Foster Care to College Partnership Evaluation: Program Overview and Research Design

Mason Burley

September 2007

Washington State
Institute for
Public Policy

Foster Care to College Partnership Evaluation: Program Overview and Research Design

Summary

The Foster Care to College Partnership originated from a collaboration between state agencies, educational organizations, private foundations, and child welfare advocates. Based on discussions and forums sponsored by the Washington Education Foundation, these partners proposed a set of programs designed to help foster youth complete high school and move onto college or other post-secondary opportunities. In 2006, Casey Family Programs, the Stuart Foundation, and the Gates Foundation awarded grants for a three-year demonstration project aimed at improving college outcomes for foster youth leaving state care. The Partnership effort includes a residential four-day summer college preparation course, informational seminars for middle and high school youth, and a mentoring program to encourage and support foster youth in achieving educational success.

The Washington State Children's Administration asked the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to conduct an evaluation of the Foster Care to College Partnership. The evaluation will examine if the programs implemented as part of this effort significantly increase high school completion and college entrance rates of foster youth in long-term care. This report will provide an overview of program activities, discuss the current research regarding education and foster care, and outline the evaluation design for assessing program outcomes. Currently, four evaluation reports are planned, with the final outcomes study to be completed by November 2009.

Mason Burley

September 2007

WASHINGTON STATE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Mission

The Washington Legislature created the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in 1983. A Board of Directors—representing the legislature, the governor, and public universities—governs the Institute, hires the director, and guides the development of all activities.

The Institute's mission is to carry out practical research, at legislative direction, on issues of importance to Washington State. The Institute conducts research activities using its own policy analysts, academic specialists from universities, and consultants. New activities grow out of requests from the Washington legislature and executive branch agencies, often directed through legislation. Institute staff work closely with legislators, as well as legislative, executive, and state agency staff to define and conduct research on appropriate state public policy topics.

Current assignments include projects in welfare reform, criminal justice, education, youth violence, and social services.

Board of Directors

Senator Karen Fraser	Robin Arnold-Williams, Department of Social and Health Services
Senator Pam Roach	Victor Moore, Office of Financial Management
Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles	Andrew Bodman, Western Washington University
Senator Mark Schoesler	Robert Rosenman, Washington State University
Representative Skip Priest	Sandra O. Archibald, University of Washington
Representative Phyllis G. Kenney	Thomas L. "Les" Purce, The Evergreen State College
Representative Fred Jarrett	Ken Conte, House Office of Program Research
Representative Helen Sommers	Richard Rodger, Senate Committee Services

Staff

Roxanne Lieb, Director
Steve Aos, Associate Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

SECTION I. THE FOSTER CARE TO COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP

The Foster Care to College (FCTC) partnership is a three-year, statewide grant-funded initiative intended to improve high school graduation and college admission rates among foster youth. The partnership efforts are designed to address recent studies in Washington State that illustrate a significant education gap between foster and non-foster youth.

A 2001 study on the educational status of foster youth found that only 59 percent of foster youth enrolled in the 11th grade graduated from high school on time.[1] By comparison, 86 percent of non-foster youth in the 11th grade went on to graduate from high school. After high school, less is known about the paths of foster youth aging out of the system. A survey of emancipated foster youth in Washington State found that six to 12 months after leaving foster care, 26 percent of former foster youth had attended college or other post-secondary training.[2] This figure is about half the college entrance rate for the general student population. The Washington State College Enrollment Study reports that 57 percent of the class of 2004 went on to attend a community college or four-year institution.[3]

In 2002, the Washington Education Foundation brought together state agency officials, educational and child welfare advocates, private foundations, and other groups interested in the educational success of foster youth. This collaboration resulted in a plan to expand or implement programs that would reduce the educational disparities between foster youth and other students. Six different agencies are responsible for implementing the FCTC programs:

- ✓ DSHS Children's Administration
- ✓ College Success Foundation (formerly Washington Education Foundation)
- ✓ Higher Education Coordinating Board
- ✓ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- ✓ Casey Family Programs
- ✓ Treehouse

---

[1] M. Burley & M. Halpern. (2001). *Educational attainment of foster youth: Achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 01-11-3901.
[2] C. Brandford & D. English. (2004). *Foster youth transition to independence study*. Seattle: Office of Children's Administration Research, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.
[3] http:// www.sesrc.wsu.edu/nsc/ClassOf2004_NSCStateReport.doc

