THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

DEFINING PROBLEMS. SHAPING SOLUTIONS.

CalYOUTH:
What We're Learning about California Youth Transitioning to Adulthood from Foster Care

Mark E. Courtney

ChapinHall at the University of Chicago
Policy research that benefits children, families, and their communities

My Purpose Today

- Share selected findings of the CalYOUTH Study
  - Youth survey at age 19
  - Child welfare administrative data
  - Analyses of predictors of remaining in extended care and the association between extended care and early outcomes
- Engage in discussion about the implications of findings for practice and policy, and future directions for research

CalYOUTH Study Funders and Partners

- **Suppor**t the research
- **Provide** guidance and feedback
- **Host** CalYOUTH Study section with results on **website (co-invest.org**—Resources)
- **Promote** via presentations and media outreach

California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership

California Department of Social Services

County Welfare Directors Association of California

The Judicial Council of California

Casey Family Programs

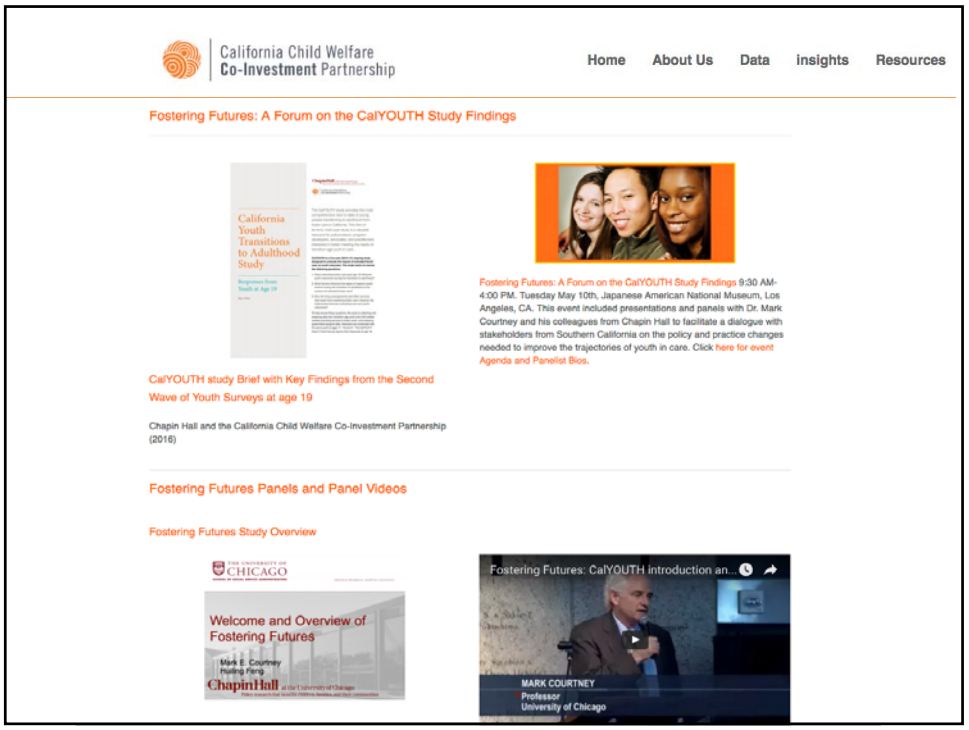
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Stuart Foundation

Walter S. Johnson Foundation

Zellerbach Family Foundation

Annie E. Casey and William T Grant Foundations (Funders, not in Co-invest Partnership)



Overview of the CalYOUTH Study

Evaluation of the impact of California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB 12) on outcomes for foster youth

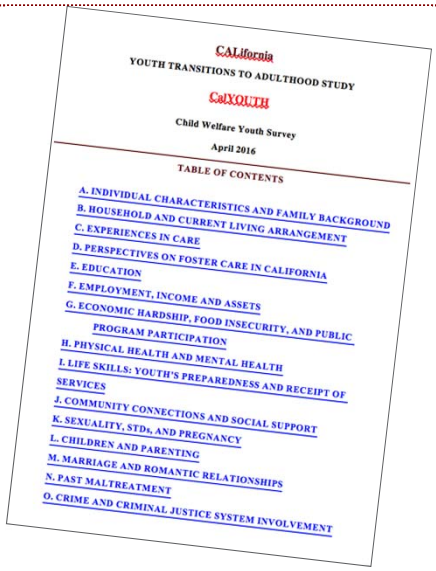
CalYOUTH Study includes:

- Longitudinal study of young people in CA foster care making the transition to adulthood
- Periodic surveys of caseworkers serving young people in CA foster care
- Analysis of government program administrative data

Purpose of the Longitudinal Youth Study

Obtain information about a broad range of life experiences & young adult outcomes

- Foster care placement
- Service utilization & preparation
- Perceptions of extended care
- Education and employment
- Health and development
- Social support
- Delinquency
- Pregnancy and children



CALIFORNIA
YOUTH TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD STUDY
CalYOUTH
Child Welfare Youth Survey
April 2016

