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youth education scholarship (yes):
supporting emancipated foster youth attending
post-secondary schools

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Introduction

The Educational Experiences of Foster Youth

Foster youth who are emancipating from the child welfare system, on average, have had traumatic and disruptive childhoods, which have led to disjointed education trajectories that often include poor academic achievement and behavior problems.

Foster youth have been removed from their homes due to histories of neglect or abuse. In California, 69% of foster youth have been removed from their homes due to parental neglect, 16% have been removed due to physical abuse, 8% have been removed due to sexual abuse, and 7% have been removed for other reasons (Needell et. al. 2002). The five most common reasons for removal are parental alcohol abuse, parental drug abuse, inadequate parenting skills, spousal abuse, and parental criminal activity (Courtney et. al. 2004). These initial experiences with abuse and neglect lay the foundation for emotional and behavioral problems at school (Choice et. al. 2001).

Adding to their initial experience with abuse and neglect, many foster youth experience high levels of instability at home and school due to multiple guardian placements that usually require school and school district changes. In California, 77% of foster youth receive multiple guardian placements. 35% of foster youth receive more than five guardian placements (Needell et. al. 2002). Courtney et. al (2004) find that 79.6% of foster youth have changed schools at least once due to these guardian changes, and that 34.2% of foster youth have changed schools more than five times. Other researchers corroborate these findings, arguing that foster youth experience more school changes than matched groups of youth (Blome 1997, Emerson and Lovitt 2003, Kelly 2000, Powers and Stotland 2002, Weinberg et. al. 2003).

The instability surrounding placement changes is further exacerbated by a disruption of contact with extended family and siblings who might provide social support. In California, 58% of foster youth are placed away from their extended family (Needell et. al. 2002). Moreover, foster youth are rarely accompanied by all of their siblings within new homes (Emerson and Lovitt 2003). While 23.6% of foster youth live with at least one sibling, only 5.1% of foster youth live with all of their siblings (Courtney et. al 2004).

Gaps in guardian oversight and advocacy begin to appear in the educational trajectory of foster youth. Foster youth miss many days of school, giving foster youth higher rates of absenteeism than non-foster youth (Choice et. al. 2001, Emerson and Lovitt 2003, Parrish et. al. 2001). Foster youth guardians are also less likely to monitor homework compared with the adults in non-foster youth lives (Blome 1997). Without education advocates, foster youth are also less likely

to have access to college prepartory courses and connections to extra-curricular activities (Emerson and Lovitt 2003, Schwartz 1999, Blome 1997).

Researchers have found that, on average, foster youth perform poorly in school as a result of these layers of trauma, instability, disruption, and lack of educational oversight and advocacy. Compared to the general population of students, foster youth are more likely

- to fail classes (McMillen et. al., 2003, Benedict et. al. 1996);
- to perform below grade level (Parrish et. al. 2001, Weinberg et. al. 2003, Emerson and Lovitt 2003, Stein 1997, Sawyer and Dubowitz 1994);
- to repeat a grade (Courtney et. al. 2004, Benedict et. al. 1996);
- to have lower standardized test scores (Emerson and Lovitt 2003); and
- to drop out of school (Blome 1997, Emerson and Lovitt 2003).

Foster youth also exhibit more discipline problems at school, compared with non-foster youth (Blome 1997, Urquiza et. al. 1994). Foster youth are twice as likely to get in a serious fight or to be suspended from school when compared with non-foster youth (Courtney et. al. 2004, McMillen et. al. 2003). And foster youth are four times as likely to be expelled from school or to runaway from where they are living (Courtney et. al. 2004).

Notably, running away often leads foster youth to be booked into detention, at least for a few days, thus beginning a relationship with the juvenile justice system (Sherman 2005). The Vera Institute found that foster youth are overrepresented in the detention population. While foster youth represent less than two percent of the general population, they represent 15% of the detention population (Spencer 2005).

Limited education leads to further problems after foster youth emancipate from care. Emancipated foster youth often struggle with limited employment experience, limited health insurance, and poor mental and physical health (Emerson and Lovitt 2003, Barth 1990, Collins 2001, McDonald et. al. 1996). Some emancipated foster youth experience severe housing problems, substance abuse, and criminal behavior (Emerson and Lovitt 2003, Barth 1990, Collins 2001, McDonald et. al. 1996).

The policy and academic literature on promising practices to address the educational needs of foster youth is limited. Ayasse (1995) found that California foster youth receiving school placement, school advocacy, tutoring, counseling, and employment readiness services were more likely to graduate from high school. Other studies have found that foster youth who graduate from high school are more likely to be employed and maintain stable housing compared with foster youth who do not graduate from high school (Altshuler 2003, et. al., Iglehart 1994, Sawyer and Dubowitz 1994).

