initiation of the Federal Independent Living legislation.

Another act, Standards for Independent Living of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) was adopted in 1989 and its principles "are relevant for understanding the elements necessary for an effective independent living program. Many of the program activities and services advocated in the CWLA standards a decade ago were explicitly included in the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act" (Loman & Siegel, 2000, p. 9). Christenson (2002) stated, "this program challenged child welfare agencies to provide programs and services to foster youth in the areas of education, housing, employment, counseling, life skills, and decision making" (p. 4).

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway (2013), the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act created help for foster youth with the planning and/or transitioning into adulthood. It is where the "transition plan" was created and implemented into the Independent Living Program. A transition plan details the youth's goals along with an effective plan on how that particular youth will reach those goals during the transition into independence. According to this act, Child Welfare Gateway (2013) states that a transition plan must be completed:

Ninety days prior to a youth's 18th birthday (or the age required by the State for aging out of care), the youth, his or her caseworker, and other representatives of the youth's choosing must develop the plan. Specific elements such as housing, education, employment, mentoring, and continued support services must be included. (p. 3)

In the State of California, research is utilized in a form of data collection and analysis in order to provide information pertaining to the successful outcomes for foster youth. "California has adopted a set of exit outcomes to measure the performance of the child welfare system in meeting the needs of youth as they transition from foster care into adulthood. Each quarter, California counties will provide data to the State" (Becker, 2009, p. 1). The data collected provides insight as to how foster youth are doing after exiting the foster care system with hopes that it will provide each County with

information regarding improvement and effectiveness of the strategies

provided in the program.

<u>Lack of Supportive Relationships</u>

Youth in the foster care system are already at a disadvantage with

supportive relationships as they are in the system due to some type of abuse

and/or neglect thus providing a strain or loss of a parental relationship.

Research shows that in addition to the traumatic experience of being removed

from home, the longer period of time in foster care can lead to strained

relationships with an adult or a positive figure to depend on. It suggests that

the conditions for these youth may be improved with supportive relationships

with their caseworkers and counselors, as well as consideration of the youth's

perspective in decision-making prior to exiting the foster care system (Hatton

& Brooks, 2009).

One would think that ILP services would provide skills on how to obtain

and sustain lifelong supportive relationships however the effectiveness of the

program in improving social support has yet to be established. However,

according to Courtney et al. (2014), a study by Nesmith and Christophersen

(2014) provides the first step to improving social relationships for youth. "The

results were that compared to the comparison group, youth who received the

intervention suggested by the researchers felt more empowered, had better

emotional regulation, and improved their social support as demonstrated by a

wider variety of supportive adults in their lives" (Courtney et al., 2014, p. 2).

Emotional and Behavioral Issues

      According to the literature, children who are in foster care placement struggle more with behavioral issues versus children who remain with their parents. The literature hypothesizes that children in foster care possibly struggle with appropriate behavior due to the frequent changes in placement which can affect their ability to form strong relationships.

      Loman and Siegel (2002) found:

      Most children in the child welfare system who have been in placement have a poor basis for personal growth, given their start in troubled families. Early and repeated removals from home and multiple placements in foster homes and other facilities disrupt continuity in mature emotional development. A high proportion have emotional problems (the primary disabling condition among foster youth), and correlative behavior issues. Behaviors such as truancy, running away from care, dropping out of school are in part evidence of emotional withdrawal. (p. 6)

Education

      Most foster youth are behind in schooling when they enter the system and most fall behind due to the instability of placements. This infrequency creates a problem for these youth once they are in high school and most drop out because they are too behind and simply give up. Another factor that can explain the lack of education is the rate of runaway status.

Overall, the literature shows that there is a solid foundation for services to emancipating youth however it also reveals that there is a large majority of youth that do not fully participate in the formation of a transitional plan or the focus areas described above. There are many factors that can contribute to the lack of participation and it could be due to the lack of stable support system.

Therefore, further research is needed to explore if participation in ILP does in fact provide a better foundation for success with independent living. This researcher hoped to discover overall success in the five categories mentioned above for those who participated in ILP to shine light on the program for its positive impact on those who take advantage of it.