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Youth Surveys: Data Collection and Response Rate

- **Wave 1 Survey Period (age 17)**
  - April 2013 to October 2013
  - 51 counties included in final sample
  - Youth eligible for study *n* = 763
  - Completed interviews *n* = 727 (response rate = 95.3%)
- **Wave 2 Survey Period (age 19)**
  - March 2015 to December 2015
  - Youth eligible for study *n* = 724
  - Completed interviews *n* = 611 (response rate = 84.1%)

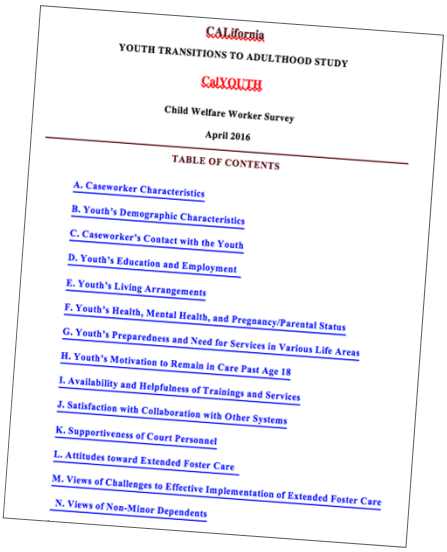
Purpose of Child Welfare Worker Study

Obtain perceptions of service delivery context

- County level availability of and need for services

- Coordination of services with other service systems

- Attitudes of caseworker, county court personnel, and youth toward extended care



CALifornia

YOUTH TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD STUDY

CalYOUTH

Child Welfare Worker Survey

April 2016

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Caseworker Surveys: Data Collection and Response Rate

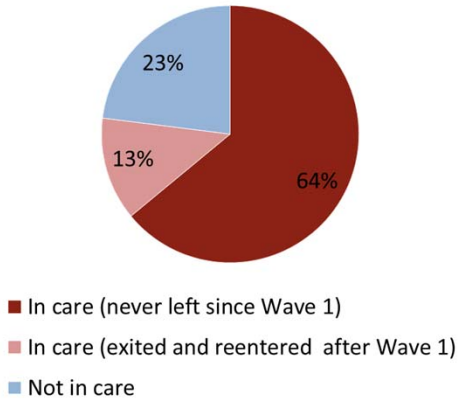
- **First Caseworker Survey**
  - Sample of caseworkers across the state serving older foster care youth
- **Second Caseworker Survey**
  - Caseworkers serving young people in the longitudinal Youth Survey who were still in care as of June 1, 2015
  - Survey Period: July 2015 to October 2015
  - **Part A**: questions about service context in their county
    - 295/306 of eligible caseworkers completed surveys (96.4%)
  - **Part B**: questions about specific youth on their caseload
    - 493/516 surveys completed about youth on their caseloads (95.5%)

Demographic Characteristics at 19 (*n*=611)

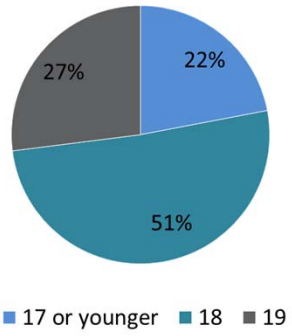
	n	%
Gender		
Female	367	60.0
Age		
19 years old	599	97.9
20 years old	12	2.1
Hispanic	272	47.4
Race		
White	193	27.8
African American	108	24.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	20	3.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	23	4.1
Mixed race	240	41.1
Language spoken at home		
English	567	91.1
Spanish	41	8.6
Other	2	0.2

Current Foster Care Status

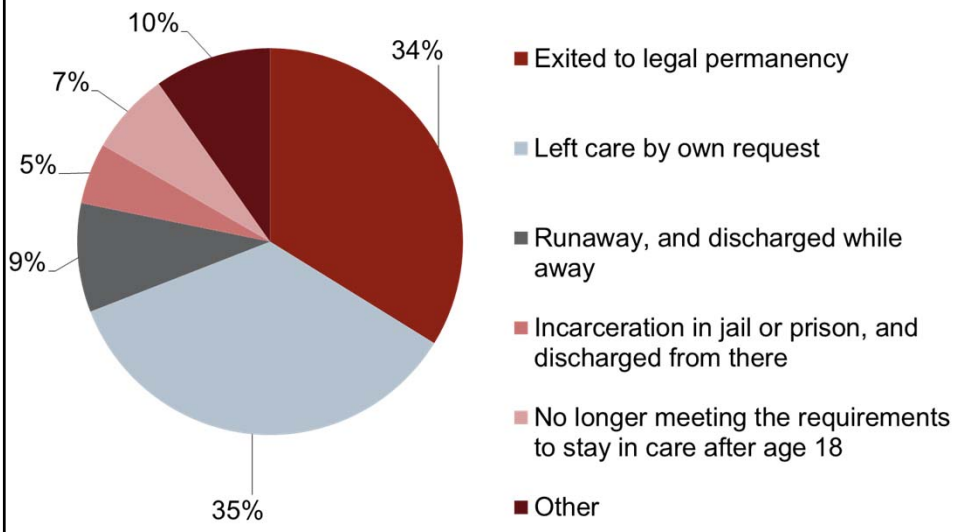
Care Status at Wave 2
（*n*=611）



Age at Discharge
（*n*=134）



How Youth Left Care(*n*=134)



