Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC)

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CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.©
in partnership with the GMFYEP

Evaluation of a Foster Youth Education Program: Preserving the Needs of a Local Evaluation While Satisfying Mandated Federal Requirements

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Foster youth face complex and daunting administrative, emotional, and educational obstacles on their path to adulthood, including frequent placement changes, delays in transfers between schools, lost or misplaced records, lack of connection to available resources, and difficulties enrolling in the classes required for high school graduation. These circumstances often lead to poor educational outcomes with rates as low as 30% of California's foster youth attending college and only 3% earning a college degree. This lack of educational attainment generates longer term issues such as high rates of unemployment, incarceration and homelessness. Within four years of emancipation, 50% of foster youth are unemployed, about 25% are incarcerated, and 20% are homeless. Over 70% of the California prison population has spent some time in foster care.

Many of these challenges are a direct result of the lack of coordination and efficiency across social welfare and educational systems. School districts and child welfare agencies have struggled with assuming co-responsibility for educating foster youth. Youth in foster care require a multi-pronged approach, supported by the collective efforts of *all* agencies involved in their care (e.g. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), school districts and community-based organizations with which they interface). No single agency can comprehensively meet all the needs of foster youth. Therefore, a collaborative approach is essential to ensuring that foster youth have the opportunity to thrive.

About the Program

In 2010, the Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC) was awarded an Investing in Innovation (i3) development grant from the Federal Department of Education. This grant provided five years of funding and support to CYFC to expand its educational program model and to allow CYFC to take leadership of the collaborative developed under the pilot program, known as the Gloria Molina FosterYouth Education Program in Los Angeles County. The i3 funds allowed CYFC to refine its program model, lead the collaboration of partners, expand the program into additional school districts, and develop and participate in an external evaluation plan.

CYFC served as the lead agency of the i3 project and the agency's A.R.I.S.S.E.© (Academic Remediation, Intervention, Support Services and Education) program model was its core intervention. In addition to providing direct service, CYFC provided its program model as the academic and educational component of this collaborative partnership that also included: the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Educational Program (GMFYEP), which had social workers meet with students on school campuses; the Department of Children and Family Services; and the Hacienda/La Puente, Los Angeles, Pomona and Montebello Unified School Districts. All partners agreed to share data in order to identify foster youth attending participating schools, document program data and evaluate program implementation and student outcomes. Data sharing allowed for more comprehensive reporting and information sharing that also informed program improvements throughout the project's implementation. The collaborative approach proved to be aneffective strategy to improve foster youth academic outcomes, develop holistic, multi-systems solutions, and support cultural shifts in the systems responsible for the care and education of foster youth.

The A.R.I.S.S.E. program delivered the following program services:

- Academic assessments and credit audits to inform the development of Individualized Service Plans (ISP's)

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- Tutoring and homework assistance aligned with the ISP's
- Educational case management
- Credit recovery
- College readiness and access, including college research, college tours, SAT test prep and assistance with college and financial aid applications

Services were delivered directly on the campuses of participating schools by a Youth Education Specialist (YES), trained by CYFC on its model and program services, as well as foster youth cultural sensitivity. Each YES passed a tutoring test similar to the skills tested on the CBEST as one of its qualifying measures to serve as a YES. GMFYEP social workers made visits to these schools to meet with foster youth.

The Evaluation

The evaluation focused on academic and behavioral outcomes of the youth and included a study on the implementation of the model. CYFC engaged the Center for Nonprofit Management (CNM) to evaluate the implementation and impact of this program for the duration of the five-year funding period. In all program years, pre- and post- academic measures were collected to evaluate the impact of the YESes[1] and social worker interventions on foster youth academic outcomes. In the final program year (2014-2015), pre and post academic measures were collected to evaluate the impact of the YESes' and social worker's interventions on foster youth academic outcomes for that school year. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, and treatment youth were compared to non-treatment youth. In 2014, California Standardized Test (CST) scores were collected as a pre-measure. Also in that same year, the State of California stopped the administration of the CST in the midst of the research cycle. Thus, the program had to research, identify and implement another validated instrument similar to the CST. Using the CST as a post measure was no longer an option. The WRAT4 test was administeredas a post- measure. Pre- and post-test scores were standardized (Z-scored) in order to assess the impact of the intervention on standardized test scores.

Purpose of This Report

This report summarizes the evaluation conducted during the final grant funded year of the program. Based on guidance from the national evaluation team, this report covers only one cohort of program participants who received services during the 2014-2015 academic year. This report focuses on four components: 1) implementation fidelity; 2) impact study; 3) process evaluation; and 4) exploratory study. The first two components are those of primary interest to the i3 national evaluation based on strict research design criteria related to impact.

Highlights of the Findings

During the 2014-15 school year, 150 students participated in the program across the four districts engaged in this study. Of these participants, 143 worked with YES staff and 61 received support from the School Based Clinical Social Workers; 55 students received the full program treatment intervention of both components. The CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© program implementation successfully bridged these entities to bring a new collaborative focus on the educational achievement of foster

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[1]YESes denote both Tutor Coordinators/YESes

youth. Successes were articulated by the youth participants and the staff both in terms of educational achievements and individual empowerment and motivation.

Overall, the review of the program indicated the following program highlights:

- **High levels of implementation fidelity were achieved.** The program reached or exceeded all of its benchmarks in adherence to the program implementation benchmarks. The achievements of these benchmarks indicate that educational assessments and Individualized Service Plans were completed within the prescribed amount of time; foster youth received ongoing support from the YES staff and social workers; and on-going interagency collaboration occurred.

- **Students credit their success to support from program staff.** Overall, students attribute the support of staff to increased feelings of confidence, support and motivation. Most youth agreed that the goal of the program is to get help with schoolwork while also achieving other academic goals: maintaining focus, staying on track with homework and classes, graduating from high school, and improving grades. Others added that the program provided encouragement, helped with home life, kept them focused on acquiring college-level education, and assisted with scholarship deadlines and test dates. Foster youth explained that they felt supported by their YESes because they had someone who reached out to check in, stayed late to help out, pushed them to identify goals, and had the practical skills to help them with their academic assignments and progress. In addition, participating foster youth explained that they felt supported by the social workers because they "checked in" and listened to the students.

- **The role of service providers, particularly, the YESes was key to success.** The role of the service providers overall, and in particular of the YESes, was described aptly as, "creating a bridge between the under-represented population (foster youth) and everyone else by being their voice, advocate, mentor, and teacher." The results of this role are evidenced in the successes highlighted in this evaluation by the data and the input provided by the participants.

Student Successes:

- **Participating foster youth were more likely to attend school and stay out of trouble.** Participants attended school more than comparison students with fewer documented absences. Participants were suspended less overall than those students who were not in the program.

- **Participating foster youth recovered more credits than comparison group.** An increase was found in earned credits over the study year. An increase in credits earned for participants was significantly greater than the average increase in credits earned by their peers who were *not* part of the program.

- **Participants' graduation rates and college acceptance and attendance surpass non-participant and state averages.** All (100%) of those who participated in the program during the academic year 2014-15 graduated compared to state average of 30% and of those, 88% went on to college, vocational training or the military. **Throughout the lifetime of the grant period, 94% graduated from high school.**

Summary

Overall, the findings highlight the success of the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.[©] program implementation in bridging the social welfare and educational entities to bring a new collaborative focus on the educational achievement of foster youth. The program successfully linked and supported the under-represented population (foster youth) to needed services and supports. This was accomplished through the core A.R.I.S.S.E.[©] intervention, on-site social workers, data sharing and collaboration among partners. The successful implementation fueled the motivation and support of the participants who then felt more hopeful about their future, attended school, exhibited fewer behavioral issues, graduated from high school and matriculated into college. Program participants outperformed their peers who did not participate in the program.

Given the limitations of the research design, primarily related to the small sample and the limited time frame, it is remarkable that findings indicated measurable outcomes for the program. This is particularly noteworthy given that one of the underlying assumptions was that the target students often require support for more than one year to demonstrate substantial gains. Despite the limitations of the one-year evaluation designed, over the entire project period CYFC learned that earlier intervention is preferred for a number of reasons. These include prevention of further declines in grades, more time to recover credits and turn around or prevent poor behavior and attitudes, and the ability to deliver specific support with grades, testing and college readiness and access. Future research with a larger matched sample, use of the same assessment at pre and post, and longer participation in the program would likely yield greater gains across outcomes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Experience of High School-Aged Foster Youth in California

Recent research has demonstrated that foster youth in California experience a uniquely high level of school instability and learning loss while in foster care: foster youth transfer schools an average of eight times while in foster care and lose four to six months of learning each time.[2] As a result of school instability, only 21% of foster youth are proficient in English and 6% in math by 11th grade.[3] Only 30% of foster youth graduate from high school.[3] Foster youth are more likely than their peers to display higher rates of absenteeism and disciplinary problems and earn lower grades and achieve lower test scores.[4]

Within the last 15 years, the state of California has made strides in establishing policies to support the academic development of foster youth. While these policies bring several different types of actors to the table (e.g. County Offices of Education, school districts and social services), these policies do not in-and-of themselves break down the silos between—and facilitate collaboration among—these agencies.