Theoretical Orientation

Theories regarding social and/or psychological behaviors were utilized as a guiding force for hypothesizing outcomes of the research that was conducted. Systems theory is an interdisciplinary study which was utilized as a foundation for this study.

According to Turner (2011), systems theory focuses on concepts that emphasize the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations, or communities and mutually influencing factors in the environment. The systems theory was applied to the study to provide information pertaining to the relationships between the participants in the study and the organization that

provided ILP services to those participants that were in some point of time in the foster care system.

Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and Macro Social Work Practice

The data obtained in this study was able to provide some intimate details regarding the effectiveness of ILP services for foster youth and if it does in fact create better outcomes for those who participated in the program.

At the micro level, social workers who are working with this population of foster youth will become motivated to have an ongoing discussion with the youth earlier than usual regarding the benefits of the ILP program and active participation prior to independence. Furthermore, social workers can utilize the information gathered in this study to support any misconceptions regarding independence that the youth may have. At the macro level, it can help foster care organizations better understand the dynamics of the program and seek to improve it to fit the needs of the youth that they serve.

Summary

The focus of this research study was to examine the success rate of those who participated in ILP while in the foster care system. A positivist design was chosen for this study and it was explained why it was the best approach for this particular study.

The literature review was introduced to provide background information as to the research topic and previous findings pertaining to ILP and foster

youth. The literature review provided implications and further research for foster youth who age out of the system. It also showed that participation in ILP provided better outcomes for those after the foster care system.

In addition, the chapter covered the theoretical orientation behind the research which is the systems theory. Lastly, the potential contribution that the study has to the micro and/or macro level of social work practice was explained to provide information to social workers and organizations running ILP regarding the effectiveness of the program and whether or not it has created a better outcome for those youth who have participated in the program.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter two explores the engagement process of the research. Also, it provides information regarding self-preparation. Next, diversity, ethical, and political issues will be explored in this chapter. Lastly, the role technology will play in the research study.

Study Site

The research was conducted throughout Riverside County in California. A particular site was not designated for this study; rather individuals who met the criteria of adults who had emancipated or were in the process of emancipating from foster care were contacted through the snowball sampling method. Nevertheless, the participants in this study all participated in the foster care system in California which is operated by a County Social Services agency. Each county has a public Child Protective Service (CPS) agency mandated to investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect. According to the State of California CPS website, their goal "is to keep the child in his/her own home when it is safe, and when the child is at risk, to develop an alternate plan as quickly as possible". Social workers are assigned to each family and/or youth in order to provide said services. It should be noted, majority of these counties contract with private agencies to provide life skills classes for these

youth. Therefore, the participants in this study all worked with a social worker and CPS at some point prior to independence.

Self-Preparation

The positivist approach assumes that the research question, literature review, and theoretical orientation are developed by the researcher. In order to engage the participations, the researcher had simple discussions with each participate regarding the need for participation by explaining the purpose of the research. Surveys were given to participants via email or hand delivered by the researcher.

Participants were welcomed to contact the researcher with any questions they may have pertaining to the research study via email. Participants were given information regarding the study via handouts/informed consent form and verbally informed of the value that the study will have for those who will be emancipating soon.

The researcher ensured that an inviting positive attitude was maintained throughout the research study, especially when interacting with participants by being honest about the study and the potential outcome.

Diversity Issues

Diversity issues were anticipated and the researcher remained open and sensitive to the issues that arose. The researcher studied various cultures and socioeconomic statuses in order to gain acceptance by the participants to

make them feel comfortable with participating in the study. A few diversity issues arose when conducting the study such as several participants not wanting to make their past social worker "look bad" and some participants being younger than the researcher. These issues were handled with care and honesty. Participants were informed that their concerns were viable and were ensured that no personal or identifiable information is being provided in this study. Also, participants were assured that their age was not being discriminated against but was merely used for legal constraints as this study was not approved for those under the age of eighteen years or younger.

A survey was distributed that did not discriminate between cultures, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses. Lastly, the study did not discriminate between participants as they were merely selected by networking strategies and participation was completely voluntary.