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How is it Going at Home? Housing, Homelessness, and Housing Supports

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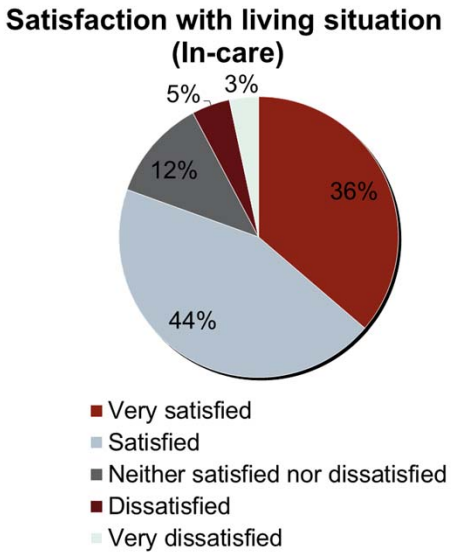
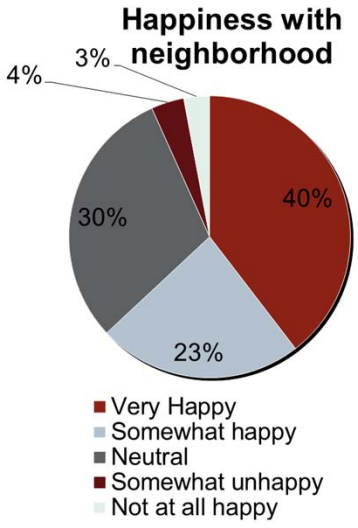
Where Are Youth Living? Youth In-Care (*n* = 477)

	n	%
SILP	**142**	**31.4**
THP+FC	**114**	**19.2**
Home of a relative	93	22.6
Foster home with an unrelated foster parent	61	13.2
Home of a nonrelated family member	41	8.7
Other	16	2.6
Hospital, treatment or rehab facility	2	0.6
Group care	8	1.6

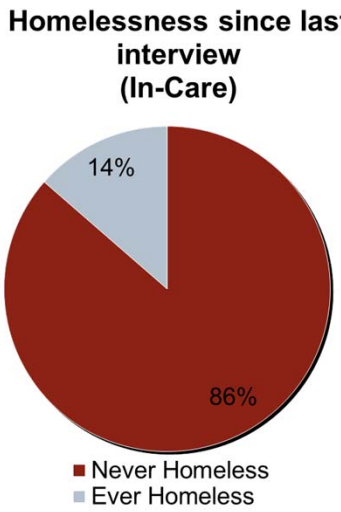
How Satisfied Are Youth In Their Living Situations?

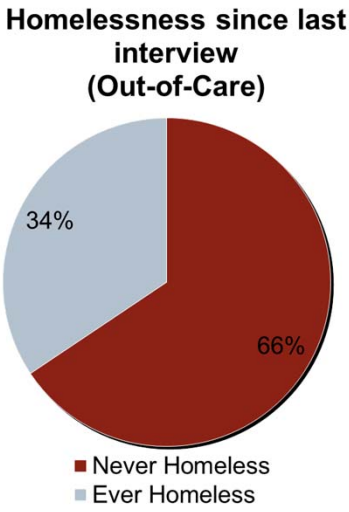




- Nearly nine-in-ten youth indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood

How Many Youth Have Experienced Homelessness?





Summary

- Youth in-care and out-of-care are living in different settings
  - The majority of youth in-care are living in SILPS or THP-Plus FC
  - The majority of youth out-of-care are living in the home of a birth parent, in the home of another relative, or in their own place
- The vast majority of youth are living with others
- Youth were more likely to feel "not prepared" in the area of housing than in any other area (not shown)
- Youth out-of-care are more likely than youth in-care to experience an episode of homelessness or couch-surfing

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Connected or Not? Youth's Connections to Education and Employment

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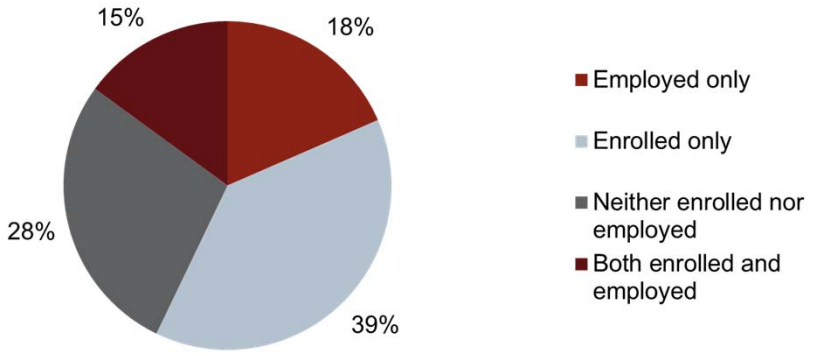
Connected to School or Work (n=606)[1]