The two institutions most active in the lives of high school-aged foster youth—the schools and the social welfare system--have traditionally not shared data or information that would support youths' overall development. As a result, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers' efforts to address high school youths' educational advancement are hampered by a lack of college access training as well as a lack of timely and comprehensive information on each youth's academic progress. At the same time, school districts are not always aware of the identities of foster youth enrolled, and therefore do not actively address their needs.

For this reason, foster youth face complex administrative and educational obstacles on their path to adulthood including frequent placement changes, delays in transfers between schools, lost or misplaced records, lack of connection to available resources, and difficulties enrolling in the classes required for high school graduation. Consequently, as a result of these inefficiencies and other factors, 50% do not graduate from high school and within four year of emancipation 50% foster youth are unemployed, about 25% are incarcerated, and 20% are homeless. Only three percent of emancipated foster youth in California earn a college degree.[3]

About the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© Program

Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC) has been an integral driving force in the response to the complicated and complex issues of foster youth and their educational success since 1999. To address these historical deficiencies in educating foster youth, the Program utilizes and shares data across sectors in an integrated service model and provides an array of services to support the success

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2Children Now, 2014 California Children's Report Card (2014) available at

https://www.childrennow.org/files/6114/1762/6161/2014_CA_Childrens_Report_Card.pdf

3 Stuart Foundation, Foster Youth Education Outcomes in Four California Counties (2011), available at http://stuartfoundation.org/first-look-foster-youth-education-outcomes-four-california-counties/

4 California Legislative Analyst's Office, Education of Foster Youth in California (2009) available at

www.lao.ca.gov/2009/edu/foster_children/foster_ed_052809.pdf

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of foster youth. Having provided services to foster youth in two school districts, CYFC was invited to provide its A.R.I.S.S.E. Program Model in Pomona, CA. CYFC served as the educational services partner in a successful 2008 pilot program (Gloria Molina FosterYouth Education Program) in Los Angeles County. This collaboration addressed the academic and social needs for children in foster care by leading the effort in addressing data sharing, collaborating and focused academic support. The program primarily serves high school students who have an open case with DCFS in participating school districts.

In 2010, the Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC), a CBO that provided tutoring and intervention supports to foster youth, was awarded an Investing in Innovation (i3) development grant from the Federal Department of Education. This grant provided five years of funding and support to CYFC to–replicate its educational program model launched in 1999 and to lead the collaboration developed under EPP. The i3-funded program was named the *CYFC Academic Remediation Intervention and Support Services Education Program* (A.R.I.S.S.E. © Program) *in partnership with the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Education Program* (GMFYEP). ***In the following report, the program title is abbreviated as CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.©***

With funding from a 2010 Investing in Innovation (i3) grant through the U.S. Department of Education, CYFC refined its program model and led the collaboration of partners to build an agreed upon logic model, expand the program into additional school districts, and to develop and participate in an evaluation plan required under the grant funding.

About the Evaluation

CYFC engaged the Center for Nonprofit Management (CNM) to evaluate the implementation and impact of this program for the duration of the 5-year funding period. Specifically, CNM facilitated the group to develop the logic model and evaluation plan; to institute data collection measures; collect data, conduct data analysis and provide feedback to the program regarding the implementation and evaluated the effect of the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© program on the students. CNM worked closely with the DOE's national evaluation team to align the local evaluation with the national requirements. In the final program year (2014-2015), pre- and post- academic measures were collected to evaluate the impact and metrics on the implementation of the program.

Purpose of This Report

This report summarizes the evaluation conducted during the final grant funded year of the program. Based on guidance from the national evaluation team, this report covers only one cohort of program participants who received services during the 2014/2015 academic year. This report focuses on four components: 1) the implementation fidelity, 2) impact study, 3) process evaluation and 4) exploratory study. The first two components are those of primary interest to the i3 national evaluation based on strict research design criteria related to impact and the second two add complementary information that serves to document the successes and challenges of the implementation, the experiences of and suggestions from program stakeholders (service providers and students) and insight into additional outcomes not included in the impact study.

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III. A.R.I.S.S.E.©PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP

The Program

The CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.©(Academic Remediation, Intervention, Support Services and Education) in partnership with the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Educational Program (GMFYEP) has three principle components: support activities by School-Based Social Workers (social worker or social workers), Implementation of the A.R.I.S.S.E.© program model by CYFC Youth Education Specialists (YESes), and inter-agency student-focused collaboration activities.[5]

The underlying intervention model focuses on the collaboration among participating agencies including Children Youth and Family Collaborative, Department of Children and Family Services, and Hacienda/La Puente, Los Angeles, Pomona, and Montebello Unified School Districts.The collaborative utilizes a data sharing approach that assures that the academic needs of individual foster youth are met. School districts and child welfare agencies have historically not shared the responsibility of educating foster youth, which has contributed to their poor educational outcomes. To address these historical deficiencies in educating foster youth, the Program utilizes and shares data across sectors in an integrated service model. CYFCprovided its model in partnership with five school districts.The initial collaboration with Pomona was primarily between child welfare agencies and school districts as partners. This proves to be a limited model because community-based organizations (CBOs) were not included in a substantive leadership role. That is, CBOs had historically worked to provide supplemental services rather than in collaboration with school districts and child welfare agencies. Youth in foster care require a multi-pronged approach, supported by the collective efforts of *all* of the agencies with which they interface. Since no one agency can meet the multiple needs of foster youth, collaboration among systems is essential. Also enhanced in the CYFC program model are the components of individualized education plans, tutoring, case management and support services on school sites. In the current iteration, it is an integral componentof the program provided to every youth.

Logic Model

A logic model was developed to articulate the assumptions and expectations about and across the components. All were developed based on what is known about the population (Facts) and the context within which the program operates.

A.R.I.S.S.E.© Program& Partners

PARTNERSHIP COMPONENTS

1. Youth Education Specialists Intervention (CYFC)

-Relationship-based Academic Remediation and Intervention (*tutoring, college access, credit recovery, pre-emancipation planning, on-site communication and coordination with school staff*)

-Individualized Service Plan & Educational Case Management

2. School Based Social Workers Intervention (DCFS)

Comprehensive Educational Assessment & Intake

-Ongoing Support (*including referrals to resources, credit recovery, and pre-emancipation planning*)

3. Inter-Agency Collaboration

-Care Team Meetings (*SBSW and YESes who share caseloads*)

-Data Sharing (*among school districts, DCFS and CYFC*)

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[5]CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© program model has historically served elementary, middle and high school students. However, the focus of this report is solely on high school students.

Facts
- Foster youth have lower educational achievement rates than the general student population.
- Because of instability at home, intervention at school is needed to keep foster youth on track to graduate and to address academic gaps in learning.
- Graduation from high school increases the likelihood of adult success.

External Factors
- There is a high rate of attrition among the foster youth population.
- There are institutional barriers that impede collaboration between large agencies.
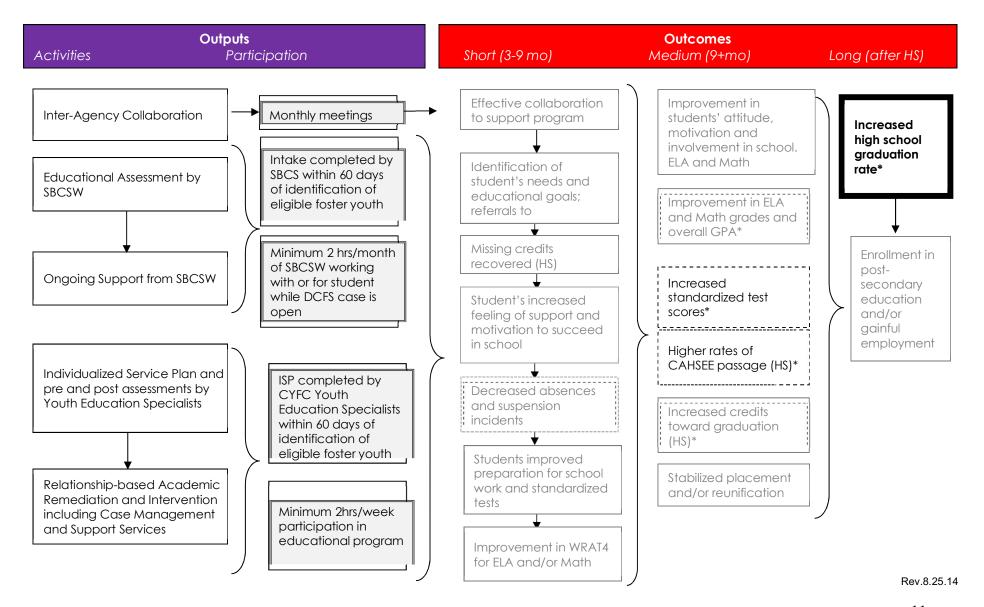
Logic Model and Evaluation
The logic model below illustrates the program activities, outputs and outcomes expected. Note that one of the underlying assumptions is that the target students often require support for more than 1 year but for the purposes of this evaluation study all outcomes are measured after the conclusion of the school year.