Other researchers have argued that post-secondary education is necessary for long term financial and emotional stability for foster youth (The Youth Transition Funders Group 2004).

Foster youth themselves see post-secondary education as an important goal. Over 70% of foster youth want to attend and then graduate from college (Courtney et. al. 2004, McMillen et. al. 2003).

Unfortunately, few foster youth attain their goal. While 55% of emancipating child welfare youth attend community college, only 2% complete an AA degree, 1% complete a certificate program, and 2% transfer to a four year college (Needell et. al. 2002). This rate is far below the general population: 37% of non-foster youth complete an AA degree and 19% transfer to a four year college (Needell et. al. 2002)

Given the high aspirations, irregular elementary and high school trajectories, and low college success rate of most foster youth, there is a clear need for services that help foster youth transition and stay in college. Yet, there are few programs explicitly linking foster youth to post-secondary education (Workforce Strategy Center 2001).

Five programs appear to make this link.

- The American Institute of Learning in Austin, Texas offers foster youth GED classes and a connection to the local community college (Workforce Strategy Center 2001).

- The California Community College Foundation provides independent living workshops as well as college preparation and readiness for foster youth on community college campuses, creating a bridge between high school and college. This program also provides information about Pell Grants in order to link foster youth to college financial aid (Workforce Strategy Center 2001).

- The Puget Sound Pathways Network (PATHNET) links all low-income and out-of-school youth to the local community college as well as financial aid. While not directed specifically at foster youth, this program provides many services that foster youth need to transition into college (Workforce Strategy Center 2001).

- The Orangewood Children's Foundation Guardian Scholars program brings private-sector businesses, public agencies, private donors, and academic institutions together to provide academic counseling, housing assistance, job assistance, tutoring, financial aid, and mentoring.

- The Renaissance Scholar Program and the Smith Scholastic Society, both associated with the University of California, Santa Cruz provide a web of services for foster youth in Northern California. Together these programs conduct outreach programs to foster youth in high schools and community colleges in Northern and Central California, providing an early academic planning camp, academic advising, and test preparation courses, college application workshops, and financial aid workshops. The Renaissance Scholar program and the Smith Society then work together to provide services for those foster youth who choose to attend the University of California, Santa Cruz. The Smith Society provides a $1000 annual scholarship as well as a link to a college mentor. Renaissance provides additional support services such as financial aid and scholarship advising, priority enrollment in classes, academic skills workshops, and work-study and internship experience (Roa 2005).

The partnership between the Silicon Valley Children's Fund (SVCF) and the Santa Clara County Independent Living Program (ILP) provides a comprehensive model that is similar to the Orangewood Children's Foundation Guardian Scholars and Renaissance Scholar Program/Smith Scholastic Society models.

Overview of the Youth Education Scholarship (YES)
The Silicon Valley Children's Fund (SVCF) is a 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation that works to improve the lives of abused and neglected children and foster youth in Santa Clara County. SVCF was formed in 1987 to build a children's shelter for abused, neglected, and abondoned youth. Since the completion of the shelter, SVCF has partnered with other agencies to develop and support programs for abused and neglected children and youth.

One of the programs developed by the SVCF is the Youth Education Scholarship (YES). YES is a scholarship program for emancipated foster youth originating from Santa Clara County. Since 2000, YES has provided scholarships to 73 youth emancipating from foster care in Santa Clara County. The amount of financial support has fluctuated over the years. Currently, YES provides up to $2500 per year for community college students, up to $6000 for state university students, and up to $7500 for University of California and private university students.

Scholars are largely identified through the Santa Clara County Independent Living Program. Over 90% of YES scholars have been participants in the ILP program.

Acceptance into the YES program provides financial aid and a range of academic and mentorship support services for foster youth for up to five years of post-secondary education. The YES program is unique because:

- Scholars are allowed to use the scholarship money for attending any accredited post-secondary program, including vocational or technical

training, community college, or a four year university. (The majority of scholars attend school in the San Francisco Bay Area.)

- Scholars are allowed to spend their scholarship money on a wide range of needs, including tuition, books, housing, food, transportation, clothing, and other education-related expenses.
- The YES program links each scholar with a mentor as well as other needed services such as tutoring, financial aid advising, and college transfer advising.

Ceres Policy Research evaluated the YES program. This paper reports our findings.

Research Design and Methods

Ceres Policy Research followed a particular research process when evaluating YES.