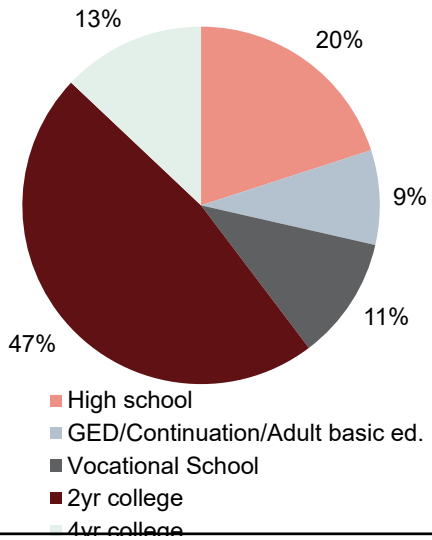
- Nearly three-quarters of youth reported being enrolled and/or employed (72%)

[1] Excludes 5 incarcerated youth

Education Status and Enrollment

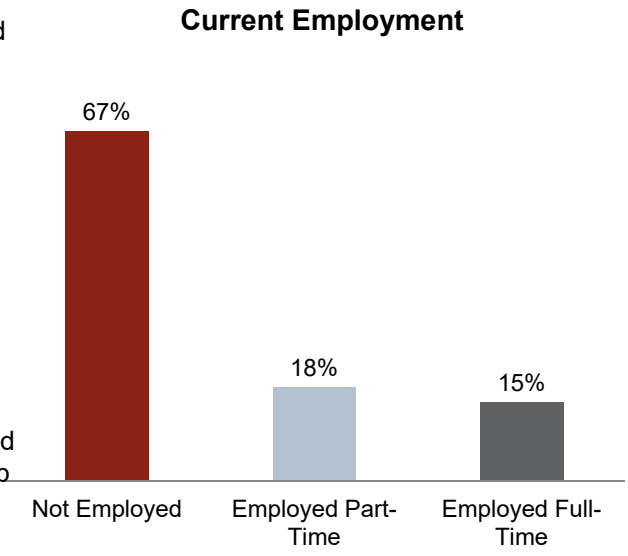
- 71% of youth had a high school diploma or equivalency certificate
- 54% of youth were currently enrolled
- Among those enrolled, 60% were in college

Type of School Enrolled in (n=317)

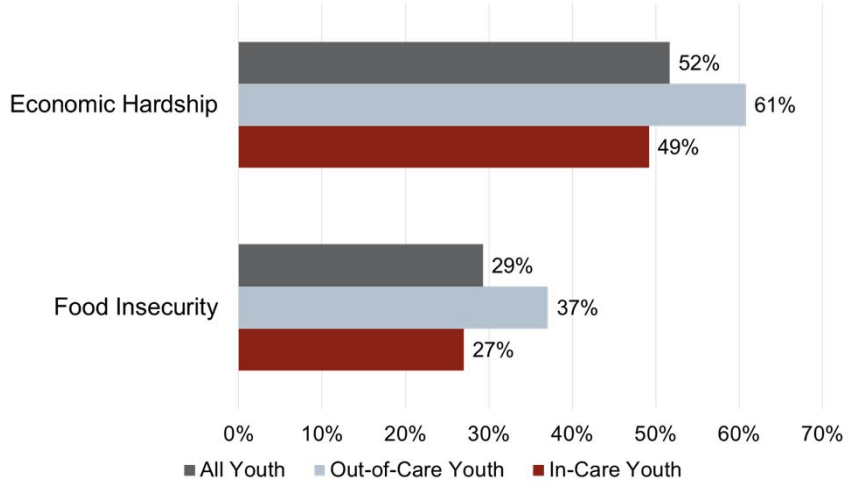


Employment

- 76% of youth reported ever having a job
- 33% were currently employed
- Among youth not in school, 40% were currently employed
- Average hourly wage: $10.21
- Among all unemployed youth, most want a job (89%)