Each of these agencies brings specific expertise in implementing and managing programs in the education or child welfare arena. Several of the FCTC initiatives are based on programs currently in operation regionally or statewide. The Foster Care to College partnership effort will include four related programs to improve the college success of foster youth. These programs are discussed in detail in the remainder of this section and include:

1. ***A four-day college preparation summer program for foster students in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grades***. The College Success Foundation (CSF) will run the "**Make it Happen!**" program each summer for up to 150 youth who are state dependents. The program is based on CSF's ACE (Achiever's College Experience) program that takes place each summer for students entering the 12th grade.

2. ***College informational seminars for youth in foster care and their caregivers***. Contractors around the state will provide special seminars for both middle school (grade 6–8) and high school (grade 9–12) students and their foster families. Seminars are designed to educate youth on the importance of post-secondary education, career planning, and resources; and discuss college requirements and financial aid.

3. ***The Foster Care to College Mentoring Program, providing mentoring matches and educational services for foster youth between age 16 and 21***. Volunteer mentors will work with older foster youth to provide encouragement and assistance with tracking progress toward graduation, career decision-making, and completion of financial aid and college applications.

4. ***An educational campaign designed to increase awareness on resources for college preparation and planning***. The Foster Care to College partnership will also mail up to 1,000 brochures each year to long-term foster adolescents. These brochures will provide information on available resources and encourage youth and their foster families to begin the college planning process. A comprehensive web site will also be developed to help these students connect with programs and information that will assist in post-high school opportunities.

1) Make it Happen! (Residential College Preparation Program)

The College Success Foundation (formerly Washington Education Foundation) provides college scholarships and mentoring to low-income students in Washington State. The Foundation has several initiatives, including the Achievers College Experience (ACE). ACE is a four-day, overnight summer program held at the campus of a Washington State college or university. High school juniors and seniors who are recipients of the Foundation's Achievers Scholarship attend this summer workshop. At the workshop, participants learn about college admissions, how to pay for college, and how to navigate resources at the state's colleges and universities.[4] The program started in 2002 and serves about 600 students each summer.

The Foster Care to College Partnership decided to replicate the ACE summer program and designed a similar summer program for foster youth. This event, called Make it Happen! (MIH), serves Washington State foster students in grades 10, 11, and 12.[5] The first MIH program included 92 students and took place on the campus of Seattle University in 2006. The MIH program includes activities and information about Washington's higher education system, career planning, and information about financial aid and work study opportunities. Currently, funding is in place for MIH programs to be held in 2007 and 2008. The Foster Care to College Partnership plans to have approximately 150 foster youth attend this program every summer.

2) GEAR UP (College Information and Preparation Seminars)

The Foster Care to College Partnership has contracted with independent providers to present college informational seminars around the state. Foster care students and their families are invited to attend local seminars that discuss post-secondary education, career planning and resources, college requirements, and financial aid availability. Two different presentations are provided to middle school students (grade 6–8) and high school students (grade 9–12). The seminars presented for the Foster Care to College program will also include information on educational opportunities for foster youth, such as Education and Training Vouchers, the Washington State Governor's Scholarship for Foster Youth, and the Foster Care to 21 program.

These seminars are based on the existing GEAR UP curriculum, a federally-funded program aimed at helping low-income students stay in school and attend college. GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a cooperative effort between the Higher Education Coordinating Board, Office of the Governor, University of Washington, College Success Foundation, and a number of national, state, and local organizations.[6] Approximately 50 foster youth and their families will participate in each college preparation seminar. Across the state, a total of 300 students are expected to receive information through these seminars each year.

---

[4] See www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/achievers/ace_index.htm
[5] See www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/makeithappen/index.htm
[6] See www.hecb.wa.gov/collegeprep/gu/guindex.asp

3) Foster Care to College Mentoring Program

Treehouse is a King County non-profit agency that provides educational support services, tutoring, and advocacy for youth in foster care. Since 2001, Treehouse has operated the "Coaching to College" program. This program matches volunteer mentor "coaches" with King County foster youth between the ages of 16 and 24. The mentors help these youth clarify and achieve their educational goals. This support may include academic assistance, as well as help with college applications and funding. In the last five years, Treehouse coaches have helped over 330 King County foster youth clarify and pursue their post-high school goals.