Logic Model Development

We began the program evaluation with the development of a logic model. This process was collaborative: we worked with program staff to define the unique components of the project as well as the expected short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes (see Appendix A for a copy of the logic model). In short, YES expects to see long-term outcomes in three steps:

- Through the provision of a scholarship and links to a comprehensive network of academic and mentorship support services, YES expects that scholars will immediately return to college for their second year, make satisfactory academic progress, maintain relationships with their mentors, attend YES events, attend YES workshops, feel like a part of the YES community, develop financial management skills, develop time management skills, ask professors for help, begin to access campus resources, report feeling like they belong in college, and report feeling like a part of their college community.

- Through these immediate successes, YES hopes that scholars will graduate from their vocational and college programs, achieve the educational goals that they established, access career development resources on their post-secondary school campuses, identify and act as role models to other foster youth, be proud of their personal and school accomplishments, and choose supportive friends and mentors.

- Through these mid-term achievements, YES hopes that scholars will maintain jobs, maintain positive health, and avoid problems such as homelessness and incarceration.

Survey Development

Ceres Policy Research worked collaboratively with the YES staff to develop a survey to measure the outcomes identified in the logic model. The final survey included four domains of information collected. These four domains are explained in more detail below:

General Descriptive Information: In this section, we collected general demographic information such as age, ethnic/racial identity, sexual identity, language fluency, number of children, marital status, household income, educational goal, job status, whether the respondent was born in the U.S., and whether the respondent is living with their foster family, biological family, or on their own. In addition, we asked foster youth information about their experience as a foster youth and whether they had experienced a number of challenges outlined in the foster youth literature. Specifically, we asked

- How many years have you been/were you a designated foster youth?
- How long have you been emancipated?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters in the foster care system?
- If yes, do they live within 2 hours from you?
- While a foster youth, were you ever assigned to guardians who were extended family members?
- Do you have a family member in a gang?
- Do you have a family member in juvenile detention, jail, or prison?
- Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?
- Have you ever been held in juvenile hall?

YES Program Evaluation: In this section, we ask respondents sixteen questions that measure whether YES is meeting a number of short- and mid-term outcomes. Respondents are provided with a series of statements and are asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. In addition, respondents are asked to answer three open-ended questions. These questions include:

- Since becoming emancipated, have you experienced a time when you needed a lot of help? If you answered yes, please explain.
- Is there anything that YES could do to improve their program or help you find the services you need? If you answered yes, please explain.
- Please tell us anything else you would like to say.

Service Use: In this section, we ask respondents about which support services they have used in the last year. We ask about twelve particular services (Santa Clara County Independent Living Program, Court Appointed Special Advocates, College Tutors, Housing Services, Financial Aid, Job Skills Workshops, Smith Society, College Career Counselors, Dentist, Doctor, Mental Health Counselor, High School (Academic) Counselor). We then ask respondents to list any other support services they used in the last year.

Needs Assessment: In this section, we ask respondents whether they have access or knowledge about seventeen different types of support services. We ask whether scholars have daycare, transportation, and affordable health care. We also ask whether scholars know where to go if they need help with health insurance, housing, school, finding a job, finding a doctor or dentist, finding a counselor, drugs and alcohol, brothers and/or sisters in foster care, a family member in a gang, a family member in jail, a safe place to stay, relationship violence, and sexual assault.

Survey Collection

In order to collect the survey data, Ceres Policy Research contacted all current scholars individually and requested that they complete a survey via phone or the internet. We explained that all responses would remain anonymous.

YES provided Ceres Policy Research with a list of 40 current scholars. We collected seven surveys over the phone, one survey in person at a YES event, and 24 surveys through an internet survey, giving us an 80% response rate.

Focus Group

Once we collected and analyzed the survey data, we held a focus group with six YES scholars to discuss our findings and collect scholars' interpretation of our findings. All of the current YES scholars were invited to participate. Six scholars attended the focus group, which was held at the Bill Wilson Center, a Santa Clara County Independent Living Program site. The participating YES scholars received $40 gift certificants in exchange for their help.

There were two YES scholars who wanted to attend but were unable to due to scheduling conflicts. These two scholars responded to questions via email. They received $20 gift certificates in exchange for their help.

There were an addition two YES scholars who answered questions at a YES event using a pen and paper questionnaire.

Notably, the focus group was co-faciliated by Lyssa Trujillo, a YES scholar who is working with Ceres Policy Research as a research assistant. Ms. Trujillo contributed to the focus group discussion.

Administrative Data

In addition, Ceres Policy Research collected administrative data from SVCF to measure change for the following three outcomes:

- the number of scholars who returned to college for their second year
- the number of scholars who maintained satisfactory academic progress
- the number of scholars who have graduated from their post-secondary school

Data Analysis

The survey data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and then input into the SPSS statistical software. Given the relatively small number of surveys, we relied largely on descriptive statistical tests. We also ran analysis of variance tests to see if there were any differences between subpopulations. (For example, did Latino and non-Latino scholars answer questions differently? Did men and women answer questions differently?)