Economic Hardship and Food Insecurity in Past 12 Months

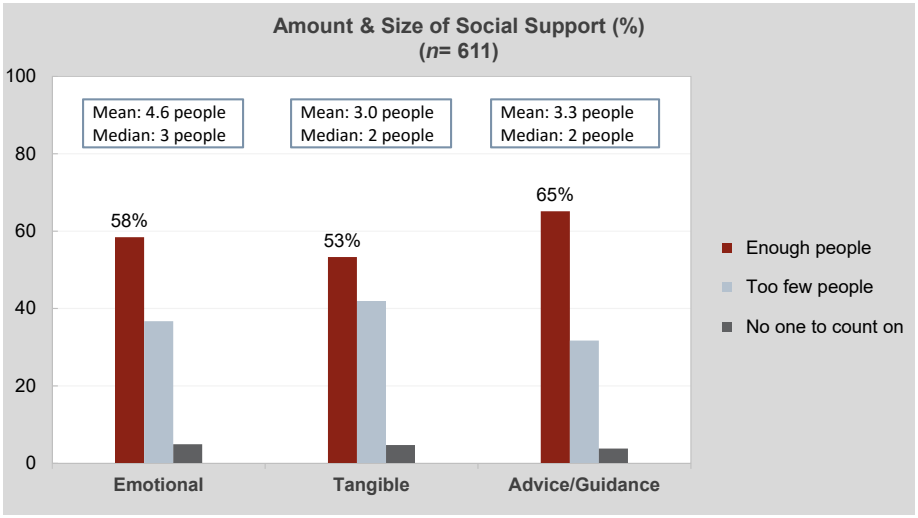


Summary

- Almost three-quarters of youth are enrolled in school or are currently working
- Some youth experienced economic hardships or food insecurity
- Out-of-care youth were less likely than in-care youth to have finished a secondary credential and to be enrolled in school, but more likely to experience economic hardship/food insecurity

Social Support

Overall Relationships

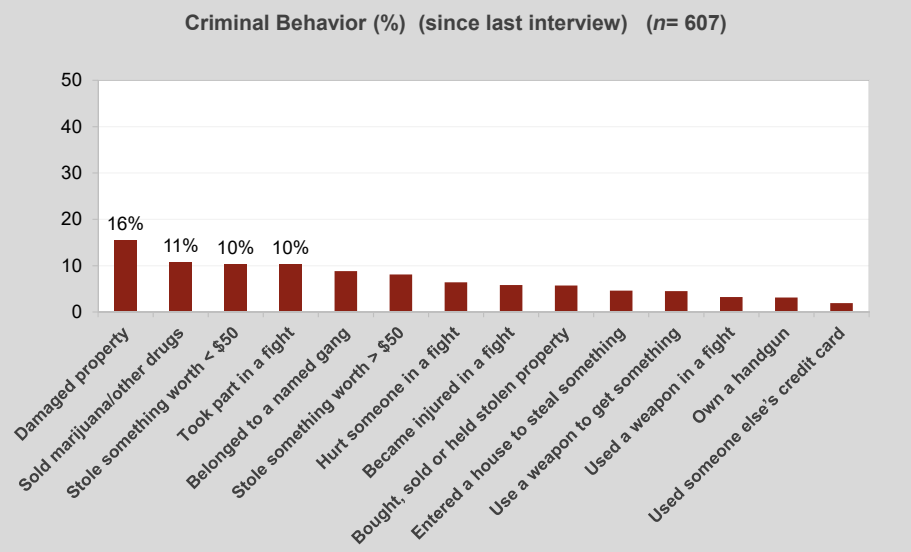


Summary: Social Support

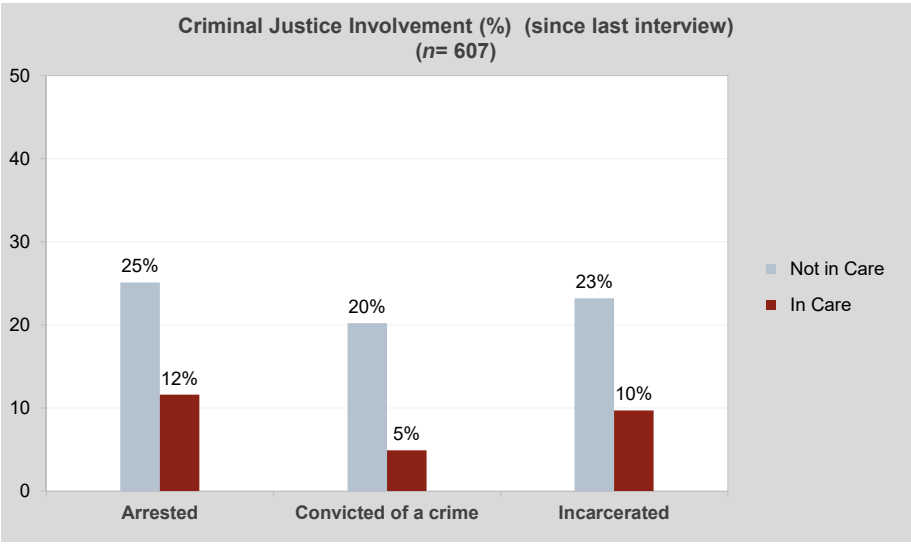
- Majority of youth had someone they could turn to, and youth were in regular contact with their supports.
- Families and peers consisted of most supports. Youth still in care were more likely to nominate caseworkers, and youth who left care were more likely to nominate grandparents.
- Strain was generally uncommon in relationships with individuals youth identified as supports (not shown)