Political Issues

There is always a chance that political issues can arise when conducting research however the researcher was prepared to address these concerns with the participants. There were a few concerns by participants that were 18 years or older and remain in the foster care system. These participants were fearful of retaliation or loss of possible services from their current social workers. The researcher was able to put these concerns at ease by providing reassurance in the form of the informed consent document and

thoroughly informing participants that the study is completely confidential and identifying information including names were not written on any documents.

The Role of Technology in Engagement

Technology was used in the study. The internet was used to aide in the literature review and to access the State's data related to ILP. Email and telephone correspondence between participants and the researcher were used to distribute informed consents and surveys along with collecting both the informed consent and surveys. Computer analysis programs were utilized as well to analyze the surveys.

Summary

This chapter covered the different stages of engagement that took place during the course of the research study. The stages included development of the research topic and the engagement of participants. Self-preparation was discussed regarding the research and preparations that will need to occur as it pertains to the literature review and working with participants. Lastly, issues with diversity, ethical issues, and political issues were discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This chapter covers the stages of implementation regarding the research topic. The stages included information about the study's participants and how they were selected to participate in the study, how the data was collected, recorded and analyzed.

Study Participants

Study participants consisted of previous and/or current foster youth that have emancipated from the foster care system or who are still in the foster system but have reached the age of 18 years and are considered non-minor dependents. The study participants varied in age and consisted of both male and female. Ethnicity and socioeconomic status ranged as well since it was not a determining factor for this study. Since participation was voluntary, telephone calls and/or emails were used to communicate with possible participants. The distribution of the surveys included hand delivered by researcher and emailed to participants who requested them to be emailed. Participants were given the option to mail the surveys however all the participants opted out of that service.

Selection of Participants

Snowball sampling was used for this study. The researcher obtained participates by asking those, who the researcher had prior knowledge of being in the foster care system during adolescence to participate in the study. Next, the researcher asked each participant to suggest someone, whom they knew, were in the foster care system that might be willing to participate and/or was appropriate for the study. When participants agreed to participate, they were given the informed consent form to review (See appendix B).

Data Gathering

The study used a positivist, quantitative design; therefore, participants were selected using the snowball sampling method following the correlation or descriptive design. A quantitative descriptive survey was used to assess ILP participation and participants' current standing in the community. The surveys were distributed to those who agreed to participate. Once the participant completed the survey, it was either emailed or hand delivered to the researcher.

Since the study followed a positivist design, quantitative data was collected through the use of a survey (See appendix A). The survey was self-administered due to sample size, limited time, and resources. The survey consisted of multiple choice questions along with open ended questions pertaining to experiences in ILP services and the participant's current living status with sections to add additional information if needed.

Phases of Data Collection

The data gathering instrument was the use of self-administered surveys. Data collection began in the winter quarter of 2016. The collection process took place in three phases; emailing/self-delivering surveys, tracking the response rate, and collecting surveys to calculate findings.

Data Recording

The data recording consisted of surveys that were distributed and collected. Since snowballing sampling was used, surveys were only given to those who were identified and agreed to participate in the study. There were 28 surveys distributed and all 28 were collected. Positivist researchers develop an understanding of the data and its meaning through hypothesis testing using statistical procedures (Morris, 2014).

Following the quantitative method, the surveys were individually collected and the data was inputted into the Qualtrics program. Next, it was imported into the SPSS software package which is used for behavioral research.

Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive quantitative data was utilized to obtain the frequency distributions and percentages of the outcomes for each question in the survey. Bivariate analysis was utilized to describe the correlation between ILP participation (independent variable) and independent success once emancipation (dependent variable). Six factors were examined to obtain

information regarding participation and current status of independence; demographics, living situation, education, financial support, emotional support, and experience with ILP services.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the study participants and how they were recruited. The participants consisted of emancipated youth and non-minor dependents from the foster care system ranging in ages and gender. The collection of data was gathered through a quantitative approach via surveys. Once the surveys were collected the data was analyzed using a t-test and findings have been presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter will provide demographic information of the study participants along with the results of the descriptive statistics that were analyzed to report the findings of any correlations between the two variables; ILP participation and success with independence.

The analyses of findings are divided into five sections using descriptive statistics; living situation, education, financial support, emotional support, and experience with ILP services.