The focus group was taped. Ms. Trujillo also took extensive notes. We transcribed the notes and then checked them against the audio tape. We then conducted a content analysis of themes related to sections of this report.

Findings

Portrait of YES Scholars

The majority of survey respondents are young, straight women who were born in the U.S. and live alone.

- 68% (n=21) of the respondents are between the age of 18 and 21. 25% (n=9) are between the age of 22 and 26. One scholar is 17 and one scholar is between the age of 27 and 30.
- 81% (n=24) of the respondents were women and 19% (n=6) were men.
- 91% (n=28) scholars identify as straight; 6% (n=2) identify as lesbian or gay"; and 3.2% (n=1) say they are unsure about their sexual identity.
- 74% (n=23) scholars were born in the U.S.; 23% (n=7) were not.
- 79% (n=24) scholars live alone; 21% (n=7) live with a partner.

This group of scholars also has very high educational aspirations.

- 1 scholar is aiming for a vocational or technical degree; 2 scholars are seeking an AA degree; 13 schoars are aiming to complete their BA; 4 scholars are aiming to complete a law degree; 8 scholars are aiming to complete a Master's degree; 2 scholars are aiming to complete their Ph.D.

The YES respondents were varied by ethnic and racial identity, and language fluency.

- 25.8% (n=8) of the respondents have an Asian identity; 32.3% (n=10) have a Latino identity; 16.1% (n=5) have an African or African American identity; 32.3% (n=10) have a White identity; and 9.7% (n=3) have a Native American identity.

- All of the respondents speak English; 39% (n=12) of the scholars also speak another language. 16.1% (n=5) speak Spanish and 22.6% (n=7) speak another language.

YES survey respondents have experienced many of the hardships as other foster youth. We report the number of scholars who have experienced each hardship or challenge below. When possible, we present comparative data about other foster youth or the general public in parentheses.

- 13% (n=4) of the scholars have children. (67% of girls from the California child welfare system have children within five years of emancipation.)
- 13% (n=4) of the scholars have a family member in a gang and 27% (n=7) of the scholars have a family member in jail.
- 36% (n=11) of the scholars have either been suspended or expelled from school. (28% of the general public has been suspended or expelled. Approximately 70% of the foster youth population has been suspended or expelled [Courtney et. al. 2004])
- 23% (n=7) have been in juvenile hall.
- 29% (n=9) scholars were designated foster youth for 1-2 years. 69% (n=21) of the scholars were in the child welfare system for longer. Their stays ranged from 3-18 years. The median number of years for all scholars is 5.
- 17% (n=5) of the scholars had one placement. 81% (n=25) of the scholars had multiple placements. 43% (n=13) of the scholars had more than five. (23% of California foster youth receive one placement, 77% of California foster youth receive multiple placements, and 35% of California foster youth receive more than five placements.)
- 33% (n=10) scholars have brothers and sisters in the foster system currently. Only 33% (n=3) of these scholars have brothers and sisters placed within two hours of where they currently live.
- 52% (n=16) of the scholars were assigned to family members. 45% (n=14) were not. (Data on foster youth placement ranges. Needell et. al [2002] analyzed data on the entire population of emancipating child welfare cases in California. They found that 42% of California youth are placed with family, while 34% are placed in foster homes.)

From the limited comparative data that we have, this group of scholars appears less likely than other foster youth to have children, or to have a history of suspension or expulsion from school. They also appear more likely to have been placed with family members. At the same time, this group of scholars appears more likely than the general public to have a history of suspension or expulsion from school. They have also appear to have had more placements, and therefore more disruption, than other foster youth.

Taken together, this group of YES scholars may face fewer challenges than their foster youth peers, but more challenges than their general population peers.

Findings on Expected Short-Term Outcomes

As discussed above in the description of the logic model, YES hopes to see some short-term outcomes for scholars. Table 1 (see page 11) lists each of the expected short-term outcomes, as phrased in the logic model; the survey question that operationalizes each expected outcome; the average response for each survey question; and the lay interpretation of the findings for each question.