The variables related to the various components of this evaluation are indicated by the following:

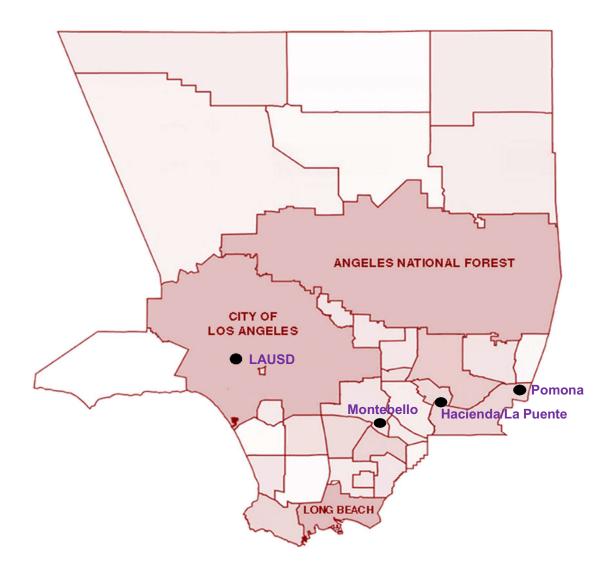| * i3 Impact Measurements for Program vs. Matched Comparison Youth	Fidelity Measures	Exploratory Study Outcomes

Program: CYFC Academic Remediation Intervention and Support Services Education Program Model (A.R.I.S.S.E.©) in partnership with the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Educational Program (GMFYEP) Logic Model

Situation: A collaboration between the Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC), Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and participating school districts to address the academic and social needs for high school students in foster care through individualized interventions by a school based social worker and intensive tutoring by highly trained educational specialists.

Outputs		Outcomes		
Activities	Participation	Short (3-9 mo)	Medium (9+mo)	Long (after HS)

Activities:
- Inter-Agency Collaboration
- Educational Assessment by SBCSW
- Ongoing Support from SBCSW
- Individualized Service Plan and pre and post assessments by Youth Education Specialists
- Relationship-based Academic Remediation and Intervention including Case Management and Support Services

Participation:
- Monthly meetings
- Intake completed by SBCS within 60 days of identification of eligible foster youth
- Minimum 2 hrs/month of SBCSW working with or for student while DCFS case is open
- ISP completed by CYFC Youth Education Specialists within 60 days of identification of eligible foster youth
- Minimum 2hrs/week participation in educational program

Short (3-9 mo):
- Effective collaboration to support program
- Identification of student's needs and educational goals; referrals to
- Missing credits recovered (HS)
- Student's increased feeling of support and motivation to succeed in school
- Decreased absences and suspension incidents
- Students improved preparation for school work and standardized tests
- Improvement in WRAT4 for ELA and/or Math

Medium (9+mo):
- Improvement in students' attitude, motivation and involvement in school. ELA and Math
- Improvement in ELA and Math grades and overall GPA*
- Increased standardized test scores*
- Higher rates of CAHSEE passage (HS)*
- Increased credits toward graduation (HS)*
- Stabilized placement and/or reunification

Long (after HS):
- **Increased high school graduation rate***
- Enrollment in post-secondary education and/or gainful employment

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A.R.I.S.S.E. © Partnership: Participating School Districts 2014-2015

Four high school districts committed to participating in the i3 program over the course of the 5-year funding cycle. The districts collaborated with CYFC to provide workspace for and share student data with social worker and YESes. Participating high school districts were located in LAUSD, the Hacienda/La Puente, Montebello, and Pomona, and capture the geographic and demographic variation that makes Los Angeles County unique.

IV. i3 EVALUATION DESIGN

All i3 development grantees were required to commission a rigorous independent evaluation of their program implementation efforts. The evaluation thus includes two main components as required: The implementation analysis - describes key features of the implementation. It documents whether the program was successful in achieving the metrics as indicated in the logic model within the specified timeframes. These metrics and timeframes were set as minimums to ensure that all components of the program were operating. The second required component is the impact analysis, presented in this report, which relies on comparison group of students to measure the relative effectiveness of intervention.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the impact and document the implementation of the program and identify any opportunities for improving program delivery. The evaluation thus consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the research questions described below. These questions address the program model fidelity as well as impact measurements as required by i3 as well as an attempt to describe the participating youth and address program implementation, delivery and additional outcomes of interest to the program.

The evaluation was designed for the following uses:
1. Program monitoring and quality improvement
2. Identifying and addressing challenges and successes
3. Providing a feedback loop for the education process
4. Documenting the impact of the program and
5. Communicating about the value and results of the program to a wide range of stakeholders

Implementation Fidelity

The first of two components mandated by the national evaluation involved a study of implementation fidelity. This information was used to examine the implementation of the program according to the fidelity measures that were established. Statistical analyses (descriptive statistics) were conducted to provide support for tracking the activities of the program, to answer the following:

- *Was the program implemented as planned?* Factors include adequately trained staff, intakes conducted, and services provided in a timely manner according to the intervention model.

Impact Study

- *What was the impact on program youth?* How were standardized test scores influenced? Did youth graduate at a higher rate?

Exploratory Outcome Study

- *How did the program influence or impact the students aside from standardized test scores?* Were feelings of support and motivation, educational outcomes, school attendance and behavioral outcomes positively influenced?

Process Evaluation Study

The objective of the qualitative component is to document the process of intensive service delivery provided by the YESes and SBSW and to provide a perspective on the youth and staff program experiences. The perceptions of the staff and youth are critical to understanding which services were considered most helpful and transformative for the youth served as well as to identify any quality enhancements that might be made to the program. Questions that were framed this study included:

- *What was the experience of youth and staff participating in the program?* Did the inter-agency collaboration work as expected, did youth receive the help they needed and if not, what were the barriers? What worked well and what could be done to improve the program? Were staff members able to deliver services successfully? If not, what were the barriers? What was the overall value of the program for both youth and staff? Was the experience different for youth in middle school than those in high school?

- *How might the program be improved?* What suggestions do participants and staff have for enhancing the experience with and success of the program?

Sample

During the 2104-15 School Year, a total of 150 students participated in the four school districts included in this study. Of the 150, available data indicate that 143 students worked with YESes staff and 61 worked with social worker. Data confirmed that a total of 55 students received both components of working with YESes and social worker staff (full program treatment intervention). Note that two of the four schools did not have full implementation that included a SBSW; all schools had implementation of YES component. For the purposes of the impact study, the focus was on the smaller sample of students who received both components. Baseline equivalency on relevant demographic variables between the treatment group and the comparison group was tested and the final composition of the sample was determined to yield equivalent groups suitable for the analyses.

Study Design

Experimental Model

In the final program year (2014-2015), pre- and post- academic measures were collected to evaluate the impact of the YESes and social worker interventions on foster youth academic outcomes. A quasi- experimental research design was employed, and treatment youth were compared to non-treatment youth for the impact and outcome portions of this evaluation. All youth in the treatment group were included in the implementation and process evaluation components.

In response to changes that occurred outside of the program, primarily that California changed its required standardized testing, the evaluation plan was modified. Based on guidance from the i3 National Evaluation team, the study focused on the final year of the program implementation to allow for the use of a comparison group in the design. Thus, the analysis focused on only one year of program activities and changes in the standardized tests were changed to measure the impact of the program.

CST scores were collected as a pre- measure. Because the State of California stopped the administration of the CST in the midst of the research cycle, the WRAT4 test was administered as

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a post-measure. After significant research and discussion, it was determined that the use of the different measures would allow for an adequate test of the program's impact. Pre- and post-test scores were standardized (Z-scored) in order to assess the impact of the intervention on standardized test scores.

Data Sources

Various sources were used to collect data including school district databases and transcript records, the Educational Assessment (initial assessment done by the SBSW/SWI to identify a youth's academic needs) and Education Case Plans, created at Core Team Meetings by DCFS staff, school staff, the youth and parent/caregivers, to address academic needs identified in the initial Educational Assessment. The Evaluation Team utilized quantitative data obtained from school records, the CYFC database, the DCFS database and case files, which include instruments specifically developed for the program, and qualitative data gathered directly from staff and youth in the participating school districts. In addition, data were collected from the CYFC and DCFS databases, and the EPP/GMFYEP Program Services Log.

Analysis Approach

Data were collected from the various multiple sources, then entered, cleaned and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics:

- Baseline equivalency between the program recipients and the comparison group (to ensure that the program group and comparison group were sufficiently similar in characteristics at baseline to allow for impact analysis)

- Independent samples t-test comparing the target outcomes of groups receiving both treatments versus the group receiving neither treatment for overall group and by district were used.

- Correlational analyses comparing treatment levels (continuous) to target outcomes (e.g., Math, ELA, Overall GPA; Total Absences, Total Suspensions, Credit Completion Percentage).

- An analysis of variance to determine whether there were differences in student achievement of target outcomes at different levels of treatment. Students receiving treatment were divided into three groups: low, medium and high.

The reason for conducting an analysis of variance stems from the variance in treatment dosages observed across students in treatment group, with some students receiving less than two hours per month and others exceeding 20 hours per month. Levels of treatment were determined by division of students into equal groups (i.e., low, medium, high) in order to conduct analyses at district level and by grade level. Outliers were removed based on univariate analyses of dependent variable via scatterplot matrices. Of note: In the Los Angeles school district, only nine students received treatment from one school site. Due to the low sample size, results that could not be adequately compared across different levels of treatment were excluded from the data interpretation section.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were inherent in the nature of the research design. First the small sample size possibly limited the sensitivity of the analysis, reducing the likelihood of yielding reliable results. In addition, the time period of the study as limited to just one academic year, presents a challenge to the study in that more often than not, students in this program tend to, as needed, participate in the program for more than one school year. This timing issue may have also influenced the ability to confirm a statistically significant and meaningful relationship between dosage and outcomes.