The Foster Care to College Partnership will use the Coaching to College framework to create mentoring programs outside of King County. Children's Administration has contracted with non-profit agencies around the state to recruit, train, and support adult volunteer mentors. Treehouse staff will be responsible for training contracted agencies and providing technical support.

The Foster Care to College Mentoring Program will follow the Coaching to College model and match mentors with foster youth in an effort to assist them in completing high school and pursuing post-secondary opportunities. These opportunities may include four-year colleges, two-year institutions, vocational, certificate, or apprenticeship programs. To be eligible for the program, foster youth must be:

- ✓ between the ages of 14 and 21 and currently in foster care (or reached age 18 while in foster care without having been adopted);
- ✓ eligible for Independent Living Services (ILS) or Transitional Living Services (TLS);
- ✓ enrolled in high school or GED program at the time of application; and
- ✓ interested in pursuing post-secondary education or training.

Adult mentors are expected to meet with youth at least once a month and must make a minimum 12-month commitment to the program. In the second year of the mentoring program, the timeframe of the commitment was raised to 18 months. Mentor volunteers will receive a background check, training on educational resources, and ongoing support. Mentors will help youth explore career options, identify the appropriate classes for college entrance, interact with social workers and school counselors, assist with college and financial aid applications, and provide a positive and supportive environment for youth to realize their educational goals. In addition, mentors will track the following pieces of information for assessing a youth's progress:

1. expected graduation date
2. credits achieved
3. grade-point average (GPA)
4. specialized educational plan or requirements
5. absences
6. discipline referrals

In the five DSHS regions outside King County, it is anticipated that up to 250 youth per year will receive mentoring support and assistance. In the first year of the program, not all contracts were completed in the planned timeframe. As a result, the participation level in the first year fell short of projected goals. Exhibit 1 displays the enrollment level for the first year of the mentor program, October 2006 through July 2007.

Exhibit 1
Foster Care to College Mentor Program—Youth Enrollment
October 2006–July 2007

401 youth referred to FCTC mentor program	→	**158 youth** enrolled	→	**94 youth** matched with mentor
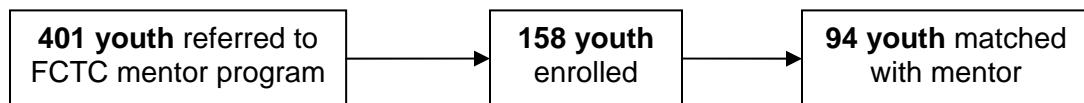
Some of the delay in matching enrolled youth to suitable mentors is a result of the length of time it takes to check the background of adult mentors that apply to the program. Exhibit 2 shows the status of volunteers that have applied to be mentors. Some mentors are currently mentoring more than one youth, so the number of youth matched to mentors is more than the number of mentors. Also, not all the mentors required new background checks.

Exhibit 2
Foster Care to College Mentor Program—Mentor Enrollment
October 2006–July 2007

Mentor Applicants	**121**
Background Checks Started	88
Background Checks Returned	60
Mentors Attending Orientation	**99**
Mentors Attending Training	**78**
Mentors Matched with Youth	**73**

An influx of both mentors and youth are needed to meet current program goals. The 2007–08 school year will be the first full school year with all contracts and technical supports in place. Consequently, enrollment numbers for both mentors and mentees should increase.

The next section reviews the available research on educational outcomes for foster youth leaving high school, in addition to the effects of mentoring. In Section 3, we discuss the evaluation plan for following outcomes of participants in the Foster Care to College programs.

Education and Training Vouchers

In 2003, the federal government established the Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program. This program provides educational funds for youth who have aged out of foster care or been adopted from foster care after their 16th birthday. Each student may receive up to $5,000 which may be used for tuition, school supplies, and approved living expenses. In Federal Fiscal Year 2006, states received over $45 million dollars for the ETV program.

Washington State distributes about $800,000 each year in ETV funds. In Federal Fiscal Year 2005, 207 youth in Washington State received educational assistance through the ETV program. Ongoing tuition and education support is provided from Education and Training Vouchers. Of the 207 awards in FFY05, 75 were for new recipients.

