



An E-mail Newsletter for Youth Development Advocates
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Adolescents Represented Well in Academic Research *Recent Articles Focus on Education*

A recent study by Dr. Sunny Hyucksun Shin (2003), Assistant Professor at Boston University, explored the educational competence of older youth in care. Dr. Shin's study utilized several standardized scales to explore predictors of reading ability of 152 youth in foster care. Among the scales used were the Mental Health Inventory, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Child Health and Illness Profile: Adolescent Edition, and the Wide Range Achievement Test – Revised. The article is grounded in a strong literature review, and the author has drawn several practical inferences from the research findings. For example, the study indicated that “aspiration for higher education is one of the most important factors in enhancing educational achievement of youth in out-of-home care.”

Interestingly, *Child Welfare* also recently published an article on (McMillen, Auslander, White & Thompson, 2003), educational aspirations of adolescents in out-of-home care. A group of academic researchers examined the educational aspirations and behaviors of 262 older youth in foster care. The

authors found that 70% of the youth indicated a desire to attend college. However, the study also indicated that these youth exhibited a wide-range of problem behaviors, such as receiving a suspension, being expelled, failing a class, or engaging in physical fights with other students. One inference the authors draw from their research is a need for “a system of educational advocates that work to maintain proper educational placements for youth in foster care and help them receive academic resources they need to graduate from high school and proceed to college.”

These articles are both published in *Child Welfare*, the peer-reviewed journal published by [Child Welfare League of America](#). The citations are as follows:

Shin, S.H. (2003). Building evidence to promote educational competence of youth in foster care. *Child Welfare*, 82(5), 615-632.

McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R. (2003). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare*, 82 (4), 475-495.

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Casey Family Program Releases Study Results *The Foster Care Alumni Studies*

[Casey Family Programs](#) has been delivering planned long-term foster care since 1966. In recent years a group of researchers developed the *Foster Care Alumni Studies: Stories from the past to shape the future*. In October 2003, preliminary results of the alumni studies were published in *Assessing the effects of foster care: Early results from the Casey National Alumni Study*.

The Casey study clearly outlines the research questions, data collection methods, and with great detail, describes the demographics of the population that the Casey program serves. The key finding of the study was the identification of factors that are predictive of adult success. In identifying these factors, Casey outlines statistics in several domains, and draws comparisons between their youth and the general population. For example, in looking at high school completion rates, “Casey alumni high school completion rates are similar to those for the general population.” The Casey study identified that approximately 81% of their sample completed high school, and the U.S. Census Bureau gives a rate of 80.4% for the general public.

The study found that:

“the following characteristics strongly predicted that an alumnus would be considered *successful* at the time they were interviewed for the study:

- Life skills preparation;

- Completing a high school diploma or GED before leaving care;
- Scholarships for college or job training;
- Male gender;
- Participation in clubs and organizations for youth while in foster care;
- Less positive type of parenting by their last foster mother;
- Not being homeless within a year of leaving care;
- Minimized academic problems (as indicated by use of tutoring services throughout their time in care); and
- Minimized use of alcohol or drugs (as indicated by use of treatment services near the end of their time in foster care). (p. 45)

“Success” was defined and identified by looking at factors such as educational attainment, income, mental and physical health, and relationship satisfaction. Review a PDF copy of this document, at http://www.casey.org/Documents/casey_alumni_studies_report.pdf or contact Casey Research Services at info@casey.org

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Update on Education and Training Vouchers Program *Development of an Evaluation and Monograph Project*

In February, 2003, \$42 million was earmarked for Chafee Independent Living Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) under appropriations for Fiscal Year 2003. This Bill was signed into law on February 20, 2003. After a .65% (.0065) across the board cut for administrative purposes, \$41.7 million remained for student vouchers and training that was distributed. This provision of ETV is not currently permanently funded. However, funding for fiscal year 2004 is proposed in the Omnibus Spending Bill currently before congress.

The ETV application process has been completed through the state Independent Living office for release of funds to the state once matching and other requirements have been certified. Applications for FY 2003 were due July 31, 2003. To view a copy of your state’s plan for ETV funds, go to the State By State section of the National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD) [website](#) and click on your state. Other information available on the NRCYD website related to this program includes legislative information, State appropriations, and State plans for spending ETV money. For general ETV information, go to the Programs page on the NRCYD site.

NRCYD is also pleased to announce that they are evaluating the ETV Program and will create a monograph related to educational supports for older youth in foster care based on the information from the evaluation. NRCYD plans to conduct a systematic comparison of all state ETV plans, a survey of state Independent Living Coordinators, and an analysis of survey results. Also, during the project, NRCYD will give preliminary evaluation findings at

their National Conference in April. The monograph will be available to states and advocates by September 2004.

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The Collaboration to Adopt US Kids *Recruitment Work Plan and Guide Now Available*

With the help and support of the Children's Bureau and the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, The Collaboration to Adopt US Kids with a multi-state project team developed *Answering the Call: A Recruitment Work Plan Guide for Adoption and Foster Care Program Managers*. The guide in a well-organized 3-ring binder, provides information on the steps and process of adoption recruitment; it also includes a CD-Rom, a Family Pocket Guide, and a Practitioner's Guide. For more information on receiving this guide go to <http://www.adoptuskids.org>.

A highlight of this guide is the inclusion of a new recruitment strategy called "child-centered recruitment." Child-centered recruitment is a practice that "starts with an assessment of the child, includes the child if he or she is old enough, and aggressively searches for lost relatives (birth relatives, grandparents, and/or other persons who are important to the child." This strategy is important particularly for older youth, many of whom are adopted by persons that the youth identifies. Another benefit of the guide is its user-friendly explanation and approach to benchmarking and evaluation.