V. FINDINGS

1. Program Implementation Fidelity Findings

The term fidelity of implementation refers to the extent to which implementers adhere to the core principles and practices of a given program. For the purposes of this evaluation, fidelity benchmarks were those articulated in the program logic model. Analysis of program documentation indicated that the program was implemented in schools with a high level of fidelity in the study year.

When designing the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© program, CYFC identified the following activities as essential to the achievement of program goals: timely completion of foster youth participant intake, educational assessments, tutoring and individualized service plans; ongoing support from YES and collaboration with social workers; and ongoing inter-agency collaboration.[8] Fidelity measures were developed as a way for the program evaluation to ensure that the program is delivered as envisioned.

Implicit in this partnership is the assumption that the contributions of *both* YESes and social workers are important to achieving program outcome goals. Each of the 5 years of program implementation was unique with respect to the depth of YESes and social worker participation in each Program school district. In the 2014-15 school year, YESes *and* social workers were actively engaged with foster youth in two of the four program school districts (Pomona and Montebello). YESes alone were actively engaged with foster youth in the remaining two school districts (Hacienda/La Puente and LAUSD). *See table in Appendix B.*

Overall, the program met or exceeded all benchmarks of implementation. The following highlight specific fidelity trends and progress in attaining benchmarks in program implementation by YESes and social workers by school district. *See table in Appendix B.*

- ***Foster youth educational assessments were completed within 60 days by social worker: fidelity goal fully achieved in two districts***

  One hundred percent of participant intakes and educational assessments were completed within 60 days by social worker for foster youth in the Pomona School District (n=26) and Montebello School District (n=35). The benchmark of at least one school district completes 69% to 89% of program youth intakes within 60 days) was attained.

- ***Foster youth Individualized Service Plans were completed within 60 days: fidelity goal fully achieved in one district***

  Individualized Service Plans (ISP) were completed by YESes within 60 days for 75% of participants in the Hacienda/La Puente School District (9/12 students), 64% of participants in the East San Gabriel School District (37/57) 81% of participants in the Montebello School District (30/37 students), and 100% of participants in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) (13/13 students). The benchmark, set at least one of the school districts completes 61% to 89% of ISPs and pretest assessments within 60 days was therefore exceeded.

- ***Foster youth received ongoing support from YESes: fidelity achieved.***

Foster youth met an average 8.3 hours per month with a YES.[6]All the four districts achieved the full goal of having more than 75% of participants receive two hours per month of YESes time. The benchmark of 51% to 74% of program youth in one district receiving an average of two hours of academic remediation and intervention services was met.

- ***Foster youth received ongoing support from social worker: fidelity goal fully achieved in one district***

  Of the two districts with an active social worker component, in one of the districts (Montebello), social workers spent more than 2 hours per month with greater than 75% of participants, meeting the program fidelity goal set as a benchmark of at least one of the school districts has 51% to 74% of program youth who receive an average of 2 hours per month of ongoing support from the SBSW. In the other district (Pomona), social workers spent more than 2 hours per month with 73% of program participants.

- ***Ongoing inter-agency collaboration: fidelity goal fully achieved in one district***

  In the 2014-15 school year representatives from Pomona Unified School District (PUSD), DCFS, CYFC, the Los Angeles County office of Probation, and the First District were consistently present in each monthly Care Team meeting hosted by the CYFC and DCFS.[7]

Impact Study Findings: Academic Outcomes

During the 2014-2015 academic year, a total of 150 foster youth in 9th, 10th, 11thand 12thgrades were served across the program. For the purposes of the impact study, students who worked with a social worker and YESes were identified for inclusion in the analysis[11] and are referred to as "program" youth. Program behavioral and academic outcomes reported in this and the following sections are based on comparisons between high school foster youth in these districts who worked with both YESes and social worker (program youth), and high school foster youth in these districts who worked with neither YESes nor social worker (comparison youth). Twenty-four foster youth in the Pomona and 31 foster youth in the Montebello school districts received services andsupport from both YESes and social workers during the 2014-2015 school year.

Twenty-four foster youth in the Pomona and thirty-one foster youth in the Montebello school districts received services and support from both YESes and social worker during the 2014-15 school year.

Program behavioral and academic outcomes reported here are based on comparisons between all high school foster youth in these districts who worked with both YESes and social worker (program youth), and high school foster youth in these districts who worked with neither YESes nor social worker (comparison youth).[8]

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[6]See Table 3 in Appendix B

[7] Data were not available for other program school districts. See Table 4 in Appendix B for more information.

[8] The dataset compiled for this evaluation was developed from an initial roster of all eligible foster youth in each of the four school districts described in this report. Because in each school district several of the identified foster youth did not connect with YESes or SBSW supports, the dataset includes a natural comparison group. This comparison group was utilized to assess the statistical significance of the gains seen in academic outcomes of program participants. In the end, the comparison group culled from the Pasadena school district was not used because the non-treatment students from the treatment school districts were better candidates for matched-pair analyses than the control students from non-treatment districts.

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- ***Program participants increased their credits earned at nearly twice the rate of their peers***
  Foster youth who worked with both YESes and social worker earned an average of 31.6 credits more in the 2014-15 school year than they had earned in the previous year, prior to program participation. This increase in credits earned was significantly greater than the average increase in credits earned (17.7) by their peers who were *not* part of the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.©GMFYEP program in 2014-15 (n=102, *p=0.04*). Notably, students in the Pomona school district earned 91.5% of the credits they attempted in the 2014-15 school year (n=22).

- ***Program participants were absent less than their peers***
  While both program and comparison foster youth were absent more days in the 2014-15 school year than in the 2013-14 school year, foster youth who worked with neither YESes nor social worker were absent more in 2014-15 (11.66 days/year on average) than students who worked with both YESes and social worker (9.29 days/year on average; n=102, *p=0.80)*.

- ***Program participants were suspended less than their peers***
  On average, foster youth working with both YESes and social worker were suspended from school fewer days (-0.44 days) during the 2014-15 school year than they had been during the 2013-14 school year. Foster youth who worked with neither YESes nor social worker were also suspended fewer days (-0.08 days on average) during the 2014-15 school year than they had been during the 2013-14 school year, but the change is much less pronounced (n=102, p=0.40).

- ***Program participants saw improvement in their Math GPAs compared to their peers***
  Foster youth working with both YESes and social worker saw an increase in their Math GPA (average gain of 0.02 grade points) from the 2013-14 school year to the 2014-15 school year, while their peers who worked with neither YESes nor social worker saw a decrease in their Math GPA (average loss of 0.07 grade points) over the same time period (n=102, *p=0.80*).

- ***Academic outcomes improved by program dosage***
  Program data documented that academic outcomes improved with recommended program dosage.

- ***Impact on the standardized test scores of foster youth in the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.©GMFYEP program was not evidenced by the data***
  Program participants did not improve more than their non-program peers on standardized tests after one year of CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© GMFYEP program intervention. Typically, one would expect to see several years of program or academic intervention before observing a pronounced improvement in Standardized test scores. Additionally, the change in the test instrument may have had an effect on the measured impact on academic improvement.[9]

- ***Graduation rates and Post-Secondary Educational Plans***

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[9]A two-level hierarchical linear model with students nested in schools and matched within blocks found no significant differences between program and comparison youths' baseline- to post-program gains in standardized test scores.

Results document improved graduation rates: 100% of the 36 12th graders graduated. Of these 36 seniors, 32 (or 88%) went to college, vocational training or the military, 2 were undecided and two students' status was unknown at the time of data collection.

Post-Secondary Attendance	
Colleges/Post-Secondary	**2014-15**
Community College	**19**
Cerritos	3
Citrus College	4
East LA College	2
Chaffey College	1
Mt. Sac	4
Rio Hondo College	1
El Camino College	3
LA Trade Tech	1
Trade School	**1**
Pomona Adult School	1
Cal State	**3**
CSU Humboldt	1
CSU San Francisco	2
UC	**1**
UC Los Angeles	1
HBCU	**1**
Grambling	1
Military	**7**
Unknown	**2**
Undecided	**2**

As verified by the National Clearinghouse

In spring 2014, the YESes administered the CYFC English Language Arts and Math post-assessment where 191 students completed the CYFC ELA post-assessment and 154 completed the CYFC Math post-assessment. The YESes also focused on ensuring that students completed all missed assignments and projects to increase their course grades.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the Common Core Standards replaced the ELA and Math California State Standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) was piloted/tested to replace the California Standards Test. Consequently, CYFC adopted the Wide Range Achievement

Test, Fourth Edition (WRAT4) as a standardized measure of student academic progress.