Crime & Criminal Justice Involvement

Criminal Behavior



Criminal Justice Involvement

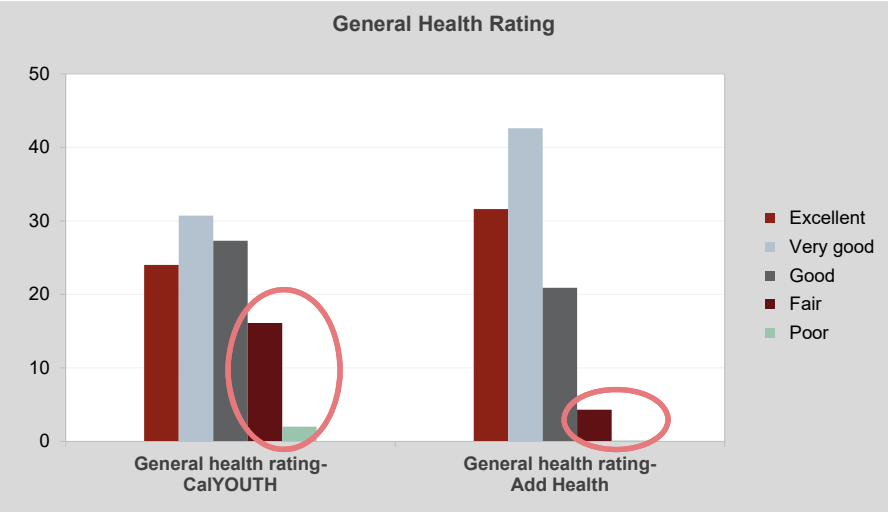


Summary: Crime & Criminal Justice Involvement

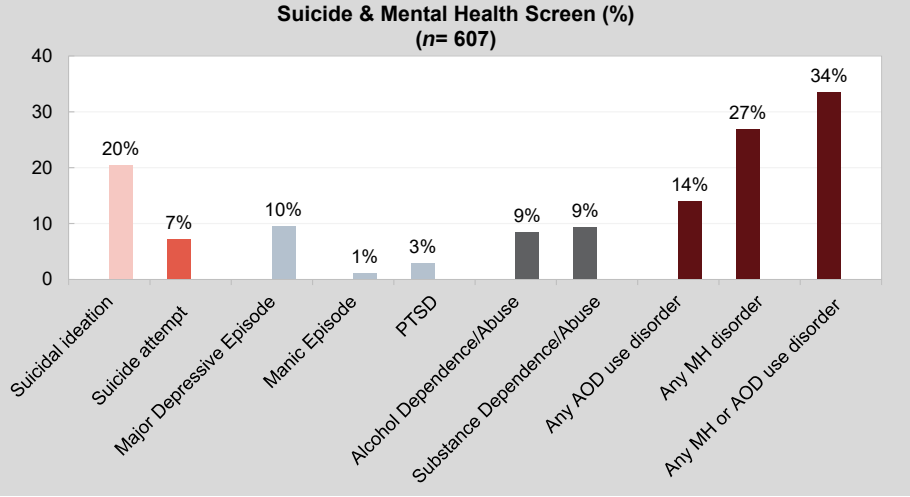
- Most youth reported "never" engaging in criminal behaviors.
- Criminal justice system involvement was lower for youth still in care than those who left care.

Health

Health Status



Behavioral Health



Summary: Health

- The majority of youth rated their health as being "good," "very good," or "excellent."
- About 1/3 screened positive for a mental health *or* substance use disorder.
- Most youth reported having a medical exam within the past year, and about one-quarter reported using behavioral health services.

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Parenting and Romantic Relationships

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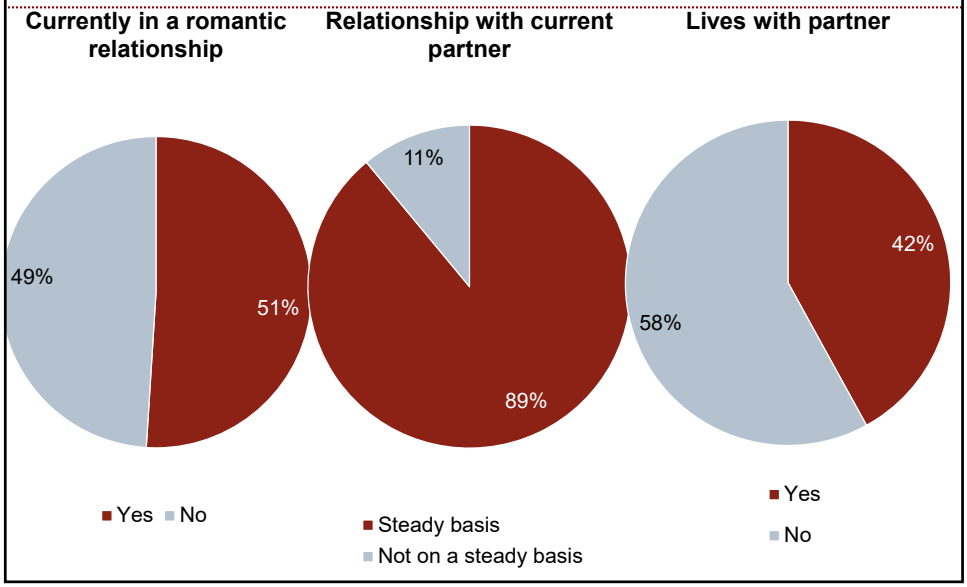
Children and Parenting