Demographics

The total sample population that completed the ILP survey was 28. Of the 28 participants 9 identified as males (32.1%) and 19 identified as female (67.9%), with 0 identifying as transgender (0%). The participants were also asked to provide their age, within a range. Out of 28 participants, 10 identified being 17-18 years old (35.7%) and 18 identified being 19 years or older (64.3%). When asked about their current County of residence, 16 participants indicated Riverside County (57.1%), 2 participants indicated San Bernardino (7.1%), 1 indicating Los Angeles (3.6%), 1 indicating Out of State (3.6%), and 8 were left blank (28.6%) in regards to current County residence. Please see Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender (N=28)		
Male	9	32.1
Female	19	67.9
Transgender	0	0
Decline to State	0	0
Age		
17-18	10	35.7
19 or older	18	64.3
County Residing		
Missing	8	28.6
Los Angeles	1	3.6
Out of State	1	3.6
Riverside County	16	57.1
San Bernardino	2	7.1
Informed Consent		
Yes	27	96.4
No	1	3.6

Presentation of the Findings

The study consisted of 28 young adults who participated in ILP services while in the foster care system. The five identified factors that contribute to the dependent variable of success after foster care were analyzed.

Living Situation

Questions regarding the current living situation for the 28 participants were analyzed. Of the 28 participants, 26 reported not living alone (92.9%) and 2 participants reported living alone (7.1%). Out of the 26 participants who reported that they do not live alone, 3 reported living with a relative (10.7%), 13 reported living with a roommate (46.4%), and none (0%) reported residing in a board and care facility or on-campus housing. It was interesting to notice that out of the 28 participants, 3 (10.7%) reported being homeless at some point in time after emancipation from the foster care system. Please see Table 2.

Table 2. Participants Current Living Situation

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Live alone (N=28)		
No	26	92.9
Yes	2	7.1
Live with a relative		
No	25	89.3
Yes	3	10.7
Live with roommate		
No	15	53.6
Yes	13	46.4
Reside in Board and Care		
No	28	100.0
Yes	0	0

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
On-Campus housing		
No	28	100.0
Yes	0	0
Experience homelessness		
No	25	89.3
Yes	3	10.7

Education

To determine the participants' current education, three questions were asked to gain general information. Of the 28 participants, 21 participants (75%) reported having a high school diploma with 20 participants (71.4%) disclosing that they received their high school diploma while in foster care. At the time of the survey was taken, 16 (57.1%) out of the 28 participants reported currently being in school. Please see Table 3.

Table 3. Education

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
High School Diploma (N=28)		
Yes	21	75.0
No	7	25.0
GED		
No	28	100.0
Yes	0	0
GED/Diploma while in foster care		
Yes	20	71.4
No	8	28.6
Currently in school		
No	12	42.9
Yes	16	57.1

Financial Support

Five questions were asked to gain insight as to the participants' source of income. Of the 28 participants, 15 reported being employed (53.6%). One participant (3.6%) reported receiving some form of social security or disability income. Participants were also asked if they received any government assistance such as welfare; 3 participants (10.7%) reported receiving government assistance. Since it was anticipated that some participants would be in some form of schooling, a question pertaining to financial aid from school was asked and 8 participants (28.6%) reported receiving aid. Participants were also asked if they were receiving any other source of income from family

members, friends, or side jobs and 5 participants (17.9%) responded yes.

Please see Table 4.

Table 4. Financial Support

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Employed		
Yes	15	53.6
No	13	46.4
SSI, Disability income		
Yes	1	3.6
No	27	96.4
Government Assistance(Welfare)		
Yes	3	10.7
No	25	89.3
Financial Aid (School)		
Yes	8	28.6
No	20	71.4
Any other source		
Yes	5	17.9
No	23	82.1

Emotional Support

Another factor that was analyzed regarding independent stability after receiving ILP services was emotional/social support. Participants were asked if they had at least one adult to confide in and out of the 28 participants, 25 participants (89.3%) reported that they have identified at least one person to

speak with regarding advice or emotional support. Participants were also asked if they have a significant other to look to for emotional support and 18 participants (64.3%) reported that they do have a significant other. Participants were also asked if they were receiving therapeutic services and out of the 28 participants, 2 participants (7.1%) reported receiving therapeutic services. Please see Table 5.