Of the 356 students that were enrolled in the CYFC program, 282 (79%) were pre-assessed within 60 days of their entry into the program. 211 (75%) of the 280 students enrolled at the end of the year were pre- and post-assessed using the WRAT4 Word Reading subtest. 204 (73%) completed the pre- and post-WRAT Sentence Comprehension subtest and 214 (76%) took the pre- and post-WRAT4 Math Computation.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Social Workers and YESes maintained ongoing collaboration and communication to ensure that each student made academic progress, actively participated in the program, and demonstrated appropriate social behavior. In September 2010, three DCFS Social Workers served the districts. A fourth Social Worker was funded by CYFC with the i3 project.

Care Team meetings were initially conducted bi-weekly at Montebello Unified School District (MUSD) and monthly at Pomona Unified School District (PUSD) and Hacienda La Puente USD (HLPUSD). The meetings occurred once a month at MUSD during the last year of the grant. The Care Team meetings focused on students' academic progress, performance on standardized assessments, social and/or behavioral issues and concerns, and school attendance. The Care Team collectively developed remediation strategies (including other resources and services needed) when students did not make satisfactory progress. The Care Team Meetings ensured that every service agency involved in students' lives was aware of and engaged in students' progress and outcomes. The following representatives attended the district Care Team meetings:

- CYFC CEO
- School Based Social Worker/social worker Supervisor
- CYFC Program Director
- DCFS Program Director
- Education Consultant
- District Director of Pupil Services
- Probation Officer
- Independent Living Program Coordinator
- YESes
- College Representative
- DCFS Consultant

The Operations Team consisting of representatives from each collaborative partner was also convened during the grant period. CYFC was responsible for facilitating the monthly meetings to ensure effective implementation and operations of the i3 project in the respective districts. In an effort to demonstrate partnership, CYFC included a DCFS program manager as a co-facilitator with CYFC.

The Social Workers scheduled and facilitated a Core Meeting for each student. The YESes, School Counselor, Principal or Assistant Principal, Primary Social Worker, the caregiver or guardian and the student were present at the Core Meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and sign off on the goals in the Educational Case Plan. CYFC and the social workers demonstrated shared support for each student's success.

The CYFC Program Manager conducted on-site meetings with the school principals or the principals' designee at each i3 school. The Principal meetings focused on: program updates and operations; effectiveness of the implementation of the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© program model and the YESes at their respective sites; impact of the CYFC program on students' attendance, behavior and grades; and their recommendations on areas that could be improved. The CYFC YES Staff and Teachers collaborated daily regarding students and their progress.

Process Evaluation

To supplement the outcome evaluation, the perspective of the students and the staff was gathered to provide additional insight into the successes and challenges of the program.

Foster Youth Experience in the Program

During the 2014-2015 academic year, a total of 150 foster youth in 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades were served across the program. For the purposes of the outcome evaluation, 150 who worked with social worker, YESes, or both were included in the analysis.[10] For the purposes of this report, these youth are referred to as "program" youth.

Working with School Based Social Workers

Across school districts, participating foster youth received a substantial amount of support from social worker every month: between 2.8 and 3.2 hours with each student.[6]Every foster youth student who met with a social worker completed an educational assessment. As with the YESes, participating foster youth explained that they felt supported by social workers because they "checked in" and listened.

Working with CYFC Youth Education Specialists (YESes)

Similarly, across school districts, participating foster youth spent a substantial amount of time-- no less than an average of 8.3 hours per month--with their CYFC YESes. In the LAUSD School District, participating students spent on average over 12 hours per month, or 3 hours per week, with their YESes.[11] The top three supports provided by YESes across all districts included homework assistance and tutoring (3 hours/month on average), enrichment services (30 minutes/month) and deficit tutoring (24 minutes/month). Additional support provided included higher education and employment support and care coordination activities (1 hour per month). Foster youth explained that they felt supported by their YESes because they had someone who reached out to check in, stayed late to help out, pushed them to identify goals, and had the practical skills to help them with their academic assignments and progress.

In focus group interviews, students explained that they felt that their YES was someone to whom they could open up about school or personal issues. One student explained that her YES, "took her under her wing," and looked out for her, helping her set and keep goals. For many of thestudents, it was the mentorship and support offered by YES, sometimes even more so than the explicit academic support, that made a difference in their motivation and engagement in school.

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[10]See Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix B
[11] See Table 3 in Appendix B

Greatest Accomplishments

The three greatest accomplishments that CYFC has achieved as a result of the i3 grant were: increased high school graduation rates; increased college acceptance rates; and district-wide expansion of the program in Pomona USD.

High School Graduation

Since its inception, CYFC has focused on high school graduation and college readiness as its primary goals. The i3 grant was instrumental in enabling the agency to attain these goals at the schools and districts that benefitted from the grant. In addition, as CYFC had met and exceeded high school graduation rates for foster youth, CYFC expanded its focus to college acceptance, persistence and graduation as well as career pathways for foster youth through other sources of funding.

"The goal of i3 is to get our students to graduate high school with a post-secondary plan in place."

The CYFC data indicated that 94% of foster youth seniors that participated in the project graduated from high school over the entire grant period. The CYFC high school graduation data exceeded the 49% high school graduation rates for foster youth in California. In addition, over 90% of high school seniors that took the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) passed both the ELA and Math portions in comparison to 49%[3] of those in foster care in California. **The district wide expansion in Pomona Unified School District proved a 100% graduation rate for all seniors from Pomona Unified School District.**

College Acceptance

CYFC also exceeded the post-secondary acceptance education rates for foster youth. Over 70% of foster youth that participated in the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© program were accepted into post-secondary education during the i3 grant period in comparison to the 20%[4] of foster youth that actually matriculate in California.

The pilot of the CYFC College Level Up Program enables CYFC to encourage more foster youth to attend and graduate four-year universities through support and on-going communication provided by a CYFC designated college coordinator. In addition, partnerships were being established with colleges that these students were attending to ensure that they had access to resources and support needed to graduate and be employment ready (including job internship or job shadowing opportunities).

Districtwide Expansion in Pomona Unified School District

For the 2014-15 school year, 100% of the seniors graduated from high school and 100% of the students taking the Exit exam passed the exam.

Most Difficult Obstacles Encountered

The most difficult obstacle encountered was the identification and verification of foster youth with

open DCFS cases eligible for CYFC program services. Because of multiple placement changes of foster youth within and across schools and districts as well as ever-changing life situations, the data match provided by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) did not have the most current list of foster youth enrolled in the respective schools and districts. In addition, even though the list was provided by DCFS, some of the listed foster youth often no longer had open DCFS cases and therefore were not eligible for program services.

Determining foster youth that could be recruited into the CYFC program involved a multi-step process which began with: verification with key school staff to ensure that the foster youth were still enrolled in the school; verification with DCFS that the foster youth had open cases; and communication with care-givers and school staff to ensure that eligible foster youth participate in the CYFC program.

Partnership and collaboration with key stakeholders were critical to identification and verification of student status. Verification of student enrollment in the schools was facilitated through meetings with key school staff and access to district-wide database system. In addition, during CARE team meetings, YESes could easily verify student open case status since the social workers were present and able to share if the foster youth were in their case load. However, there were also instances when the YESes were the first to know about a new foster youth enrolled at a school because another student in the same group home had alerted the YESes regarding the student. In those instances, because of prior relationships with the caregivers at the group home, the YESes would contact the caregiver to recruit students into the CYFC program. The YESes would also inform the school and social workers regarding the new foster youth at the school so all key stakeholders could provide any and all needed services and resources.

Access to district databases depended on the level of buy-in and extent of collaboration with the district and schools. YESes at Pomona Unified School District were provided access to the internet and district database within two weeks of launching their schools. This enabled them to identify potential foster youth with open DCFS cases which could then be verified with DCFS. In the event that YESes did not have access to district database, high level of buy-in at the schools also facilitated access to information about potential foster youth through either the administrators, counselors, Attendance Clerk, or Office Managers at the schools.

Perception of the Program

Program staff believe in and support the comprehensive model

The staff respondents touched on a number of major points when asked what the goal of the program is. They agreed that it is meant to help students graduate high school and attend a post-secondary institution, improve academic performance while decreasing the rate of fosteryouth high school dropouts, and ultimately improve overall well-being of students while helping them reach their goals. In general, staff felt that this program exists to help foster students be academically prepared to conquer obstacles in life, give them tools to succeed andreach their potential, and ideally have them think about attending a four-year institution.

When asked what their role is in this program, the participating staff explained that they are there to be an advocate for the foster children. This includes, but is not limited to tutoring, providing individualized attention, emotional support and educational service while ensuringthe overall well-being of the students. Respondents also noted that their role is also to get and

stay involved in the students' lives by providing mentorship and to help "bridge the gap" between foster youth and everyone else.

Staff felt that homework assistance, academic remediation, mentoring, and emotional and psychological support were the most helpful for the youth.

One staff member expressed the importance of emotional and psychological support because the kids "are neglected by their biological parents or guardians." Homeworkassistance and grade checks were also seen as critical to youth success because it assures youthare aware of their progress and what is needed to improve or maintain said progress. Manyalso agreed that providing one-on-one attention and support to the students was crucial. Ithelps the youth to feel more comfortable and confident as well as reminds them that "there issomeone one their side, in their corner."