Table 1

Expected Outcome	Survey Question	Average Response[1]	Interpretation
Participants will return to college for their second year.	Administrative data		Over 90% of scholars return to college.
Participants will make satisfactory academic progress.	Administrative data		63% of scholars have made satisfactory progress.[2]
Participants will see their mentors once a month.	I see my mentor once a month.	3.08	Scholars report that they usually see their mentors once a month.
Participants will attend YES events.	I attend YES events (like the YES dinner).	3.46	Scholars report that they usually or always attend YES events.
Participants will attend YES workshops.	I attend YES workshops (like budgeting workshops, or the summer bridge program).	1.89	Scholars report that they sometimes attend YES workshops.
Participants will report feeling like a part of the YES community.	I feel like a part of the YES community.	3.14	Scholars report that they usually feel like a part of the YES community.
Participants will develop financial management skills.	I keep my finances in order.	3.03	Scholars report that they usually keep their finances in order.
Participants will develop time management skills	I manage my time.	2.97	Scholars report that they usually manage their time.
Participants will ask professors for help.	I am comfortable speaking with professors.	3.38	Scholars report that they are usually to always comfortable asking professors for help.
Participants will begin to access campus resources.	I seek resources when I need them.	3.47	Scholars report that they usually to always seek resources when they need them.
Participants will report feeling like they belong in college.	I feel like I belong in college.	3.55	Scholars report that they usually to always feel like they belong in college.
Participants will report feeling like a part of the college community.	I feel like a part of the college community.	3.14	Scholars report that they usually or always feel like a part of their college community.

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[1] *Respondents were asked to circle "1" if they strongly disagreed, "2" if they disagreed, "3" if they agreed, and "4" if they strongly agreed.*
[2] *Over 80% of scholars in the 2004-5 and 2005-6 cohorts have made satisfactory progress.*

The results are very strong. YES is meeting almost all of their short term outcome goals.

In addition to analyzing the means for each survey question, we ran analysis of variance tests to determine whether scholars belonging to different subpopulations provided different answers. We studied whether age, gender, ethnic/racial identity, foreign language fluency, marital status, reported number of siblings in foster care, type of placement (kin/no kin), reported family members in jail, reported suspensions or expulsions, reported detentions, and immigrant status led to statistically different answers. We found that there was no subpopulation of scholars that provided significantly different answers.

Notably, one measure had a relatively low average response. From the survey data, it appears that scholars are only sometimes attending life skills workshops.

In the focus group, scholars indicated that they don't attend workshops because they often don't have the time in their work and school schedules. With further discussion, the scholars mentioned that topics focussing on upper-division topics would be more helpful. Suggestions included:

- How to study abroad and pay for it.
- How to find internships related to your field.
- Transferring to a four year university.
- University scholarship availability and deadlines.
- Upper division level tutoring in math.

In addition, scholars would appreciate access to tutors in the evening when college campus tutoring is closed.

The focus group uncovered two additional qualitative findings related to short-term outcomes:

- Two members of the focus group were surprised that scholars, on average, were comfortable speaking to professors. They were both nervous about office hours. Other scholars probably feel the same way. Practicing what to do and say in office hours might be a helpful workshop topic.

- The entire focus group was surprised that scholars, on average, felt part of the YES community. This perspective derived from the feeling that there was not much community to feel a part of. This finding was corroborated by our observation that the focus group members did not know one another when they arrived at the Bill Wilson Center. Focus group members requested that YES sponsor more social events that would allow scholars to share experiences with one another. They requested that these events be casual, with limited participation of YES staff and donors.

Findings on Expected Mid-Term Outcomes

In addition to the short-term outcomes, YES identified eight mid-term outcomes goals for their scholars. Table 2 (see page 14) lists each of the expected mid-term outcomes, as phrased in the logic model, the survey question that operationalizes each expected outcome, the average response for each survey question, and the lay interpretation of the findings for each question.

These findings are also very positive. YES has met the five outcomes that were measured on the survey. In addition, seven scholars have graduated from a college, university, or vocational program.

We ran analysis of variance tests to determine whether scholars belonging to different subpopulations provided different answers. We studied whether age, gender, ethnic/racial identity, foreign language fluency, marital status, reported number of siblings in foster care, type of placement (kin/no kin), reported family members in jail, reported suspensions or expulsions, reported detentions, and immigrant status led to statistically different answers.

We found that scholars who were not born in the U.S. were more proud of their achievements: Scholars who were born in the U.S. had an average response of 3.24 (or, "I am usually proud of my personal achievements.") while scholars who were born outside of the U.S. had an average response of 4 (or, "I am always proud of my personal achievements.").

Findings on Expected Long-Term Outcomes

YES identified three expected long-term outcomes:

- Participants will maintain jobs.
- Participants will maintain positive emotional and mental health.
- Participants will remain out of jail.

It is too soon to evaluate whether YES scholars have achieved the expected long-term outcomes.