Parents (*n* =121)	Males (n=22; 9.5%)		Females (n=99; 27.2%)	
	n	%	n	%
Number of living children				
1 child	22	100	87	90.8
2 children	0	0.0	12	9.2
Respondent lives with all children ***	10	42.7	86	88.2
At least one child is a dependent of the court	3	14.6	13	15.5

Romantic Relationships



Summary

- Females were more likely than males to be a parent, and if they were a parent, to be living with their children
- Few children were involved with the child welfare system
- Over half of youth were in romantic relationships, and most of these relationships had a high level of commitment and satisfaction

Research Question #1

- What are the correlates of the length of youths' stays in out-of-home care after their 18th birthday?
  - Youth characteristics can be indicative of the inclination of youth to remain in care and the system's capacity to provide appropriate care
    - Demographic characteristics
    - Maltreatment history and experiences in care
    - Psychosocial functioning
  - Change in policy and between-county differences in context and policy implementation could influence the likelihood that youth will remain in care

Data and Analysis

Two approaches to the question:

- Analysis of months in care after 18th birthday based on data from baseline CalYOUTH survey at age 17 (n = 711) linked to Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) data on timing of youths' exits from care through 19.5 years of age
- Analysis of months in care after 18th birthday based on data from CWS/CMS for youth in care on or after 16.75 years old who (1) turned 18 between 1/1/2008 and 12/31/2013, and (2) turned 21 before 3/31/2016 (n = 38,458)

Data and Analysis: Youth Survey

Analytic models: OLS regression (shown); Tobit regression; sensitivity analyses

Outcome: Months in care after 18th birthday

Individual-Level Predictors:

Demographics: Gender, race/ethnicity, sexual minority, born in US, age at entry to care (controls for age at baseline and at follow-up)

Maltreatment & Care Experiences: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, other maltreatment, # episodes in care, main placement type, # of placements; satisfaction with care, reentry to care after 18

Functioning: general health, mental health disorder, substance use disorder, pregnant before baseline, parent, delinquency, ever incarcerated, special education, repeated a grade, WRAT reading score, ever worked for pay, social support (# of individuals)

System-Level Predictor: % in care in county at age 19.5

Data and Analysis: CWS/CMS Data

Analytic models: OLS regression (shown); Tobit regression; sensitivity analyses

Outcome: Months in care after 18th birthday

Individual-Level Predictors:

Demographics: Gender, race/ethnicity, age at entry to care

Maltreatment & Care Experiences: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, other maltreatment, main placement type, # of placements

Functioning: any disability, ever on probation before age 18

System-Level Predictors: placing county, year turned 18 (2008-2013; pre- or post-policy change)

Predictors of Months in Care Past 18th Birthday: Youth Survey Data (n = 711)

Variable (only statistically significant shown)	*b* (months)	
Primary Placement Type (group home; ref.)		
Nonrelative foster home	3.31	*
Kinship foster home	3.31	**
Treatment foster care (FFA)	2.79	*
Other placement	4.45	*
Number of placements (5 or less; ref.)		
6-10	4.00	***
11 or more	5.40	***
Satisfaction with care (strongly disagree/disagree; ref.)		
Agree to strongly agree	2.16	*
Proportion of youth still in care in county at age 19.5 (measured in 10% increments)	14.12	**

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

Predictors of Months in Care Past 18th Birthday: Administrative Data (n = 38,458)

Variable	*b* (months)	
Gender: Male (Female: ref.)	.55	***
Race/Ethnicity (White non-Hispanic; ref.)		
Black	.86	***
Hispanic	.54	***
Asian/Pacific Islander	.92	**
Native American	.14	
Primary Placement Type (group home; ref.)		
Nonrelative foster home	1.85	***
Kinship foster home	1.34	***
Treatment foster care (FFA)	1.90	***
Other placement	.97	***
Number of placements (1 placement; ref.)		
2-5	2.11	***
6-10	4.52	***
11 or more	5.04	***
Placing County (LA ref., 57 county indicators not shown)	-4.12 to 6.7	***

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

Predictors of Months in Care Past 18th Birthday: Administrative Data (n = 38,458)

Variable	*b* (months)	
Age at Entry to Care (< 10 years; ref.)		
10-13	-.45	*
14-15	-.28	
16-18	-.40	*
Substantiated Maltreatment Prior to Care		
Physical Abuse	-.37	*
Severe Neglect	-.26	*
Emotional/Other Maltreatment	-.23	*
Any Recorded Disability	1.67	***
Ever on Probation Prior to 18	-3.21	***
Year Turned 18 (2008; ref.)		
2009	-.09	
2010	.11	
2011	5.81	***
2012	12.17	***
2013	12.80	***