Accomplishments

The staff felt very positively about the year as a whole. Many noticed that the youth are more motivated. Foster youth are now graduating from high school, going to college and preparingfor life after school, which makes the staff inclined to say the program is effective. There has been a notable improvement in both grades and attitudes as well. The students are becomingmore confident and learning what they are truly capable of accomplishing.

When asked what they thought went well this year, almost all staff mentioned the improved academic performance of the students. In addition, many staff also discussed how pleased they were with the relationships created between the students and the YES as it helps the students to feel as though there is someone rooting for them. Some staff also mentioned howthey thought the communication with the SBSW went well too. All staff agreed that the most helpful services were homework assistance, emotional and psychological support, academic remediation and mentoring.

According to staff respondents, the three greatest accomplishments that CYFC and program participants have achieved as a result of the i3 grant were: increased high school graduation rates; increased college acceptance rates; and district-wide expansion of the program in Pomona USD.

Table 1: Student Enrollment from 2010-2015 (Duplicated Numbers)			
Grant Year	**Number of Students Served**	**Number of Schools Served**	**Number of Districts**
2010-2011	220	14	4
2011-2012	275	18	5
2012-2013	359	20	5
2013-2014	354	20	5
2014-2015	356	20	5
TOTAL	**1,564**		

Program Youth see the academic support and personal support as critical to their success

Most youth surveyed (n=52) agreed that the goal of the program is to get help with schoolwork while also achieving academic goals, maintaining focus, staying on track with homework and classes, and improving grades. Others added that the program provided encouragement, helped with home life, maintained their sights on college-level education, and assisted with scholarship deadlines and test dates.

Service Provision

Service provision entails a wide range of supports. All staff provided direct services to youth,which included everything from mentoring, emotional and psychological support, grade checks, and homework assistance (100%). The second most commonly provided services were academic remediation and the enrichment program (87.5%). College preparation (81.3%) followed that.

Services Provided to Youth by Program Staff, n=16

Service	Number	Percent
Mentoring	16	100.0%
Grade Checks	16	100.0%
Homework Assistance	16	100.0%
Emotional or psychological support	16	100.0%
Academic Remediation	14	87.5%
Enrichment Program	14	87.5%
College Preparation	13	81.3%
Referral to School-based resources	12	75.0%
Career counseling/help with jobs	11	68.8%
In-class Tutoring	10	62.5%
Credit Recovery Program	10	62.5%
Extra-curricular Activities	10	62.5%
Post-Emancipation Planning	8	50.0%
Standardized Test Prep - CAHSEE	7	43.8%
Referral to External Services	5	31.3%
Standardized Test Prep – Smarter Balanced	4	25.0%
Transferring credits from a previous school	3	18.8%

Source: Staff Online Survey

Limitations

Several limitations were inherent in the nature of the research design. First, the small sample size possibly limited the sensitivity of the analysis, reducing the likelihood of yielding reliable results. Secondly, only high schools were included in the sample. The comparison group may have been exposed to portions of the intervention**.** This must be taken into consideration with reference to the intent and assumptions about the program intervention in which the dosage would be given over multiple schools (as the program does not serve only seniors). In fact, the

data shows that earlier intervention is preferred for a number of reasons. Even prior to have this data, CYFC had hypothesized that this would be the case and so provides academic interventions in grades K-12. These include prevention of further declines in grades, more time to recover credits and turn around or prevent poor behavior and attitudes and specific support with grades and testing. This timing issue may have also influenced the ability to confirm a statistically significant and meaningful relationship between dosage and outcomes. Secondly, the time period of the study was limited to that of one school year.

Given the limitations of the research design, primarily related to the small sample and the limited time frame, it is remarkable that findings indicated measurable outcomes for the program.

VI. SUMMARY

School districts and child welfare agencies have historically not shared the responsibility of educating foster youth, which has contributed to their poor educational outcomes. The CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.©program implementation successfully bridged these entities to bring a new collaborative focus on the educational achievement of foster youth. This demonstration grant program was implemented with high fidelity. The findings detailed in this report suggest significant progress towards the achievement of outcomes for the program participants indicatinggeneral success of the model.

Successes were articulated by the youth participants and the staff both in terms of educational achievements, individual empowerment, and motivation.

- ***High School graduation.*** Since its inception, CYFC has focused on high school graduation and college readiness as primary goals for youth. The i3 grant was instrumental in enabling the agency to attain these goals at the schools and districts that benefitted from the grant. In addition, as CYFC met and exceeded high school graduation rates for foster youth, they simultaneously expanded their focus on college acceptance, matriculation, and graduation, as well as career pathways for foster youth through other sources of funding.[12]

    The CYFC data indicated that 94% of foster youth seniors who participated in the CYFC i3 project graduated from high school during the grant period. The CYFC high school graduation data exceeded the low 49% high school graduation rates (30-49%) for foster youth in California. In addition, over 90% of high school senior CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© program participants who took the CAHSEE passed both the ELA and Math portions of the CAHSEE in comparison to 49%of those in foster care in California.[13]

    The district wide expansion in Pomona Unified School District proved that 100% graduation rate for all seniors from Pomona Unified School District. *See page 17.*

- ***College acceptance.*** Results indicate improved graduation rates and post-secondary education plans. Of the 36 seniors in the test group, 36 or 100% of them graduated. Of those who graduated, 32 went on to enroll in higher education, vocational training or the military. More specifically, 19 (52%) attended community college, 1 (3%) attended a trade school, 3 (8%) attended a CSU campus, 1 (3%) attended a UC campus, 1 (3%) attended an Historically Black College or University (HBCU) and 7 (19%) Below is a more detailed list of the colleges students were attending: See Appendix C for three years of data on college attendance.

- ***Successful implementation garnered additional support for college success***. Over 50% of these high school graduates attended community college and about 14% attended four-year universities. The CYFC College Level Up Program enables CYFC to encourage more foster youth to attend and graduate four-year universities through support and on-going communication provided by a CYFC designated college coordinator. In addition,partnerships were being established with colleges attended by student participants to ensurethey have access to resources and support needed to graduate and be employment ready (including job internship or job shadowing opportunities).

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[12]See Table 7 in Appendix C

[13]Wiegman, W., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Barrat, V.X., Magruder, J. &Needel, B. (2014).*The Invisible Achievement Gap Part 2: How the Foster Care Experiences of California Public School Students Are Associated with their Education Outcomes.*

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- ***Partnership was a key factor in program success***. Partnership was a key successful strategy for addressing the challenge of identifying eligible students for the program in a timely manner. Furthermore, partnership (particularly via the Care Team Meetings) ensured that every service agency involved in students' lives was aware of and engaged in students' progress and outcomes and therefore improved services and program effectiveness.

- ***Successful partnership lead to expansion and new opportunities.*** Due to CYFC's successful partnership with the Pomona Unified School District (PUSD), the CYFC program was included in the district Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) funded through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Collaboration with PUSD began with the i3 grant and will continue to expand until the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.$^{©}$ program model is implemented to serve foster youth in all PUSD schools.

  Through LCFF, CYFC expanded implementation of the A.R.I.S.S.E.$^{©}$ program model to 14 elementary, middle and high schools in PUSD in 2013-2014 school year. PUSD awarded a contract to CYFC to provide academic remediation and intervention to foster youth with open DCFS cases. During the second year of the PUSD LCAP, YESes (previously known as Tutor Coordinators) provided academic remediation and intervention to 149 students in 17 elementary, middle and high schools as well as continuation schools in PUSD (see table 3 for list of LCFF-funded schools in PUSD). For the 2014-15 school year, 100% of the seniors graduated from high school and 100% of the students taking the exit exam passed the exam.

Overall the findings highlight the success of the program in successfully creating a bridge between the under-represented population (foster youth) and everyone else by being their voice, advocate, mentor, and teacher. This was accomplished through data sharing and partnership among partners and the one-one connections as well as the administrative, academic and emotional support provided by YES and SBSW program staff.

Given the limitations of the research design, primarily related to the small sample and the limited time frame, it is remarkable that findings indicated measurable outcomes for the program. This is particularly the case when considering one of the underlying assumptions is that the target students often require support for more than one year, but for the purposes of this evaluation study all outcomes are measured after the conclusion of one school year. In fact, the program also learned that earlier intervention is preferred for a number of reasons. These include prevention offer the declines in grades, more time to recover credits and turn around or prevent poor behavior and attitudes and specific support with grades and testing. Future research with a larger matched sample, use of the same assessment at pre and post, and longer participation in the program would likely yield greater gains across outcomes.