Table 5. Emotional/Social Support

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
One adult confidant		
Yes	25	89.3
No	3	10.7
Significant Other		
Yes	18	64.3
No	10	35.7
Therapy		
Yes	2	7.1
No	26	92.9

Experience with Independent Living Program Services

Participants were asked questions pertaining to their individual experiences with ILP services. Of the 28 participants, 6 participants (21.4%) reported receiving services through Los Angeles County, 17 participants (60.7%) reported receiving ILP services in Riverside County, and 5

participants (17.9%) did not disclose the County in which they received

services.

Participants were asked if they were offered transitional housing while

through the ILP services and 22 participants (78.6%) reported that they were

given the option to choose transitional housing and 6 participants (17.9%)

reported not being offered transitional housing. The participants were also

asked if they completed the life skill classes that are offered through ILP

services which provide education on basic skills needed for independence. Of

the 28 participants surveyed, 16 participants (57.1%) reported completing the

life skill classes and 12 participants (42.9%) reported not completing the life

skill classes.

Participants were also asked if they were assigned a life coach through

ILP services which serves as a person of support with obtaining and maintain

independence. Of the 28 participants, 22 participants (78.6%) reported not

being assigned a life coach and 6 participants (21.4%) reporting being

assigned a life coach. The participants were also asked if they met with their

life coach regularly and out of the 28 participants, 4 participants (14.3%)

reported meeting with their life coach regularly. One participant (3.6%) decline

to state and one survey was missing a response to the question of meeting

with a life coach regularly.

Participants were also asked if they were aware that their ILP worker

was separate from their case carrying social worker. Of the 28 participants, 19

participants (67.9%) reported that they were aware and 9 participants (32.1%) reported that they were not aware that the two were separate.

Participants were asked if they obtained a driver's license while in care which is a part of independence building. Of the 28 participants, 9 participants (32.1%) reported obtaining their driver's license prior to exiting foster care and 19 participants (67.9%) reported not obtaining a driver's license. The participants were also asked if they obtained a DMV identification card prior to exiting foster care and 26 participants (92.9%) reported that they were able to obtain a DMV identification card with 2 participants (7.1%) reporting that they did not obtain a DMV identification card prior to independence.

Participants were asked if their foster parents offered them to stay in their home after emancipation which could be used as an indicator as to whether or not the case carrying social workers and/or ILP workers are working to find housing for youth prior to emancipation to help possibly alleviate homelessness. Of the 28 participants, 17 participants (60.7%) reported that their foster parents offered a place to stay and 10 participants (35.7%) reported not being offered the opportunity to stay in their foster parents' home after emancipation. One participant (3.6%) declined to state. Lastly, participants were asked to identify as many people as they felt that were helpful with their transition out of foster care. Of the 28 participants, 10 participants (35.7%) reported their ILP worker as helpful; 16 participants (57.1%) identified their case carrying social worker, 1 participant (3.6%)

identified the life coach, 8 participants (28.6%) identified their foster parent, 2

participants (7.1%) identified their biological parent, and 6 participants (21.4%)

marked "other". Please see Table 6.

Table 6. Experience with Independent Living Services

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
County Services Received		
Los Angeles	6	21.4
Riverside	17	60.7
No Response	5	17.9
Offered Transitional Housing		
Yes	22	78.6
No	6	21.4
Complete Life Skills		
No	12	42.9
Yes	16	57.1
Assigned Life Coach		
No	22	78.6
Yes	6	21.4
Met with Life Coach regularly		
Yes	4	14.3
No	22	78.6
Decline	1	3.6
Missing answer	1	3.6
Knowledge of ILP worker versus case carrying worker		
Yes	19	67.9
No	9	32.1

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Driver's License while in care		
Yes	9	32.1
No	19	67.9
DMV ID while in care		
Yes	26	92.9
No	2	7.1
Foster Parents offer you stay in their home		
Yes	17	60.7
No	10	35.7
Decline	1	3.6
Who was helpful with transition out of care		
ILP worker	10	35.7
Case carrying worker	16	57.1
Life Coach	1	3.6
Foster Parent	8	28.6
Biological Parent	2	7.1
Other	6	21.4

Data Interpretation

The data collected and analyzed in this research revealed that youth who participate in the ILP services provided by their county have a better success rate of achieving overall success in independence in housing, education, financial support, and emotional/social support. It appears that the

participants living situation was stable with majority not living alone. This begs the question that they still depend on others for support with housing needs.