Table 2

Expected Outcome	Survey Question	Average Response	Interpretation
Participants will graduate from vocational and college programs.	*This data is now only collected for scholars who graduate from YES while still receiving money. Ceres suggests that YES try to collect graduation data for scholars who graduate after their scholarship ends.*		
Participants will achieve the educational goals that they established.	*This data is not currently collected. Ceres suggests that YES begin collecting goals data from scholars.*		
Participants will access career development resources on campus as they transition out of college.	*This data is not currently collected. Ceres suggests that YES begin collecting goals data from scholars.*		
Participants will identify and act as role models for other foster youth.	I am a role model for other foster youth.	3.28	Scholars report that they usually or always identify as a role model for other foster youth.
Participants are proud of their personal accomplisments.	I am proud of my personal accomplishments.	3.41	Scholars report that they usually or always are proud of their personal accomplishments.
Participants are proud of their school accomplishments.	I am proud of how I do in school.	3.23	Scholars report that they usually or always are proud of how they do in school.
Participants choose supportive friends.	I choose friends who support me.	3.45	Scholars report that they usually or always choose supportive friends.
Participants choose supportive mentors.	I choose mentors who support me.	3.76	Scholars report that they almost always choose supportive mentors.

Support Service Use

Respondents were asked whether they used any of twelve support services available to emancipated foster youth. Table 3 reports the percentages of respondents who have used each service in the last year (see below):

Table 3: Prevalence of Support Service Use

Name of Support Service	Percent of Respondents Reporting Use in Last Year
Independent Living Program (ILP)	77.4% (n=24)
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)	9.7% (n=3)
College Tutors	41.9% (n=13)
Housing Services	35.5% (n=11)
Financial Aid	93.5% (n=29)
Job Skills Workshops	29% (n=9)
Smith Society	9.7% (n=3)
College Career Counselor	67.7% (n=21)
Dentist	54.8% (n=17)
Doctor	64.5% (n=20)
Mental Health Counselor/Therapist	9.7% (n=3)
High School (Academic) Counselors	12.9% (n=4)

Respondents were also asked whether they used any other services. Two scholars reported using transition housing. Two scholars reported relying on friends and family. One scholar reported using each of the following services: NOVA, college academic counselor, EOP, Foster Care Ombudsman, parenting classes.

These findings indicate that a majority of scholars are still connected to the Santa Clara County ILP. This is a positive finding because Santa Clara County ILP and YES provide overlapping, but distinct support services for emancipated foster youth.

In addition, our findings indicate that a majority of scholars are receiving dental and health care. At the same time, many scholars did not see health care professionals in the last year. The focus group respondents indicated that this is due to the cost of health care. While many scholars have health insurance through school, they are required to pay for any visits. Even a $20 co-pay can be prohibitively expensive for these scholars who are on a limited budget.

Needs Assessment

We asked scholars whether they have access to or knowledge about a range of support services. Scholars were provided a series of statements and then asked to circle "yes" or "no." Table 4 reports the percentage of scholars that circled "yes" after each statement. We highlight the areas of higher need with a bold font.

Table 4

Needs Statement	Percent "Yes"
I have affordable daycare for my children.	**25%[3]**
I have the transportation I need.	90%
I can find affordable health care.	**62%**
I know where to get health insurance.	**76%**
I know where to go if I have questions about my sexuality	91%
I know where to go if I need help with housing.	**76%**
I know where to go if I need help with school.	95%
I know where to go if I need help finding a job.	84%
I know where to find a doctor or dentist.	81%
I know where to find a counselor.	91%
I know where to get information and help about drugs and alcohol.	93%
I know where to find help when my brothers and/or sisters are in trouble.	87%
I know where to find support if I have a family member in a gang.	**72%**
I know where to find support if I have a family member in jail	**77%**
If I can't stay at home, I know of a safe place to stay.	96%
I know where to go to get help if my boyfriend or girlfriend hurts me.	93%
I know where to get help if somebody sexually assaults me.	95%

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[3] *This number represents the percentage of parents who reported having affordable day care.*

These findings are also very positive. The strong majority of YES scholars have access to a wide variety of services. At the same time, there are clearly some services that fewer scholars have access to. In the table above, we highlight the six statements with the lowest positive response rates. YES might consider helping scholars

- find affordable day care,
- find affordable health care,
- find health insurance,
- find housing,
- find support if they have a family member in a gang, and
- find support if they have a family member in jail.

We ran analysis of variance tests to determine whether scholars belonging to different subpopulations provided different answers. We studied whether age, gender, ethnic/racial identity, foreign language fluency, marital status, reported number of siblings in foster care, type of placement (kin/no kin), reported family members in jail, reported suspensions or expulsions, reported detentions, and immigrant status led to statistically different answers. We found a number of interesting findings.