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION MATRIX

	Research Questions	Variable(s)	Source/Timeline	Population	Question Type
A. OUTCOME EVALUATION					
1	What were the characteristics of the students at the start of the school year?	Baseline testing: • Grade Level • Gender • Ethnicity • WRAT4 Math score • WRAT4 English Language Arts score • ELL Status Variables below may be investigated as part of the exploratory evaluation: • District • School • School Type • Birth Date • Special Education Status • Number of School Absences • Number of Suspension Incidents • Residential Type* • Number of Placements* • Time in Foster Care*	School District Database *DCFS Database Baseline testing variables will be collected at the beginning of the school year (August–September 2014 and end of school year (April-June 2015). Other variables will be collected at the end of the school year (September 2015).	Program versus Comparison	Descriptive/I3 Impact
2	What is the impact of the program on student achievement as measured by standardized state test scores?	Test score data prior to program and during program: • Date of administration • Math score • ELA score	School District Database April-June 2015	Program versus Comparison	i3 Impact
3	What is the impact on student graduation rates? Did a higher percentage of program participants pass the CAHSEE tests and receive their high school diploma than the comparison group?	• Date of CAHSEE administration • CAHSEE Math score • CAHSEE ELA score • Credits attempted • Credits earned • High School Diploma Earned	School District Database September 2015	Program versus Comparison	i3 Impact

Research Questions	Variable(s)	Source/Timeline	Population	Question Type
Implementation				

4 When was the program implemented and how many students participated? Were the intakes completed within the time specified?	• Date of SBCSW Intake
	  ○ Date of identification
	  ○ Date of permission from holder of educational rights
	  ○ Date of Educational Assessment
	  ○ Date of Case Plan/Core Team Meeting
	• Date of CYFC Intake*
	  ○ Date of identification
	  ○ Date of Individualized Service Plan/Intake Form
	  ○ Date of CST/WRAT results review and assessment
		Program Log
		
		*CYFC Client Management Database
		
		April-June 2015
			Program Only	i3 Fidelity

5 Did the inter-agency collaboration function as planned?	• # of bi-weekly Care Team Meetings by district	Meeting Sign-in Sheets September 2015	Program Only	i3 Fidelity
B. EXPLORATORY EVALUATION				
Academics and Behavioral				
6 Did program participants show greater improvement in grades for ELA, Math and overall GPA?	Grades for spring semester of previous 3 academic years: • ELA Grade • Math Grade • Overall GPA	School District Database September 2015	Program versus Comparison	Exploratory
7 Did CYFC impact program participants' academic achievement as measured by the pre and post CYFC skills assessments (WRAT4)?	• CYFC pre and post assessment (WRAT4) math score • CYFC pre and post assessment (WRAT4) ELA score	CYFC Client Management Database April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory
8 Did program participants pass Algebra at a higher rate than the comparison group?	• Algebra grade	School District Database September 2015	Program versus Comparison	Exploratory
9 Did program participants show	• Number of school absences	School District Database	Program versus	Exploratory

Research Questions	Variable(s)	Source/Timeline	Population	Question Type
greater improvement in school attendance than the comparison group?		September 2015	Comparison	
10 Did program participants show greater improvement in suspension incidents than the comparison group?	• Number of suspension incidents	School District Database September 2015	Program versus Comparison	Exploratory
11 To what extent did the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© in partnership with GMFYEP program improve program participants' involvement, interest and motivation in school? If so, how?	• Student Experience	CYFC Exit Survey/ Interviews May-June 2015	ProgramOnly	Exploratory
12 Did students plan to enroll in post-secondary education or living wage employment at the start of the school year? a. Did students report: b. educational planning? c. career planning? d. access to help at school in previous school years?	Student Report of: • Interest in education • Frequency of planning • Access to help at school	CYFC Student Entry Survey April-June 2015/Ongoing upon id	ProgramOnly	Exploratory
13 Did students expect to graduate and plan to enroll in college pre-program?	• Plans after high school	CYFC Student Entry Survey April-June 2015/Ongoing upon id	ProgramOnly	Descriptive
14 Did program participants enroll in post-secondary education or find employment within 3 months of high school graduation?	• Enrollment in Post- Secondary Education • Employment Status	Graduate Survey Fall 2016	ProgramOnly	Exploratory
Service Delivery/Dosage				
17 Was the minimum dosage for primary services met?	• Hours/week ofparticipation in educational program	SBCSW Program Log	ProgramOnly	Exploratory

Research Questions	Variable(s)	Source/Timeline	Population	Question Type
	• Total hours/month of SBCSW working with or for student	CYFC Client Management Database April-June 2015		
18 Did students experience any challenges to service receipt? If so, what were they?	Student Report of: • Frequency of SBCSW meetings • Frequency of CYFC support • Opinion of Frequency • Student Experience	CYFC Student Exit Survey/ Interviews April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory
Programmatic Feedback				
21 Did students and staff understand the goals and approach of the CYFC A.R.I.S.S.E.© in partnership with GMFYEP program?	• Student Experience • Staff Experience	Student Exit Survey/ Interviews Staff Online Survey April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory
22 Did staff experience any challenges in service delivery? If so, what were they?	Staff Report of: • Access to Data • Training Received • Educational Resources Needed • Physical Space Needed	Staff Online Survey April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory
23 Which services were most helpful for students?	• Student Experience • Staff Experience	Student Exit Survey/ Interviews Staff Online Survey April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory
24 What were the student and staff perceptions of the value of the program? a. Care Team Meetings (staff only) b. Comprehensive Intake assessment and Individualized Learning Plan (CYFC and DCFS) c. CYFC tutoring d. Pre-Emancipation Planning e. The Core Team Meeting	• Student Experience • Staff Experience	Student Exit Survey/ Interviews Staff Online Survey April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory

Research Questions	Variable(s)	Source/Timeline	Population	Question Type
25 What did students and staff like about the program?	• Student Experience • Staff Experience	Student Exit Survey/ Interviews Staff Online Survey April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory
26 What didn't students and staff like about the program?	• Student Experience • Staff Experience	Student Exit Survey/ Interviews Staff Online Survey April-June 2015	Program Only	Exploratory

27 How did students and staff think the program might be improved?
a. What would students and staff like to change about the program?
b. Develop and sustain an effective collaborative (each program year)
c. Did Youth Education Specialists (YESes) receive the expected amount of training?
  i. To what extent was the YESes training helpful?
  ii. What suggestions for improvement do the training participants offer?
	• Student Experience
	• Staff Experience
		Student Exit Survey/ Interviews Staff Online Survey
		
		April-June 2015
			Program Only	Exploratory

APPENDIX B: DATA TABLES

Table 1: Social Worker and YESes Engagement by School District

District	Total # Program Youth	# Youth Worked with YESes	# Youth Worked with social worker	# Youth Worked With Both
Hacienda/La Puente	27	26	0	0
Montebello	41	37	35	31
Pomona	69	67	26	24
LAUSD	13	13	0	0
Total – Program	150	143	61	55

Table 2: Students Served by School District by Grade

District	Total #
Hacienda/La Puente	
9th Grade	14
10th Grade	2
11th Grade	9
12th Grade	2
Montebello	
9th Grade	18
10th Grade	11
11th Grade	9
12th Grade	3
Pomona	
9th Grade	21
10th Grade	15
11th Grade	22
12th Grade	11
LAUSD	
9th Grade	2
10th Grade	1
11th Grade	4
12th Grade	6

Total - Program	150

Table 3: Average Hours Per Month with YESes and social worker by School District

District	Hours per Month YESes	Hours per Month social worker
Hacienda/La Puente	6.5	
Montebello	8.0	3.2
Pomona	5.7	2.8
LAUSD	12.9	
Average Hours per month per programs	**8.3**	**3.0**

Table 4: CARE Team Meeting Participation, Pomona School District

	Number of Individuals Participating from Each Agency				
Month	**DCFS**	**First District**	**PUSD**	**CYFC**	**Probation**
May	3	0	1	12	2
April	2	0	1	11	3
March	3	0	1	18	2
February	5	0	1	13	1
January	3	0	0	12	0
December	3	1	1	8	0
November	4	1	1	9	1
October	5	1	1	9	2
September	4	0	1	7	1

Table 5: Fidelity Measures Performance Matrix

Component	Implementation Score Benchmark	Implementation Score Achieved	Implemented with Fidelity
Inter-Agency Collaboration	*0= Low* = ≤49% of the planned meetings took place *1= Partial*= 50%-75% of the planned meetings took place *2= Full* = ≥76% of the planned meetings took place Benchmark: At least 1 school district has Partial Implementation	1 district scored 2/Full	***Exceeded benchmark:** The Pomona School District Implemented with Full Fidelity*
Educational Assessments Completed by social worker	*0=Low* = ≤50% of Educational Assessment completed within 60 days *1= Partial* = 61%-89% of Educational Assessment completed within 60 days *2=Full* = ≥90% of Educational Assessment completed within 60 days Benchmark**:** At least 1 school district has Partial Implementation.	2 districts scored 2/Full. 2 districts did not have social worker	***Exceeded benchmark**: Pomona and Montebello School Districts Implemented with Full Fidelity; 2 remaining school districts did not have social worker*
Ongoing Support from social worker	*0=Low* = ≤50% receive an average of 2 hours/month of ongoing support *1=Partial* = 51% - 74% receive an average of 2 hours/month of ongoing support *2=Full* = ≥75% receive an average of 2 hours/month of ongoing support Benchmark: At least 1 school district has Partial Implementation	1 district scored 2/full 1 district scored 1/partial	***Exceeded benchmark*** The Montebello School District implemented with Full Fidelity; The Pomona School District implemented with Partial Fidelity.
Individualized Service Plan, and WRAT4 Pre-and Post Assessments by YESes	*0=Low* = ≤50% of Individualized Service Plans and CYFC Pre and Post Assessments completed within 60 days *1=Partial*= 61%-89% of Individualized Service Plans and CYFC Pre and Post Assessments completed within 60 days *2=Full*= ≥90% of Individualized Service Plans and CYFC Pre and Post Assessments completed within 60 days Benchmark: at least 1 school district has Partial Implementation.	1 district scored 2/Full. 3 districts scored 1/Partial	The LAUSD School District implemented with full fidelity; The Hacienda/La Puente, Pomona and Montebello School Districts scored 1/partial.
Relationship-based Academic Remediation and Intervention including Support Services from YESes	*0=Low* = ≤50% receive an average of 2 hours/week of academic remediation and intervention *1=Partial* = 51% - 74% receive an average of 2 hours/week of academic remediation and intervention *2=Full*= ≥75% receive an average of 2 hours/week of academic remediation and intervention Benchmark: Implementation with full fidelity = At least 1 of 3 school districts has a score of 1 or 2	1 district scored 1/partial 3 districts scored 0/low	The LAUSD School district implemented with partial fidelity; the remaining three school districts implemented with low fidelity

*Bolded, italicized text indicates level of implementation achieved.