Education analysis revealed that majority received a high school diploma prior to emancipating. The data showed that it was almost divided equally when it came to the participants currently enrolled in some form of schooling and/or being employed as the employment percentage was closely equally divided as well. This can be interpreted as an indicator that prior to emancipating, ILP attempts to ensure that the youth are continuing education or entering the workforce.

In regards to emotional/social support the data revealed that majority of the youth were able to form a lifelong connection as evident by the high percentage of participants answering yes to having an adult that they can confide in for support. Overall experience with ILP revealed that majority were assisted with emancipating by their case carrying social worker in addition to the services that ILP provides such as obtaining DMV identification cards, offering transitional housing, and offering life skills classes that are designed to prepare youth for real world responsibilities such as budgeting, housing, etc.

It is important to note, that although majority of the participants did have stable housing, there was a small percentage that experienced homelessness after emancipation. This should be taken into consideration when developing the services that ILP provides. Lastly, the question at the end of the survey

asking participants to describe their individual experience with ILP services was not completed by any of the 28 participants.

Limitations

Since snowball data collection method was utilized to obtain participants there was a low response. A small number of surveys were completed, thus trying to apply the findings to a much larger population could not hold much credibility. In addition, another limitation that should be noted is the time constraints given to complete the data collection process. The time constraints hindered the possible collection of a larger sample for data analyses. Lastly, the researcher was not able to obtain a research site which could have provided a larger population for the study.

Implications of Findings for Micro and Macro Practice

Although there have been various research studies on the effectiveness of ILP services, there does not seem to be a study that takes a detailed look at the life of those who have emancipated and are no longer involved with the child welfare system to assess if the services being provided are indeed useful in independence. It is important that agencies understand how successful youth become after leaving foster care in order to create, develop, and implement a comprehensive independent living program.

Summary

Chapter four consisted of analyzing the data. The analysis described the demographics of the 28 participants who participated in the research study. Majority of the participants were female with the age of 19 years or older. The five factors; living situation, education, emotional/social support, financial support, and experience with ILP services were analyzed as well. These five factors were identified as being possible indicators of successful independence. They were analyzed using descriptive statistics looking at the frequency and percentage.

CHAPTER FIVE

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

Chapter five provides information on the termination process of the study along with any ongoing relationships the researcher may or may not have with the study participants. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Termination of Study

Termination is a process of disengagement and stabilization. Following the generalist model of social work, termination occurred by reporting findings and noting implications for social work practice at the micro and/or macro level of social work practice in this report. Termination consisted of providing the participants with a debriefing statement that included a thank you message along with websites for information regarding ILP services and program. Additionally, participants were provided with the researcher's contact information in the debriefing statement if there were further questions regarding the research.

Communicating Findings and Dissemination Plan

The findings of this research study were communicated to the University's Social Work Department through a final research report. The results of this research will be disseminated on CSUSB's Scholarly Works

website which contains various research articles completed by students to fulfill University graduation requirements. In addition, dissemination will occur in a form of a poster to be displayed during the University's poster day event. It is the hope of the researcher that through this research, ILP services will be re-evaluated to fit the current needs of the youth with hopes of providing better success after foster care.

Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

The study participants were informed via the informed consent that they would be able to obtain the findings of the research by contacting the researcher via email.

Summary

This chapter covered the termination process of the study which included the discarding of the surveys and providing this report to the University for review. Furthermore, additional contact with the study participants was not a major factor in the termination process as any further contact was left to the study participants and how to do so was communicated in the informed consent in the beginning of the research. Overall, the research showed that those who participated in ILP services while in foster care were better equipped to succeed with a stable independence once leaving foster care. Lastly, termination and follow-up was offered to the study participants via

the informed consent. They were given the opportunity to contact the

researcher if further information regarding the research was desired.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE

Independent Living Program

I. What is your gender?
a. Male
b. Female
c. Transgender
d. Decline to state

II. What is your age range?
a. 15-16
b. 17-18
c. 19 or older
d. Decline

III. What County do you currently live?

_____

IV. Did you understand the informed consent form?
a. Yes
b. No

V. Living Situation

1. Do you live alone?
   a. No
   b. Yes
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

2. Do you live with a relative/family member (blood related)?
   a. No
   b. Yes
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

3. Do you live with roommates such as friends or renting a room, in which you help with utilities and/or rent?
   a. No
   b. Yes
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

4. Do you live in a board and care facility?
   a. No
   b. Yes
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

5. Do you live in on-campus housing?
   a. No
   b. Yes
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

6. Have you ever been homeless since leaving foster care?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

VI. Education

1. Do you have a high school diploma?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

2. Do you have a GED, general education certificate?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

3. Did you obtain a high school diploma or GED while in foster care?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

4. Are you currently in school?
    a. Yes, if so, what are you working on? _____
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

5. Are you in the military?
    a. Yes, what branch? _____
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

    ┌───┐
    │   │
    │   │
    │   │
    └───┘

6. Do you plan on joining the military?
    a. Yes, if so when? _____
    b. No
    c. Unsure

    Comments/more information:

    ┌───┐
    │   │
    │   │
    │   │
    └───┘

VII. Support (financial)

1. Are you employed?
    a. Yes, if so, how many hours a week do you work? _____
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

    ┌───┐
    │   │
    │   │
    │   │
    └───┘

2. Currently are you receiving social security payments (Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security, Disability Insurance (SSDI), or dependents' payments)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

    ┌───┐
    │   │
    │   │
    │   │
    └───┘

3. Currently are you receiving ongoing welfare payments from the government (CalWORKs, food stamps) to support your basic needs?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

4. Do you receive financial aid from an educational institution?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

5. Do you have any other source of income whether it is assistance from friends/family, scholarships, side jobs, etc?
   a. Yes, please explain _____
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

VIII. Support (Emotional/Social)

1. Currently is there at least one adult in your life, other than your previous caseworker, to whom you can go for advice or emotional support?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

2. Do you have a significant other that you can confide in?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

3. Are you currently under any therapeutic care, e.g. therapy, groups?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

IX. Experience with the program

1. In which County did you receive ILP services?

2. Were you offered Transitional Housing (THP)?
   a. No
   b. Yes, how long did you stay in transitional housing?

   Comments/more information:

3. Did you complete all the modules (Life Skill classes) offered?
   a. Yes
   b. No, why not?

   Comments/more information:

4. Where you assigned a Life Coach?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

5. Did your Life Coach check in with you on a regular basis and provide support?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

6. Did you know that the ILP social worker was separate from your case carrying social worker?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

7. Did you obtain a driver's license while in the ILP program?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Decline

   Comments/more information:

8. Did you obtain a DMV ID while in the ILP program?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

9. Did your foster parents offer for you to stay in their home after emancipation?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Decline

    Comments/more information:

10. Please circle those who were helpful with your transition out of the foster care system. If none apply, please do not circle. Please explain your answer in the comment box below as well.
    a. Case carrying social worker
    b. ILP Social Worker
    c. Life Coach
    d. Foster Parent
    e. Biological Parent
    f. Other

    Comments/more information:

X. Please take the time to describe your personal experience with the ILP program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Developed by Sherisee Bossett

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

The policy of the School of Social Work is that all research participation in the Department is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time, without prejudice, should you object to the nature of the research. You are entitled to ask questions and to receive an explanation after your participation.

Description of the Study:

This study, in which you are being asked to participate, is designed to determine if there is a correlation between participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP) services and independent success after emancipation from the foster care system. This study is being conducted by MSW student, Sherisee Bossett under the supervision of Laurel Brown, PhD MSW, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

Nature of Participation:

Your participation will consist of completing a survey/questionnaire. It should take approximately 30 minutes or less depending on the length of your responses to the questions.

Possible Risks:

a) When completing the survey/questionnaire you may come across a question or answer choice that you find unpleasant, upsetting, or otherwise objectionable. For instance, a few of the questions may cause you to think about any negative or traumatic experiences while in foster care system.

b) You may feel that you have performed poorly on the survey/questionnaire however there is no right or wrong answer. Any questions you may have, please contact the research investigator.