Washington State Governor's Scholarship for Foster Youth

The Washington State Governor's Scholarship for Foster Youth was started in 2001 by Governor Gary Locke. The scholarship provides awards between $1,000 and $5,000 (based on financial need) for students to attend public or private colleges and universities in Washington State. Each year, 20–30 scholarships are awarded. These scholarships can be renewed for up to four years.

The College Success Foundation manages this scholarship and also provides scholarship recipients with on-campus mentors for their first two years in college. To be eligible for a Governor's scholarship, applicants must 1) be a dependent youth in out-of-home care, 2) be enrolled as a senior in a Washington State high school and on track to graduate, 3) have lived in Washington State for the past three school years, and 4) have a cumulative high school GPA of 2.0 or higher. (www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/gs/index.htm)

Foster Care to 21 Program

In 2006, the Washington State Legislature passed the Foster Youth Achievement Act. This Act granted the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) authority to allow up to 50 youth reaching age 18 to continue in foster care or group care in order to complete academic or vocational education/training. Youth must live with a foster parent and can continue to receive financial support until their 21st birthday. Each year, DSHS may allow up to 50 additional foster youth to remain in foster care beyond their 18th birthday.

To continue in foster care beyond age 18, youth in the program must 1) follow guidelines established by Children's Administration (by signing a voluntary services agreement), 2) maintain a GPA of 2.0 in the post-high school academic or vocational program, 3) meet with social worker to review progress each quarter, and 4) enroll in a Transitional Living Program (if available). The Foster Care to 21 program does not provide direct educational assistance. While in the program, however, youth receive a foster care placement, medical and dental coverage, transitional living services, and referrals to community resources.

New initiatives aimed at assisting foster youth are based, in part, on a growing body of research documenting the disparities these youth face as they move toward adulthood. This section reviews current research on youth leaving the foster care system and discusses evaluation findings for programs designed to improve educational outcomes for foster students.

1) Educational Status of Foster Youth in High School

A study of the educational achievement of foster care youth in Washington State found that, compared with the general student population, foster students were twice as likely to change schools during the school year and twice as likely to repeat a grade.[7] For Washington State students enrolled in the 11th grade, *59 percent* of foster youth completed high school on time, compared with 86 percent of the general student population.

The Washington State *Foster Youth Transition to Independence Study* found similar high school completion rates for foster students.[8] The study included approximately 200 youth who were surveyed six to 12 months after leaving care. At the time of the interview, *50 percent* of former foster youth reported graduating from high school or receiving a GED.

These findings are consistent with research conducted in other regions. The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth is the largest survey to date of youth leaving the foster care system. The survey included follow-up interviews with 600 youth at age 18, 19, and 21. At the time of the second interview (age 19), 58 percent of these youth had received a high school diploma.[9] Prior research also indicates that a low high school completion rate has been a long-standing issue for dependent youth. A national evaluation of independent living programs found that between two and four years after leaving care, only about half of foster youth had completed high school.[10]

2) Post-Secondary Outcomes for Foster Care Youth

In 2006, nearly 10,000 youth were placed in out-of-home care in Washington State due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment. A large majority of these children are reunified with their families or adopted. Nearly 35 percent, however, will remain in care for two years or more.[11] Older foster children are more likely to remain in care and typically have difficulty finding a consistent, stable placement. Fifty-six percent of children age 12 or older in Washington's foster care system have experienced five or more placements.

---

[7] Burley & Halpern, 201.

[8] Brandford & English, 2004.

[9] M. Courtney, S. Terao, & N. Bost. (2004). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

[10] Cook, R. (1992). *A national evaluation of Title IV-E foster care independent living programs for youth. Phase 2 Final Report.* Rockville, MD: Westat.

[11] Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration. (2005). *Washington State Children's Administration performance report 2005: Public and legislative accountability for child safety, permanency and well-being.* Olympia: Author. http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/05Report4Permanency1.pdf, p. 27.