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

Summary

- Youth characteristics are associated with length of stay after the 18th birthday, but some more strongly than others
  - Larger effects (months): Primary placement type; number of placements; disability; probation history; satisfaction with care
  - Smaller effects (less than a month): gender; race; age at entry to care; maltreatment history
  - There is no clear pattern of "positive" or "negative" selection into extended care (e.g., group care history decreases length of stay, but placement mobility and disability increase length of stay)
- System-level factors play a large role in length of stay
  - Implementation of extended care policy has increased average length of stay for youth approaching the age of majority in care by over one year
  - There is considerable between-county variation in length of stay

Implications

- States can implement extended care policies that significantly increase the likelihood that youth will choose to remain in care well after age 18
- Given prior research on the potential benefits of remaining in care past 18, child welfare administrators and practitioners should consider whether the current service delivery array and/or practices may discourage harder-to-serve youth (e.g., those exiting group care and those with a probation history) from remaining in care
- Similarly, administrators and practitioners should seek to better understand the contributors to between-county variation in transition-age foster youths' length of stay in care

Limitations & Future Research

- Arguably still early in the implementation of the policy
- Youth survey data lack statistical power to identify smaller impacts on length of stay
- Administrative data do not provide much depth of understanding of youth functioning and no data on youths' motivations

- *Future research should further examine contributors to between-county variation in length of stay*

Research Question #2

- What is the relationship between how long youth remained in care past their 18th birthday and selected outcomes measured at the time of our second interview (i.e., when the young people were an average of 19.5 years old)?
  - Key predictor of interest: Months in care after the 18th birthday
  - Analytic models: OLS regression (Tobit regression sensitivity analyses); logistic regression; ordinal logistic regression; Poisson regression
  - Controlled for individual characteristics of youth (very similar to those used in study of predictors of length of stay after the 18th birthday) and urbanicity of the placing county

Selected Outcomes at Age 19

- Education (HS/GED/Other secondary credential; college enrollment (National Student Clearinghouse data)
- Employment (currently employed; earnings in past year)
- Assets
- Economic Hardship (# of hardships in past year)
- Food Insecurity (USDA measure)
- Homeless or Couch Surfed Since Age 17
- Receipt of CalFresh and Amount Received in past year
- General Health (poor/fair; good; very good, excellent)
- Mental Health Disorder
- Substance Use Disorder
- Social Support (number of nominated supports)
- Pregnant Since Age 17
- Parent Since Age 17
- Justice System Involvement (arrest; conviction) Since Age 17
- Victimization in Past Year (physically assaulted; weapon pulled/used on)

Impact of Time in Care on Outcomes

Outcome	Outcome Measure	n	Model Type	Outcome Unit	Change in outcome from an additional year in care	
					Beta	p-value
Secondary education	Completed diploma, GED, or other credential[a]	545	Logistic	Odds Ratio	2.25	<.001
Postsecondary education	Enrolled in college	611	Logistic	Odds Ratio	2.81	<.001
Assets	Assets in any account	578	Logistic	Odds Ratio	2.55	<.001
	Total assets across all accounts among youth with assets	342	OLS	Dollars	818	.078
Economic Hardship	Number of hardships in past year (0-6)	605	Poisson	Relative Risk Ratio	.69	<.001
Homelessness	Homeless or couch-surfed since wave 1	611	Logistic	Odds Ratio	.42	<.001
Receipt of Need-Based Public Aid	Received CalFRESH benefits in the past year	602	Logistic	Odds Ratio	.53	.004
	Amount received	110	OLS	Dollars	-.880	.003
Criminal Justice System Involvement	Convicted of a crime since wave 1	576	Logistic	Odds Ratio	.48	.016

Study Limitations

- Attrition between ages 17 and 19 might be associated with characteristics of youth in ways that bias our study findings
- Our measures of pre-existing differences between youth who stay in care and those who leave may not have captured youth characteristics that are associated with both the length of time youth remain in care and their later outcomes
- For some of our outcomes it is not possible to determine the temporal relationship between time in care and the event of interest
- Our measures do not cover all outcomes of potential interest.
- Outcomes were assessed when the youth were 19.5 years old but young people can now remain in care in California until their 21st birthday

Summary and Implications

- Youth who remained in care were much more likely than those who left to obtain a secondary credential and to continue on to college
  - Their continuing pursuit of education does not appear to negatively influence their participation in the labor market
- Remaining in care significantly decreased the likelihood of economic hardship, homelessness, and reliance on need-based public aid while it increased youths' access to financial assets
- Remaining in care was associated with an impressive reduction in the likelihood that youth would be convicted of a crime
- No evidence that remaining in care increases the risk of poor outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood from the foster care system
- However, remaining in care was not associated with several important outcomes

- *Findings to date support the benefits of allowing youth to remain in care past 18*
- *Future research should examine longer-term outcomes and the mechanisms through which extended care influences outcomes*