- Asian scholars were significantly less likely to have access to affordable health care (25% of Asian scholars compared with 79% of non-Asian scholars)(sig=.003).
- Asian scholars were significantly less likely to have health insurance (50% of Asian scholars compared with 84% of non-Asian scholars)(sig=.04).
- Asian scholars wee significantly less likely to know where to go if they need help finding a job (69% of Asian scholars compared with 95% of non-Asian scholars)(sig=.035).
- Asian scholars were significantly less likely to know how to find a doctor or dentist (56% of Asian scholars, compared with 89% of non-Asian scholars)(sig=.046).
- African and African American scholars were less likely to know where to find information about drugs and alcohol (80% of African and African Americans compared with 100% of non-African/African American scholars)(sig=.033).
- Scholars born outside the U.S. were less likely to know where to go if they need help with school (79% of immigrants compared to 100% of non-immigrants)(sig=.015).
- Scholars who speak another language are less likely to have access to affordable health care (41% of scholars who speak another language compared with 75% of scholars who speak only English)(sig=.049).
- Scholars over the age of 22 are less likely to know of a place to go if their boyfriend or girlfriend hurts them (78% of older scholars, compared with 100% of younger scholars)(sig=.029).

In addition to the quantitative questions on the survey, we asked an open-ended question about whether scholars had previously experienced a time in need. 81% of scholars said that they had. The majority of these periods were related to money. We list the five most common responses below:

- Ten scholars previously had a housing crisis resulting from a loss of a place to live and a lack of money to pay for alternative housing.
- Seven scholars mentioned general struggles over money.
- Five scholars mentioned struggles related to paying tuition
- Four scholars mentioned struggles related to paying for food
- Two scholars mentioned struggles related to paying for childcare.

The focus group expanded on these findings. Scholars are having a difficult time managing their money due to perceived caps in financial aid. Scholars believe they are limited to approximately $13,000 per year. If they work and earn over $10,000 per year, the money they earn is taken from their federal grant, creating a disincentive to work. Suggestions for improvement included

- providing gifts/gift certificates for food and clothing that would not "count against" federal income limits; and
- providing emergency loans with short application processes.

The survey data uncovered a number of other suggestions for improving YES. We provide a list of these suggestions in Appendix B.

Overall, YES Scholars feel positively about the program. Half of the survey respondents said that they would be part of the Advisory Council. Scholars also consistently expressed that the scholarship has been very helpful. When asked if scholars had any additional comments, ten respondents voluntarily described how YES has helped them. We include some examples below:

> **"I am very grateful for the help and support the YES Program has given me. Once I graduate in the Fall of 2006, I plan to be a part of the program to continue to help others who have been in similar situations."** *-scholar survey*

> **"YES does a lot for me. It's what I live on, and therefore is very necessary for me. The workshops are also a great idea. Is there any way the award can be extended until I finish college?"** *-scholar survey*

> **"YES is a huge contributing factor to the reason I am transferring, or even still in college for that matter. Their support is unbelievably comforting. The fact that they stay open to their scholars and try so hard to keep the channel of communication open; they truly care, and it shows. The fact that they try to connect to their scholars is what makes YES unique and better than standard scholarship."** *-scholar survey*

> **"Being a YES scholar has thoroughly changed my life. Without the help of the YES scholarship I would not have been able to afford college. Also, the classes they have on various subjects help me to understand the value of being an independent and productive adult within my college and community."** *-scholar survey*

Summary and Recommendations

SVCF, their YES program, and their partnership with SC ILP and Bay Area college campuses provides a very promising program that links foster youth to college and then supports those youth for up to five years of post-secondary education.

Most importantly, scholars widely feel that YES has been a huge help in their lives.

Additionally, our research indicates that YES is meeting almost all of their short-term outcome goals:

- Participants report that they are seeing their mentors once a month
- Participants report that they are attending YES events
- Participants report that they are developing financial management skills
- Participants report that they are developing time management skills.
- Participants report that they will ask professors for help.
- Participants report that they ask for resourcees when they need them.
- Participants report that they belong in college.
- Participants report that they feel like a part of the college community.

Our research also indicates that YES is also meeting almost all of their mid-term outcomes goals:

- Participants report that they identify as role models for other foster youth.
- Participants report that they are proud of their personal accomplishments.
- Participants report that they are proud of their school accomplishments.
- Participants report that they choose supportive friends.
- Participants report that they choose supportive mentors.

At the same time, there is data indicating that YES could improve their service in four ways:

- We recommend that YES offer a wider range of workshop topics, so that scholars might attend YES workshops more regularly.
- We recommend that YES offer more frequent, casual social events, so that YES scholars might feel more a part of the YES community.