Despite placement instability and difficulties in school, foster students still have high educational aspirations. One study of older youth in Wisconsin found that 79 percent wanted to attend college.[12] Ryan J. Davis noted, "studies reveal that only 10 percent of all traditionally college-aged youth from foster care enroll in some form of postsecondary education, even though nearly 70 percent have aspirations to do so."[13] While studies in recent years have documented high school careers of foster youth, less is known about college entrance rates for foster students. In an analysis of these studies, Curtis McMillen et al. reported that college entrance rates for this population range between 2 and 11 percent.[14]

According to a review of studies by Thomas R. Wolanin, the rates of college enrollment among foster youth are low as a result of poor academic preparation, lack of high expectations for these youth, a general unawareness of opportunities available, and insufficient support in navigating the complicated process to apply for college.[15]

3) Research-Based Evidence on Mentoring

While the educational gap among students in foster care has been well documented, less is known about effective strategies for helping these youth achieve academic success. The Pathways to College study looked at a sample of 216 former foster youth that had overcome past adversity by enrolling in and attending college. The authors report findings from this study also "mirror findings on the literature on resilient youth. Factors found associated with resilience and positive outcomes for at-risk youth include a positive temperament, faith in one's abilities, available opportunities and resources at important life transitions, role models and mentors who provide access to information and act as 'gatekeepers for the future'" (p. 875)[16].

Focusing on successful youth may provide insight into the factors that can help foster youth in the transition to adulthood. More information, however, is needed about how these approaches impact the entire population of foster students. Since the publication of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters study[17] in the mid-1990s, programmatic efforts to involve adult mentors in the lives of young people have been widely implemented and studied. Less is known about the extent to which these programs should be tailored to specific subpopulations. Edmund Mech noted there is "little information on mentor programs for youths considered to be difficult to reach, such as, school dropouts, youths at risk of dropping out, delinquents, pregnant and parenting adolescents, and youths in foster care."[18]

---

[12] Courtney, M. & Piliavin, I. (1998). *Foster youth transitions to adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 months after leaving out-of-home care*. Madison: University of Wisconsin, School of Social Work and Institute for Research on Poverty.
[13] Davis, R.J. (2006). *College access, financial aid, and college success for undergraduates from foster care*. Washington, DC: National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.
[14] 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): 475-795.
[15] Wolanin, T.R. (2005). *Higher education opportunities for foster youth: A primer for policymakers*. Washington, DC: The Institute for Higher Education Policy.
[16] Merdinger, J.M., Hines, A.M., Osterling, K.L., & Wyatt, P. (2005). Pathways to college for former foster youth: Understanding factors that contribute to educational success. *Child Welfare 84*(6): 867-896.
[17] Tierney, J.P. & Grossman, J.B. (1995). *Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.
[18] Mech, E. (1994). Foster youths in transition: Research perspectives on preparation for independent living. *Child Welfare 73*(5): 603-613.

While there are few studies on the impact of mentoring programs for foster youth, the lack of effective role models in the lives of foster students is well known. According to Wolanin, "foster youth generally lack sustained relationships with caring adults that would prepare them to be independent adults generally and, in particular, that would enable them to undertake the adult responsibilities that are inherent in higher education. In a recent study of foster care alumni, less than half of them reported being mentored while growing up."[19]

At first glance, the benefits of mentoring may seem self-evident. Research in this field points out that the nature and structure of the mentoring relationship plays a large role in future benefits. In an assessment of this research, Jean E. Rhodes and David L. DuBois concluded, "mentoring relationships are most likely to promote positive outcomes and avoid harm when they are close, consistent and enduring. Second, to date, programs have achieved only limited success in their efforts to sustain such relationships. This is evident in a modest and inconsistent pattern of effects on youth outcomes, well-documented implementation problems, and a lack of compelling evidence of cost-effectiveness."[20]

While the accumulated research on mentoring has shown varying degrees of program success, the emerging knowledge should serve as a guidepost, rather than a deterrent, to program implementation. Joseph A. Durlak emphasized that the probability for success can be increased if mentoring programs:

1. Select mentors who have previous relevant experience in helping.
2. Require a long (at least 12 months) commitment from mentors.
3. Carefully train and support mentors, and help structure their activities with their mentees.
4. Monitor program implementation.
5. Involve parents as much as possible.[21]

The Foster Care to College Partnership in Washington State represents a significant investment in time and resources aimed at helping foster youth achieve academic success. Section 3 describes the evaluation design that will be used to determine if the program initiative meets the goals of helping foster students complete high school and pursue post-secondary education and training.

---

[19] Wolanin, 2005.

[20] Rhodes, J. & DuBois, D.L. (2006). Understanding and facilitating the youth mentoring movement. *Social Policy Report 20*(3): 3-20.

[21] Durlak, J.A. (2006). Will mentoring become the next supermarket tomato? Reactions to Rhodes and DuBois. In *Rhodes & DuBois, 2006*, p. 12.