Program youth said they felt supported by their tutors and counselors, learned about the path to higher education, set goals and created plans to reach their goals, and developed intrinsic motivation to do better and stay on track. In addition, under the leadership of social worker and YESes in their school, youth developed peer relationships and a sense of belonging and community on campus. Youth said they felt nurtured and comforted by the support network that developed from the program.

Table 6: College Attendance

Colleges	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Grand Total
Community College	**26**	**17**	**19**	**60**
Mt. SAC	8	6	4	19
East Los Angeles College	7	2	2	13
Cerritos College	4	3	3	10
Southwest Community College		1		5
Citrus College	2	2	4	5
Chaffey College	2		1	
Rio Hondo College		1	1	2
El Camino College	1		3	2
L A Trade Tech		2	1	
Los Angeles City College	1			1
West LA Community College				1
Spokane Community College	1			1
Cal State	**5**	**3**	**3**	**9**
CSU San Francisco		2	2	
CSU San Bernardino	1			2
Cal State LA	2			2
CSU Channel Islands	1			1
CSU Humboldt		1	1	
CSU Dominguez Hills	1			1
UC	**3**	**1**	**1**	**4**
UC Los Angeles		1	1	
UC Santa Cruz	1			1
UC Davis	1			1
UC Irvine	1			1
Military		**2**	7	**3**
Undecided		**2**	2	**2**
HBCU		**1**	1	
Grambling		1		
Trade School		**1**	1	
Unknown			2	
Grand Total	**34**	**27**	**36**	**97**

APPENDIX C: PROGRAM COMPONENT DETAIL

Inter-Agency Collaboration

- **Care Team Meetings:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists work with the Department of Children and Family Services and school district personnel to discuss the individual needs of foster youth and collectively identify and strategize to address the needs for each foster youth.
- **Data Sharing:** Academic and other information are shared between agencies to help develop intervention strategies for each foster youth.

CYFC Intervention

Relationship-based Academic Remediation and Intervention including Tutoring

- **Individualized Service Plan (ISP) Development:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists in collaboration with DCFS social workers, school district personnel and guardians, co-create an individualized academic remediation plan that guides efforts to address a youth's academic deficiencies by setting and tracking academic improvement goals.
- **Academic Assessments:** student progress in learning particular concepts and achieving academic improvement goals is monitored and recorded through ongoing skills assessment tests.
- **One-to-one & Small Group Tutoring**: CYFC Youth Education Specialists provide comprehensive one-to-one and small group tutoring tailored to each participant's academic needs and learning style to improve mastery in subject areas in which they are under-performing, as well as to improve overall academic skills congruent with state content standards and reinforcing daily classroom curriculum.
- **Homework Assistance Tutoring:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists assist students with homework assignments on an as-needed basis and apart from tutoring activities by clarifying instructions, providing guidance and support, brainstorming ideas, proofreading reports, and empowering students to schedule and track homework assignments in their agendas**.**
- **Academic Progress/Program Monitoring and Follow up**: to ensure that students are making steady progress, CYFC tutors, along with the CYFC Senior Education Monitor and Education Coordinator monitor: Bi-weekly grade checks; follow-up on missing work; extra credit completion; A-G requirements and progress toward graduation; attendance; and discipline referrals. Follow-up is conducted as appropriate with teachers, parents/guardians, Department of Children and Family Services School Based Social Workers, Children's Social Workers or Deputy Probation Officers.
- **Standardized Test Prep Support:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists provide skills-building to improve scores on standardized academic assessments, including: California High School Exit Exam, Pre-SAT, SAT, and ACT and CYFC Pre and Post Assessments.
- **Credit Recovery:** Because foster youth often attend multiple schools and have high absenteeism it is common for them to lose credits. CYFC Youth Education Specialists advocate for participants with schools and district registrars to ensure that youth receive credit towards high school graduation for any courses wholly or partially completed at any school attended that youth are able to make up missing credits in order to meet the credit requirements for high school graduation.
- **Other Academic, Employment and Social Supports:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists provide a variety of on-going academic and life skills opportunities, including study and learning skills training; Financial Literacy and Money Management; Referrals to Financial Aid Workshops; Summer job placement, applications, resume writing and job search strategies; Referrals to community and cultural workshops and events; Microsoft Office and online research lessons; and Academic Research skills.

Educational Case Management

- **Individualized Service Plan (ISP) Monitoring**: CYFC Youth Education Specialists actively monitor progress towards goal attainment and then update, revise, and develop new ISP goals in consultation with the Senior Education Monitor.
- **Collaboration:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists work with school staff, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Probation, parents/guardians and other stakeholders to advocate for the needs of students.
- **Linkages and Referrals:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists encourage and link students to in-school supports and external community supports aimed at improving student well-being and academic success.
- **Teacher Input & Feedback:** Teacher input and feedback solicited via a TeacherFeedbackform. The teacher provides information such as: current grade, missing assignments, absences, behavior issues, suggestions for how a student can improve their grade, etc.

Support Services

- **Pre & Post Emancipation Assessments and Planning:** In collaboration with the youth, the Pre & Post

Emancipation Specialist assesses students' strengths, goals, needs and emancipation readiness related to employment, post-secondary education, housing, etc. An individualized, strengths-based plan is developed for each foster youth to address all issues impacting successful emancipation from the foster care system and transition into independent adulthood.

- **College Access and Employment Support:** Staff ensures that foster youth have access to the supportsthey need to sustainably matriculate into post-secondary education. This may include: Developing an action planwith youth towards completing higher education goals; Assisting with college application processes; Group fieldtrips to local colleges and universities; Information and assistance with scholarships; Information and assistancewith financial aid and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); Resume developmentand job search strategies; Assistance with employment applications and interview preparation; Coordinating internship experiences; Providing information and access vocational training programs; Providing referrals to other services and resources.
- **Cultural and Enrichment Activities:** Activities designed and planned to introduce youth to the surrounding community in an effort to promote community awareness and involvement. Activities include but are not limited to: attending community events, art shows, extracurricular activities, and sporting events, etc. Workshops are designed to increase skill and build capacity, i.e. completing college applications, applying for college financial aid, applying for a job, job search, completing a job application, etc.
- **Life and Social Skills Workshops:** Hands-on activities and workshops designed to promote competence and well-being to enable foster youth to effectively manage everyday life situations and make informed choices, including: effective communication skills, critical thinking, self-awareness, interpersonal relationship

DCFS Intervention

Inter-Agency Collaboration

- **Care Team Meetings:** CYFC Youth Education Specialists work with the Department of Children and Family Services and school district personnel to discuss the individual needs of foster youth and collectively identify and strategize to address the needs for each foster youth.
- **Data Sharing:** Academic and other information are shared between agencies to help develop intervention strategies for each foster youth.

Comprehensive Intake by SBCSW

- **Educational Assessment:** The assessment is completed in collaboration with foster youth and the review of academic school records to develop an action plan for addressing youth's academic and social needs.
- **Case Plan / Core Team Meeting:** During the core team meeting, an Education Case Plan is developed including the goals, objectives, and time frames for achieving individual goals.

Ongoing Support from SBCSW

- **Follow-up Meetings:** Meeting with youth and other parties are held as needed to track a youth's progress towards goals identified in the Educational Case Plan and to identity other barriers and/or strategize to assist youth with achieving goals.
- **Referrals to Resources:** As needed, youth are referred to resources outside of the program to assist them with their academic progress or other social needs.
- **Credit Recovery:** Credit recovery assistance is provided for youth who are not on track with the credits needed to graduate either by the SBCSW recovering credits from youth's prior schools or assisting youth enroll in classes needed to gain credits.
- **Pre-Emancipation Planning:** SBCSW, in collaboration with youth assesses students' strengths, goals, needs and emancipation readiness related to employment, post-secondary education, housing, etc.
- **Post-secondary planning:** SBCSW assist youth with planning for life after high school by assisting them with resume development and job search strategies, assistance with employment applications and interview preparation, providing information and access vocational training programs, and providing referrals to other services and resources.
- **College Prep:** SBCSW assist youth who plan on attending college by discussing their higher education goals, assisting with college application processes, taking youth on group field trips to local colleges and universities, providing youth information and assistance with scholarships, and information and assistance with financial aid and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).