- We recommend that YES provide scholars with gifts/gift certificates for food and clothing, as well as emergency loans, so that YES scholars would have an easier time managing their finances.
- We recommend that YES provide a workshop explaining caps on student income. Students believe that any income earned over $13,000 each year will be subtracted from their financial aid. In fact, independent students have an income protection allowance that allows an additional $5790 per year. Moreover, only 50% of any additional income is deducted from financial aid. This is a complicated set of rules. Scholars would benefit from greater understanding.
- We recommend that YES provide stronger links to childcare, health care, health insurance, emergency housing (including shelters in cases of relationship abuse), and support groups for scholars with family members in gangs or jail. Similarly, YES scholars would appreciate stronger links to upper-division-level tutors in the evening, when college tutoring centers are generally closed.

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Appendix A: YES Logic Model

Inputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
-YES grants cover a wide range of needs, including tuition, books, housing, food, transportation, clothing, and other education-related expenses. -YES provides linkages to counselor/mentors, CASA, ILP, tutoring, housing services, and on-campus services such as Smith Society. -YES grants do not limit choice of school or living arrangements. -YES provides varying levels of coordination with partner schools. While YES does not limit scholars' choice of school, they provide more support to students attending Bay Area schools, and the strongest support for students attending San Jose State and DeAnza.	-Participants will return to college for their second year. -Participants will make satisfactory academic progress (as defined by each school) -Participants will maintain relationships with their mentors (meeting once/month) and attend YES events and workshops. -Participants will report feeling like a part of the YES community. -Participants will develop the life skills needed to manage their finances, manage their time, and ask adults such as professors for help. -Participants will begin to access campus resources. -Participants will report feeling like they belong in college and that they feel like a part of the college community.	-Participants will graduate from vocational and college programs (compared with 67% of foster youth who drop out) -Participants will achieve the educational goals that they established. -Participants will access career development resources on campus as they transition out of college. -Participants will identify and act as role models to other foster youth. -Participants will be proud of their personal accomplishments and school -Participants will choose supportive friends and mentors	-Participants will maintain jobs (compared with the 50% of emancipated foster youth who are unemployed) -Participants will maintain positive emotional and mental health (compared with the 38% of emancipated foster youth who exhibit emotional and mental health problems) -Participants will remain out of jail (compared with the 30% of emancipated foster youth who are incarcerated)
Sources of Data			
	Administrative Data Survey Focus Groups	Administrative Data Survey Focus Groups	Administrative Data Survey

Appendix B: Additional Suggestions for Improvement

"**Require 10 units only rather than 12 units.**" *–scholar survey*

"**Can you give us money directly so that we don't have to pay back taxes on it at the end of the year, or tax it before we get it.**" *–scholar survey*

"**(Go) back to the original amounts (of money) to youth, like before they went through the colleges and universities and paid the youth. Have a set amount as opposed to the unmet need. Help to transition to higher education above BA/BS instead of assistance ending after 4-5 yrs funding--support should continue until educational goal is completely achieved. Doesn't feel like Donors get enough credit, nor do we have the opportunity to truly know them (ie. YES Dinners aren't enough).**" *–scholar survey*

"**Educate us in everyday life things. Ie. Make it mandatory for us to attend basic living skills, such as financial issues and budgeting.**" *–scholar survey*

"**Maybe they should have annual evaluations sent to the scholars homes or online evaluations of the program for scholars who can not be a part of the scholar advisory board to encourage scholarly input. I also feel it would be better to get to know the funders/donors more in depth. Even with the YES dinners I have not gotten the sense of who the people who are supporting me are. I would like to be able to have the opportunity to be able to show my gratitude and thanks to them. Also, instead of having workshops about resources, maybe they [YES] could send pamphlets of information with resource contacts, such as: health coverage/insurance, how to find a doctor, etc. Not that the workshops are not beneficial, just not everyone can make it to them.**" *–scholar survey*

"**Maybe extra help for those with children trying to go to school because it is significantly harder.**" *–scholar survey*

"**Workshops could be more clear to break down financial aid.**" *–scholar survey*

"**Expand services to address the well-being of its recipients. If we are having various problems/obstacles/unmet needs, it will distract us (and possibly even derail us) from accomplishing our goals in an academic setting.**" *–scholar survey*

"**I think that the YES program should consider revising about their rules in being a part of the YES program. For example like the grades maintaining a 2.0 GPA and how students that are taking credit no credit classes should be acceptable not all students are college level.**" *–scholar survey*

"**I just want to make sure that youth feel comfortable being YES scholars. I think it is important to build relationships with the youth since most come from a background where there were not many people there for them. This is especially true with gay youth.**" *–scholar survey*

"**There should be a Yahoo group or a newsletter telling scholars about internships and scholarship deadlines.**" *–focus group*