The Foster Care to College Partnership is a multi-faceted effort aimed at improving educational outcomes for foster youth. As discussed earlier in this report, the initiatives undertaken by the partnership include:

- ✓ an annual mailing to foster youth on the college application process and college financing;

- ✓ the development and maintenance of a comprehensive website to help foster youth and families plan and prepare for college;

- ✓ college preparation seminars for middle and high school youth modeled on the GEAR UP program;

- ✓ an intensive four-day college preparation seminar for high school students (Make it Happen!); and

- ✓ an expansion of the college mentoring program—developed by Treehouse in King County—to other regions of the state.

The Institute's evaluation design includes both an examination of trends in the educational outcomes for youth in foster care during high school as well as analyses of specific FCTC programs. The number of program efforts undertaken as part of this initiative, however, makes it difficult to determine which of these strategies *in particular* are effective in improving high school graduation and college enrollment among foster students.

1) Evaluation Design

The goal of the Foster Care to College Partnership is to increase high school completion rates and improve post-secondary outcomes for high-school aged foster youth. We will utilize graduation data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to examine high school completion rates for youth in foster care. In addition, we plan to match records of college-age foster youth with data from the College Enrollment Study (CES). The CES utilizes data from the National Student Clearinghouse, which includes 90 percent of higher education enrollments nationwide.[22]

The first step in this strategy will focus on tracking trends in high school graduation and college enrollment for foster youth since 2003. This will set an important baseline from which to monitor overall improvements and changes in transitions for foster youth. This analysis of trends will control for youth characteristics (e.g., race, type of placement, special education services) associated with educational outcomes. Because it will take years for the full impact of FCTC programs to take effect (students in 10th grade who enrolled in the mentoring program when it first started will not enter college until the fall of 2009), these data will be preliminary and largely provide a baseline from which to track the impact of these programs.

Next, we will analyze the association between participation in FCTC programs and: high school graduation; college enrollment; and receipt of Education and Training Vouchers. In order to asses the impact of FCTC programs, we need to compare how students that participate in these programs fare relative to a similar group of students. In a purely experimental evaluation design, the program and comparison groups would be randomly selected from an eligible pool of applicants. In this

---

[22] http://www.sesrc.wsu.edu/nsc/

manner, program impacts could be estimated by observing the differences in outcomes between the program and comparison groups. But the Foster Care to College programs provide services to all eligible applicants, and program participants may differ from non-participants in their level of motivation to achieve their educational goals. In making estimates of program effects, we will rely on comparisons between participants and non-participants who express interest in but do not participate in FCTC programs, and apply statistical adjustments to account for this "self-selection bias". The analysis will include statistical controls for demographic characteristics, school background, and foster care experience. While it is impossible to capture and measure every factor that may be related to success, this approach will help us separate program effects from other influences.

2) Report Timeline

The following reports are planned for this evaluation:

College Summer Seminars (Make it Happen!)—December 2007

This interim report will look at the number and characteristics of youth that attend the College Success Foundation's summer Make it Happen! (MIH) event. About 90 students have attended MIH each summer since 2005. Before and after the MIH event, the youth complete a questionnaire that asks about perceived barriers to attending college and their knowledge of the college admissions and financial aid process. The analysis in this report will show how the MIH event influenced those perceptions and discuss the barriers these youth face in continuing their education.

Mentoring Program, Background and Program Activity—August 2008

This report will describe the statewide implementation of a mentoring program for foster youth based on the Treehouse mentoring program in King County. It will provide preliminary information on the characteristics of youth served by the statewide mentoring program, frequency and duration of contact with a mentor, and educational outcomes for program participants. The report will also examine the issues that have arisen in implementing the Treehouse model around the state.

Foster Care to College Outcomes— August 2008 (Preliminary) and November 2009 (Final)

These two reports will outline trends in high school graduation and college enrollment rates for high school students in foster care between 2003 and 2008. These data will provide a benchmark for assessing progress in later years. In addition to this longitudinal analysis, we will assess the impact of FCTC programs on educational outcomes using comparison groups and statistical controls.

It should be noted that the Institute will also evaluate the new Foster Care Passport to College Promise Program (HB 1131) passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2007. The results from this evaluation should help inform efforts to increase college enrollment and success among foster youth.