The development of these resources is just one of the many Collaboration activities designed to recruit new foster and adoptive families. This coming spring AdoptUSKids will launch a national, multi-media recruitment campaign which will include public service advertising on television, radio, print and the Internet. The goal is to issue a national call to action for family-oriented Americans to consider adopting a child from the foster care system and to increase general public awareness about the children who wait for permanency. AdoptUSKids has joined forces with the Advertising Council and Kirshenbaum, Bond & Partners advertising agency to create and distribute the campaign.

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Working With High Risk Youth: Preparing for Independent Living *New curriculum available from a collaboration among Center for Development Human Services, Research Foundation of SUNY, and Buffalo State College.*

A new curriculum for training staff that work with high risk youth is now

available. The curriculum was developed as a result of a grant from the Children's Bureau. Ten grants were awarded in 2000 specifically for the development of curriculum related to older youth issues. For more information on these grant programs check out the [Independent Living Curriculum Grantees](#) section of the [National Resource Center for Youth Development](#) website.

The comprehensive three-module curriculum includes slides and presentation materials on the foundations for working with high risk youth preparing for independent living (module 1); high risk issues such as substance abuse, mental health issues, sexuality, and violence (module 2); and supports and service providers (module 3). A CD-Rom is also available with the notebook.

A limited number of copies have been produced and are available for distribution; contact Kyle Sprangle at ksprangle@ou.edu or by phone at (918)660-3700.

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California Passes A New Law To Promote Strong Relationships for Foster Youth

A new law in California moves relationships and connections for youth to the forefront. The most important thing this law does is require that courts and child welfare agencies in California now act in ways that will require adult professionals, involved in foster children's cases, to make efforts to help these children maintain relationships with individuals (not just siblings) who are important to them.

There is also a powerful foster child rights provision of the law stating that children 10 years of age and older must now be informed of their right to attend all court hearings, and if they are not present at a hearing, the court must inquire about their having received notice and why they are not present.

Finally, the law explicitly requires child welfare agencies to take appropriate actions so that "no child leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a committed adult."

To link to the 85-page summary and text of thiew law, go to http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab_0401-0450/ab_408_bill_20031011_chaptered.pdf.

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Aftercare Services Monograph Released

Aftercare Services was prepared by The University of Oklahoma, National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD) through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. As one of the federally funded National Resource Centers focusing on issues of child welfare, youth, and families, NRCYD is charged with providing training and technical assistance to staff and programs serving youth involved with the child welfare system and other youth service systems. Two recent legislative initiatives have had a significant impact on the field of child welfare: the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the Adoption and Safe Families Act. In an attempt to facilitate effective implementation of these legislative changes, the National Resource Center for Youth Development undertook federally-funded research designed to identify state-of-the-art programs and effective approaches that facilitate self-sufficiency among youth leaving out-of-home care settings.

The product of that research is the *Aftercare Services* monograph. The monograph was written by Barbara Jaklitsch in collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Network for Youth and Family Services. *Aftercare Services* is the first in a series of four publications that looks specifically into implementing best practices in the field of child welfare in regard to services for youth. The monograph is available for free download at NRCYD's website at: <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/publications.htm>. A limited number of bound copies have been produced and are available for distribution; contact Kyle Sprangle at ksprangle@ou.edu or by phone at (918)660-3700.

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National Pathways to Adulthood Conference

Pathways to Adulthood 2004, a three-day conference, is open to state independent living coordinators, federal transitional living grantees, social workers, youth workers, youth, therapists, administrators, educators, direct care providers, program coordinators, and anyone interested in improving services to youth in out-of-home care. This conference provides an opportunity for you to learn about the most recent developments regarding the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the federally funded transitional living program. Get the latest from ACF federal officers, participate in timely workshops on independent living and transitional living trends, participate in site visits to local programs, and hear motivational speakers. The continental breakfasts, networking reception, and luncheon are all opportunities to share ideas and gain support in this important work.

During your stay in the nation's capital city, we encourage you to discover Washington, DC, as more than just a tourist. The District of Columbia's neighborhoods, people, history and culture truly embody the American Experience from Duke Ellington to John Phillip Sousa; from the Civil War to civil rights. Only in Washington, DC, can visitors be inspired by touring the magnificent U.S. Capitol Building and Washington Monument by day and be

moved by taking in magical performances by the National Symphony and world-class opera by night. For more information, visit www.washington.org.

Click here for conference details and registration

http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/Conferences/NP2A_04/np04_home.html .

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Spirituality In Youth Services: *A Promising Practice and Curriculum Project*

The use of spiritual interventions is growing in youth-servicing agencies. New England Network for Child, Youth & Families Services (NEN) and the University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD) are partnering to conduct Spirituality in Youth Services, a national study designed to identify described promising practices in spiritual programming for youth. This study follows two recent reports on youth and spirituality produced by New England Network: *Practice Unbound: A Study of Secular Spiritual and Religious Activities in Work with Adolescents* (2002) and *A Part of You So Deep: What Vulnerable Adolescents Have to Say About Spirituality* (2004). Spirituality in Youth Services will become the basis of a spiritual curriculum to be developed by the project for use in public and private child welfare and youth servicing agencies.

If you are interested in participating in the study please visit our web site <http://www.nenetwork.org/research/sys.html> .

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YD E-Update currently has over 500 subscribers from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C.; and is available on the web at:

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/Publications.htm>

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The University of Oklahoma operates the National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD) through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. NRCYD is part of the Children's Bureau National Training and Technical Assistance Initiative.

FEEDBACK: Comments or questions about YD E-Update should be directed to:

Holly Ivie

The University of Oklahoma

National Resource Center for Youth Development

4502 E. 41st Street Building 4 West

Tulsa, OK 74135
(918) 660-3700

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