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

c) You will be asked to provide confidential information about yourself however your personal information will be kept confidential (please see confidentiality section).

Possible Benefits:

a) As a part of MSW student, Sherisee Bossett's graduate project, the information obtained in the study will help assist with any possible enhancements to the services provided within the ILP program for foster youth to ensure a greater success rate with independent living for those who emancipate from the foster care system.

Compensation for your Time:

There is no compensation for your participation with completing the survey/questionnaire.

Confidentiality:

All data will be kept in secured files, in a file cabinet with a lock in which the MSW student will only have the key. All files will be kept in accord with the standards of the University. All identifying information will be removed from questionnaires as soon as your participation is complete. No one will be able to know who you are and what your questionnaire responses were. Finally, remember that it is no individual person's responses that are of interest; the study is looking to generalize the information provided.

Opportunities to Question:

Any questions about this research may be directed to:

Dr. Laurel Brown, MSW

Email: laurelbrown213@aol.com

Opportunities to Withdraw at will:

909.537.5501 · 909.537.7029
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University . Bakersfield Channel Islands Chico Dominguez Hills East Bay . Fresno Fullerton Humboldt Long Beach Los Angeles Maritime Academy Monterey Bay Northridge Pomona Sacrament San Bernardino San Diego San Francisco San Jose San Luis Obispo San Marcos Sonoma Stanislaus

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If you decide now or at any point to withdraw this consent or stop participating, you are free to do so at no penalty to yourself. You are free to skip specific questions and continue participating at no penalty.

Opportunities to be Informed of Results:

If you wish to be informed of the outcome of the study, please contact:

Principal Investigator: Sherisee Bossett

Email: 004774301@coyote.csusb.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Laurel Brown, MSW

Email: laurelbrown213@aol.com

You will be directed to where you can read a copy of the results. In addition, there is a chance that the results from this study will be published, which would be available in the school library. In such an article, participants would be identified in general terms as participants previously or currently in the foster care system.

☐ By checking the box, you certify that you have read the above information and are 18 years or older.

909.537.5501 · 909.537.7029
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University . Bakersfield Channel Islands Chico Dominguez Hills East Bay . Fresno Fullerton Humboldt Long Beach Los Angeles Maritime Academy Monterey Bay Northridge Pomona Sacrament San Bernardino San Diego San Francisco San Jose San Luis Obispo San Marcos Sonoma Stanislaus

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

Thank you so much for participating in this study. Your participation was very valuable. I know that your time is very precious and I want to thank you for the time you devoted to the study to help further knowledge regarding the Independent Living Program and its effectiveness with independent living after the foster care system.

I hope clarity regarding the purpose of the research was given to you in the informed consent form you completed prior to your participation in the survey/questionnaire. If you would like more information about the ILP program and its effectiveness, you may be interested in the following:

http://www.ilponline.org/
http://hs.sbcounty.gov/cfs/fosteryouth/Pages/default.aspx
dpss.co.riverside.ca.us/.../independent-living-program
http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/default.htm
http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG1350.htm
http://www.cilberkeley.org/programs/youth-services/

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like information regarding the results of the study, you may contact the Research Advisor, Laurel Brown, Ph.D., MSW at (909) 537-7244.

Thanks again for your participation in this study!

_____

Principal Investigator, Sherisee Bossett, MSW Student

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

Researcher(s) Sherisse Bossett

Proposal Title Effectiveness of the Independent Living Program
For Teens in the Foster Care System
SW1555

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the
Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

- -

Proposal is:

✓ approved

_____ to be resubmitted with revisions listed below

_____ to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

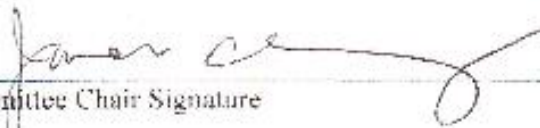_____ faculty signature missing

_____ missing informed consent _____ debriefing statement

_____ revisions needed in informed consent _____ debriefing

_____ data collection instruments missing

_____ agency approval letter missing

_____ CITI missing

_____ revisions in design needed (specified below)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Committee Chair Signature   11/18/15
                                                       Date

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